THE ROLE OF TUTOR DEVELOPMENT IN A FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM

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DECLARATION

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE WORK CONTAINED IN THIS THESIS IS MY OWN ORIGINAL WORK AND HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY IN ITS ENTIRETY OR IN PART BEEN SUBMITTED AT ANY UNIVERSITY FOR A DEGREE.

SUMMARY

THE ROLE OF TUTOR DEVELOPMENT IN A FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM

Technikon Southern Africa defined its role as distance learning institution with the implementation of the Integrated Learner Centred Distance Learning (ILCDE) model. This model implied the establishment of regional offices as well as the implementation of a tutor system. The tutor system implied the appointment of tutors at the different regional offices. In an attempt to take the distance out of distance learning the following functions of tutors were identified:

- Telephone tutoring
- Conducting contact sessions
- Assessing assignments

The focal point of this study was tutor development within a flexible learning system as no structured learning programmes for tutors exist at TSA. The purpose was to investigate and analyse the learning needs of tutors in a flexible learning system.

Various critical questions stimulated this study. However, the following three questions formed the basis of this study:

- What is the role of training and development in the tutor system?
- Do tutors have a need for continuing professional learning programmes? If so, what should the nature of such learning programmes be?
- What should the criteria be to evaluate and monitor the development of tutors?

A qualitative research approach was followed and the data was obtained by means of interviews and participative observation sessions. The subjects of the study were the tutors of the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing appointed for the registration period May 1998 – May 1999.

One of the conclusions of the study was that the following processes regarding the tutor system need attention:

- Recruitment and selection
- Interviewing and appointment
- Job descriptions
- Orientation, training and development programmes
- Evaluation and monitoring programmes
- Role clarification
- Marketing strategy

The following recommendations were formulated:

- A guide for the recruitment and appointment processes of its tutors should be compiled.
- An assessment of the support needs of learners should be performed.
- Establishing a continuing professional learning unit should be considered.
- A proposal for learning interventions for continuing professional learning should be developed.

OPSOMMING

DIE ROL VAN TUTORONTWIKKELING IN 'N PLOOIBARE LEERSTELSEL

Die Technikon Suider-Afrika het sy rol as afstandsonderriginstansie gedefinieer toe die Geïntegreerde Leergesentreerde Afstandsonderrigmodel (*ILCDE*) geïmplementeer is. Hierdie model het die daarstelling van streekkantore asook die implementering van 'n tutorstelsel veronderstel. Die tutorstelsel het die aanstelling van tutors by die onderskeie streekkantore tot gevolg gehad. Om die afstand uit afstandsonderrig te haal, is die volgende drie funksies van tutors geïdentifiseer:

- Telefoonbegeleiding
- Fasilitering van kontaksessies
- Assessering van werkopdragte

Die fokuspunt van hierdie studie was tutorontwikkeling binne 'n plooibare leerstelsel, aangesien geen gestruktureerde leerprogramme vir tutors by TSA bestaan nie. Die doel was om die leerbehoeftes van tutors in so 'n plooibare leerstelsel te ondersoek en te ontleed.

Verskeie kritiese vrae het aanvanklik hierdie studie gestimuleer, maar die volgende drie vrae het die basis van die studie gevorm:

- Wat is die rol van opleiding en ontwikkeling in die tutorstelsel?
- Is daar 'n behoefte aan deurlopende professionele leerprogramme? Indien ja, wat behoort die aard van die programme te wees?
- Wat behoort die kriteria te wees om die ontwikkeling van tutors te evalueer en te monitor?

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is gevolg en die data is deur middel van

onderhoudvoering en deelnemende waarnemingsessies ingesamel. Die tutors wat aangestel is vir die registrasietydperk Mei 1998 – Mei 1999, van die Vakgroep: Bestuursleierskap: Polisiëring is vir die studie gebruik.

Een van die gevolgtrekkings van die studie is dat die volgende prosesse in die daarstelling van die tutorstelsel aandag vereis:

- Werwing en keuring
- Onderhoudvoering en aanstelling
- Posbeskrywings
- Oriënterings-, opleidings- en ontwikkelingsprogramme
- Evaluerings- en moniteringsprogramme
- Roluitklaring
- Bemarking

Die volgende aanbevelings is geformuleer:

- 'n Handleiding vir die werwing en keuring van tutors behoort saamgestel te word.
- 'n Behoeftebepaling van die ondersteuningsbehoeftes van die leerders behoort gedoen te word.
- Die vestiging van 'n deurlopende professionele leereenheid behoort oorweeg te word.
- 'n Voorstel vir leerintervensies vir personeelontwikkeling behoort ontwikkel te word.

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INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Technikon Southern Africa (TSA), which was formerly a correspondence study institution, was forced to transform because of a number of factors, for example political, economic and social factors, and the result was a new vision and mission statement in 1994. This new vision and mission statement was based on the issues raised in the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996). Amongst others, the report highlighted a number of deficiencies, which characterised the South African educational system. The most significant being the perpetuation of an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for learners and staff along axes of race, gender, class and geographic discrimination, a chronic mismatch between higher education's output and the needs of a modernising economy, teaching strategies and delivery modes that have not been adapted to meet the needs of larger learner intakes and the diversity of lifelong learners (Moore, 1996:4).

In 1997 the White Paper on Higher Education called for an open and flexible system and significant changes in the traditional modes of programme delivery. Flexibility of access, exit, curriculum and learning modes require the adoption of a new teaching paradigm (Moore, 1997:8-10). Moore (1996:11) stated, in his document on the implementation of the new (flexible) system, that Technikon SA (TSA) has to start thinking beyond the traditional framework in order to think in a manner that will support innovative breakthroughs in the structuring of this new system. TSA defined its role as a flexible, distance learning institution with the implementation of the Integrated Learner-Centred Distance Education (ILCDE) model in 1994. This model was intended to offer a greater

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was intended to offer a greater variety of learning opportunities to corporate clients and learners (Moore, 1996:10) and required the implementation of a decentralising process and a tutor system. The decentralising process necessitated the establishment of regional offices in different regions/parts of the country. As a result of this process, the tutor system was implemented.

1.2   STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The implementation of the tutor system was an attempt to take the distance out of distance learning by appointing tutors who could assist the learners in their learning processes on a more personal level. The tutors play a very important role in the process of facilitating learning. Currently, however, there is no effective learning programme for the tutors and thus the researcher is of the opinion that it is imperative to assess the needs of the tutors to enable them to facilitate real learning and to support the learners. The broad purpose of this study is thus to investigate and analyse the learning needs of the tutors in the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing at Technikon Southern Africa (TSA).

1.3   CRITICAL QUESTIONS

The following critical questions stimulated this study and will be dealt with in the different chapters.

- What is the role of training and development in the tutor system in a flexible learning approach?
- What are the tutoring needs of learners?
- What type of competencies do tutors need?
- To what extent does/can the tutor assist/support the learner in his/her learning process?
- Is there a need for (a) continuing professional learning programme(s) for tutors?
- What should the nature of such learning programmes be?

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- What criteria should be used to evaluate and monitor the development of tutors?

1.4   RESEARCH GOAL

TSA's vision is to be a world-class, flexible learning, higher education institution. The question that immediately arises is: Can this vision be achieved without competent facilitators of adult learning?

The tutors are appointed to represent the lecturers in the regions, and the lecturers are currently fulfilling the role of facilitators of adult learning. Although the tutors are appointed as part-time staff, they play an important role in the learning processes of the learners and therefore it is important to consider the knowledge and competencies they have in order to guide and support the learners effectively.

The primary goal of this study is to investigate and assess the learning needs of the tutors. In an attempt to achieve this goal, the following research goals are formulated:
- to clarify relevant concepts according to literature and within the context of this study
- to explain the need and importance of continuing professional learning for tutors based on literature
- to complete a comparative review of the tutor systems of three distance learning institutions
- to determine the learning needs of tutors by means of interviews and observation sessions
- to make recommendations that could help implementing a more effective tutor system at TSA.

1.5   NEED FOR THE RESEARCH

The researcher trusts that this research will be of value to the Subject Group:

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Management Leadership: Policing, the Programme Group: Police Practice as a whole, and TSA in general, for the following specific reasons.

The research should:

- play a role in helping to achieve the vision, mission and goals of TSA/the relevant Programme Group and the relevant subject group;
- lead to a more effective learning programme for tutors;
- clarify the roles of tutors;
- offer guidelines to empower and enable tutors;
- help to establish an effective learner support system;
- encourage tutors to become lifelong learners;
- clarify the current structure of continuing professional learning;
- enable regional office staff and tutor managers to render a more effective service; and
- help learners to adapt to the requirements of the new millennium and prepare them for new workplace realities.

1.6 EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS

The clarification of some concepts is important for this study, as it should enable the reader to understand the framework and importance of tutor development in a flexible learning system.

1.6.1 Flexible learning

Flexible learning is an approach to teaching and learning that is open to the possible use of a variety of innovative learning practices and combinations of practices. Flexible learning is not a specific methodology but provides the learner with a choice of learning strategies as well as the choice of place, pace and time in which to study (Moore, 1997:1).

Simmonds (1995:25) sees flexible learning as a generic title for open learning, distance learning and resource-based learning. The key aspect of flexible learning is the all-embracing nature of the phrase, in that it includes not only the constituents of the open learning system, but also those learners who are already within the traditional system. According to Simmonds (1995:25) flexible learning also provides for institutions to offer a range of services such as:

- initial assessment;
- accreditation of prior learning;
- action planning;
- individual learning programmes;
- assessment on demand;
- records of achievement;
- work-based learning; and
- work-based assessment.

For the purpose of this study flexible learning at TSA can be described as a system which offers its learners three different registration cycles to give the learner the opportunity and freedom to register at the most convenient time of the year. It also offers a tutor system that provides for a combination of learning material and contact sessions within a distance learning situation.

1.6.2 Distance learning

It is not easy to focus on one definition of distance learning, because so many definitions have been formulated over the past years and each one has served a useful purpose. In the following table the key elements of some of these definitions are set out. It should give an indication of the purpose, structure, process and characteristics of distance education (Keegan, 1996:41-44):

TABLE 1.1

THE PURPOSE, STRUCTURE, PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF
DISTANCE EDUCATION

Dohmen (1967)	Self-study with counselling and supervision by teacher/educators.
Peters (1973)	Instruction of great numbers of students at the same time at different places.
Holmberg (1977)	No continuous, immediate supervision, but learning depends on guidance and tuition.
Garrison and Shale (1987)	Two-way communication is very important to facilitate and support the educational process with the support of communications media.
Moore (1990)	Separation between the educator and the learner(s) with the support of print and electronic communications media to facilitate learning.
Portway and Lane (1994)	Focus on the roles of the instructor and the learner in the learning process.

Distance learning is based on the principles of open learning which lead to the development of a system which is organised for use by learners at different times, in different ways and for different purposes at various stages of their lives and careers. It can thus lead to the massification of the higher education system.

Distance learning has a crucial role to play in this new learning paradigm/environment because it is built on the principles of flexible learning and it can fulfil its potential for integrating lifelong learning. This new paradigm also enhances the dual mode to facilitate distance learning, namely, a combination of learning material and contact sessions which allow the learner to utilise a tutorial package in terms of personal preferences which will result in more effective learning and individualisation of mass learning. Hall (1996:29) sees this emerging learning paradigm as learner-centred and outcomes-based which emphasises the focus on interaction between the educator/facilitator and the learner(s). This can be done by effective tutoring because

tutors are able to speak to their learners by personalising their comments, and tailoring them to the particular learning needs of a learner (Lentell, 1997:44).

Merriam & Cunningham (1989:222) argue that the definitions of distance education are too restrictive and focused on an independent print-based form of distance study. They suggest that Garrison and Shale's approach (in Merriam & Cunningham, 1989:222) should be followed in defining distance learning. According to their approach, a minimum set of criteria should be provided as a guide or standard, while leaving open the likelihood that other criteria may be added as our understandings or purposes change. The following criteria characterise Garrison and Shale's distance education/learning process:

- the structural separation of educator/facilitator and learner/student, but it also includes the possibility of using face-to-face methods (dual mode);
- the necessity of two-way communication in an educational transaction, and
- the importance of technical and electronic communications media.

For the purpose of this study distance learning at TSA means that the learner has the opportunity and choice to learn at his/her own place, pace and time, with the availability of a lecturer and/or tutor for support and guidance.

1.6.3 Adult learning

In attempting to clarify and demystify, without oversimplifying, the researcher reflected on definitions of adult education/adult training/adult development as found in Rothwell and Sredl (1992:4-7). These can be viewed conceptually in table format as follows:

TABLE 1.2

EXPLANATION OF ADULT EDUCATION, ADULT TRAINING AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT

	ADULT EDUCATION	ADULT TRAINING	ADULT DEVELOPMENT
FOCUS	• learning focused on a future job	• learning related to present jobs	• learning experiences
APPROACH	• change in knowledge	• provided by employers to employee	• employer to employees • employee to employee • employer to client
AIMS	▪ help individuals in qualifying for advancement • initiated by individuals rather than organisations • primary emphasis on career preparation	• planned learning • acquisition of knowledge and skills • short-term learning intervention	• long-term learning intervention • stimulating new ideas/insights through planned learning • focus on the creativity and experience of the individual
OUTCOME	• intermediate learning intervention	• change in skills	• not always job related change in attitudes or values

Although some clear differences were identified to clarify these concepts it was very stimulating to focus on the concept of **learning**, whilst reflecting critically. This played a major role in the development of a model and a new paradigm. It was also interesting to be able to link these concepts to the concept of andragogy. This stimulated the researcher to think in a holistic and integrated manner and start drawing the broad parameters for a new model (figure 1.1).

Boud in Boud and Griffin (1994:222-226) was influential in stimulating the researcher's thoughts when clarifying the concept of **adult learning**. According to him, the concept of adult learning is influenced by four major traditions as tabulated conceptually:

TABLE 1.3

THE CONCEPT OF ADULT LEARNING

	Technical approach to training/learning	Self-directed learning/andragogy	Learner-centered/ humanistic	Critical/Social action
AIM	• straightforward • comprising a technical outlook • all learning directed towards a particular topic	• unique goals of individuals • structure to assist learners in achieving own ends • create a climate for learning	• personal needs of learners • value each learner • respect the thinking of each learner	• shift in ideology • focus on dialectics/collective action • embedded in historical, social and material context
METHOD/ STRUCTURE	• programmed learning • traditional authoritative learning • clear learning goals • analysed tasks • learners treated as intelligent machines	• learning contracts • freedom as learners • contractual exercise	• assisted by others • totally non-directive • assist individuals in finding their own way	• leading people to change • critical thinking • integrating theory/ practice • pursuing freedom through learning
INFLUENTIAL FIGURES	Mager , Davies and Gagne	Knowles	Rogers	Freire

When reflecting on the views of Boud the researcher was again stimulated to think holistically and in an integrative manner and realised that adult learning should be the centre point of the new paradigm. This in turn triggered the following proposed model and also led to appreciation of continuing reflection and critical debate on adult learning.

FIGURE 1.1

A MODEL FOR ADULT LEARNING

ANDRAGOGY
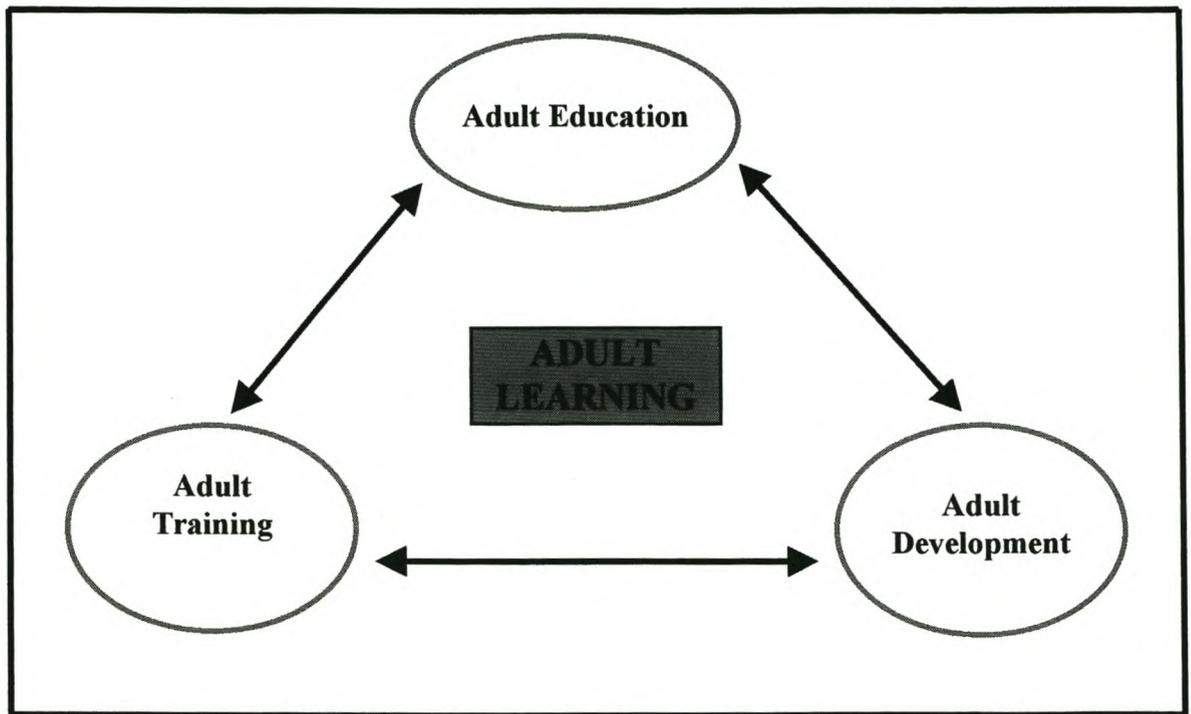
For the purpose of this study adult learning means that the learner is responsible for his/her own learning process. The learner will, however, be guided and supported by the lecturers and tutors in their development to become empowered and enabled individuals who can make a difference in the workplace.

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1.6.4 Tutoring

According to Gordon and Gordon (1990:327) tutoring has made a significant contribution to the evolution of schooling in the history of education. Some of the most important philosophers of the West developed educational theories based upon their practical experiences as tutors, rather than as schoolteachers. With their tutorial philosophy they wanted to develop the individual's thinking processes. Throughout history there are signs of some kind of tutoring, such as tutor-governess, peer tutoring, after-school remedial programmes, home schooling.

Myers (1990:i) sees tutoring as sharing yourself with another student in a way that makes a difference in both lives. Moore and Kearsley (1996:146-147) on the other hand sees tutoring as an integral part of distance learning and as an attempt to take the distance out of distance learning. According to Moore and Kearsley (1996:147) the primary rationale for having tutors is to provide learners with individualised instruction in their courses on a one-to-one basis/small groups by mail/contact sessions as the learners work through the contents of a study guide/work book and other recorded materials. Tutors should be able to facilitate the learning process further through their knowledge, experience, understanding and commitment. The tutor is often seen as an expert in the subject(s) he/she is tutoring, but this person also needs to be knowledgeable about the learners themselves. He/she needs to know how to help learners make their own sense of the subject - and about the kinds of difficulty they may have and the kind of approach they might find helpful from tutors (Rowntree,1994:80).

Tutoring at TSA means the following:
The tutor is a subject specialist and is appointed as closely as possible to the learner to represent the lecturers in the regions. The tutor should assist the learner by means of telephone tutoring, conducting contact sessions, assessing assignments and giving feedback as well as monitoring the progress of the learners.

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1.6.5 Tutor system/Integrated Learner-Centred Distance Education (ILCDE) model

The Integrated Learner-Centred Distance Education (ILCDE) model is a system that was introduced by TSA in 1994 and entailed the implementation of the decentralising process and the tutor system. This model is based on three focus areas for a well-functioning distance learning institution. These focus areas are:

- decentralised learner support delivery system (that is service delivery on a regional basis to take the distance out of the distance learning);
- the provision of quality, learner-centred courseware/learning materials; and
- aligning the Technikon's administrative systems and service with the preceding two initiatives.

Each of these focus areas are briefly discussed:

A. **The decentralised learner support delivery system (that is service delivery on a regional basis to take the distance out of distance learning):**

Learner support is based on the following six principles:

- Learner-centredness.
- Sensitivity to changes in the environment and learner needs.
- Flexibility in the learning and assessment processes.
- Phased in implementation of the decentralised system.
- Co-operation with communities as part of cummunity service.
- Optimising the utilisation of the country's resources.

The main elements of the delivery system are:

- The central campus in Florida.
- Regional offices and sub-regional offices in the 9 provinces, as explained in table 1.4.

TABLE 1.4

REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL OFFICES OF TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

REGION	CITY/TOWN
Eastern Cape	Port Elizabeth/East London/Umtata
Free State	Bloemfontein/Kroonstad
Gauteng	Florida/Pretoria/Benoni
Kwazulu Natal	Pinetown/Pietermaritzburg/Newcastle
Mmpumalanga	Nelspruit/Middelburg
Northern Cape	Kimberley
Northern Province	Pietersburg/Giyani/Louis Trichardt
Northwest	Mmabatho/Potchefstroom
Western Cape	Cape Town/Oudtshoorn/George

- Regional directors, tutor managers and administrative support in each region.
- Part-time tutors.
- The provision of a career guidance and counselling service.
- The provision of learning facilities by local communities.
- The provision of study centres in different regions.

B. The provision of quality, learner-centred courseware/learning materials

When TSA adopted the ILCDE model, the need for quality courseware was immediately identified. This lead to the establishment of the Centre for Courseware Design and Development (CCDD). The task of the CCDD is to develop quality, interactive, learner-centred, needs-driven, distance learning courseware for the Technikon learners.

After the necessary instructional design, courseware is developed by a multi-skilled project team consisting of a course writer/subject specialist, a moderator, editor, translator, graphic designer and a desktop publisher (DTP). Courseware is designed in accordance with the needs and expectations of industry, always taking into account the learner profile.

Courseware with a new underlying philosophy has been defined, the emphasis being on the learner's mastering of, rather than memorising the subject content. This is achieved through learning strategies, learner motivation through learning activities, self-monitoring and assessment in the courseware as well as graphic elements, which will make learning a much more pleasant and effective experience. The end result is a self-regulated learner with well-developed cognitive skills, capable of mastering a course.

C.   **Aligning the Technikon's administrative systems and service with the preceding two initiatives.**

The alignment of the Technikon's administration systems and service is based on the development of a needs-driven information system to provide learner information, learner support records and financial and administrative data. The implementation of this model facilitates the concept of open learning, which provides for:

- free and open access;
- freedom of pacing, which includes year-round enrolment and several examination opportunities per year;
- the freedom to combine modules from different programmes; and
- recognition of prior learning.

Figure 1.2 is a conceptual framework of the researcher's view of the ILCDE model. An important aspect of this model is the integration of all the stakeholders in this model, as none of these stakeholders can function effectively on its own.

FIGURE 1.2

THE INTEGRATED LEARNER CENTRED DISTANCE EDUCATION
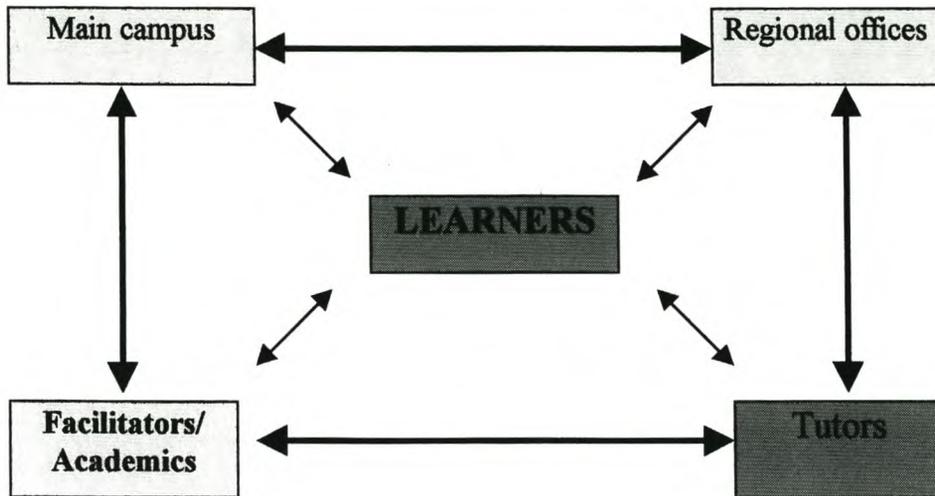
(ILCDE) MODEL

TSA sees the ILCDE model as a challenge to provide excellent service to its clients: the only way in which TSA can do so is by co-operation and the sharing and optimising of resources.

1.6.6   Learner support

Learners are supported to a considerable extent by the provision of a range of opportunities for real two-way communication through the use of various forms of technology for tutoring at a distance, contact tutoring, assignment tutoring, mentoring where appropriate, counselling (both remote and face-to-face), and the stimulation of peer support structures. The need for learners to have access to physical facilities and the study resources and participation in decision-making is also taken into account (A Quality Framework for South African Distance Education Provision, 1997:36). The tutor system is a form of learner support incorporated by TSA for its learners.

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1.6.7 Continuing professional learning

There are so many definitions of and viewpoints on continuing professional education that it can lead to either confusion or overlapping. According to Jarvis (1995:25) continuing education has long been a popular idea among people concerned with the education of adults, known by different names such as *education permanente*, lifelong education, recurrent education.

Jarvis (1995:28) further describes continuing education as a term, which refers specifically to post-initial education which includes both vocational and non-vocational education. Houle in Jarvis (1995:28) refers to continuing professional education as continuing learning while Cervero in Jarvis (1995:28) sees continuing professional education as a significant area of educational activity.

Apps in Jarvis (1995:28) cites the definition of continuing education provided by the Accrediting Commission of the Continuing Education Council of the United States as: the further development of human abilities after entrance into employment or voluntary activities. It includes in-service, upgrading and updating education. Continuing education is concerned primarily with broad personal and professional development.

Knox (1989:275) sees continuing education as the process of systematic learning to prepare for the field of practice and to maintain proficiency in a context of a changing knowledge base and practice. An adjunct of evolving professional careers is a continuum of preparatory and continuing education to enable practitioners to progress from novice to expert.

Continuing professional education can also be seen as all forms of in-service training as reflected in the following definitions of Kapp and Watkins, who refers to it as staff development and workplace learning. Kapp (1994:3) refers to staff development as all activities, actions, processes and procedures that an organisation develops or uses to enhance the performance and the potential of its human resources.

Watkins (1995:3-9) on the other hand, is of the opinion that workplace learning is the largest adult education endeavour and it is experiencing high-speed, exponentially escalating changes. Workplace learning includes terms such as training and human resource development and job-related instruction. Nadler in Watkins (1995:3) defines workplace learning as all those activities that develop people as resources for organisations, but it can be multi-faceted such as through consultants, tuition, reimbursement programs, in-house training programs, external continuing education programs, self-directed learning programs, quality teams, study teams, etc.

From all these viewpoints the researcher came to some conclusions and for the purpose of this study the concept of continuing professional learning will be used for reference to any aspect of continuing professional education as illustrated in figure 1.3.

FIGURE 1.3

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCHER'S VIEW OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

LIFELONG LEARNING
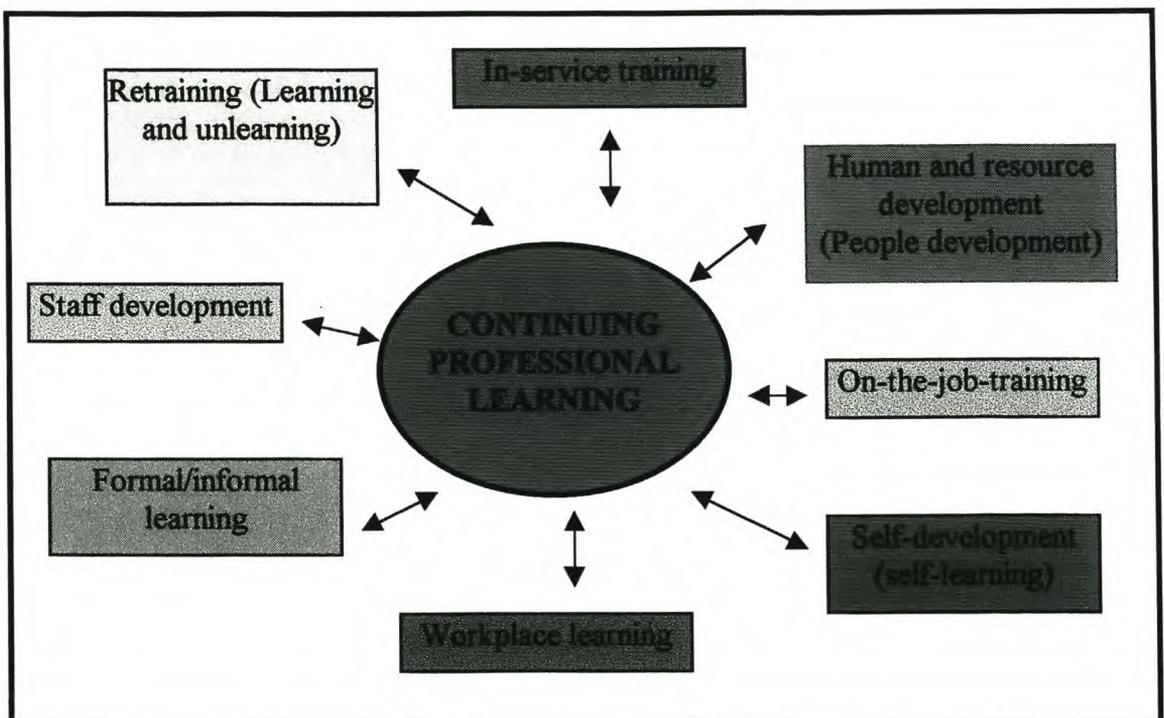
1.7   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher did a qualitative research in an ethnographic paradigm. The researcher followed a qualitative approach with a combination of exploratory, descriptive strategies as well as a comparative review. The subjects of the study are tutors of the subject group: Management Leadership: Policing appointed for the registration period May 1998 - May 1999.

A literature study on the concept of continuing professional learning and the need and importance thereof formed the basis of this study as the researcher intended to investigate and analyse the learning needs of the tutors. The researcher collected data by means of telephonic and personal interviews with the tutors as well as by means of participative observation sessions where she observed the behaviour and performance of the tutors during contact sessions. In chapter 4 the researcher gives a detailed description of the methodology followed to complete this study.

1.8   RESEARCH OVERVIEW

In chapter TWO the researcher explained the need for and importance of continuing professional learning for staff and tutors, the importance of evaluation as well as a description of a learningshop as a developmental strategy for tutors.

Chapter THREE is a comparative review where the researcher describes the tutor systems of TSA, the Open University in the United Kingdom (a European perspective) and the University of South Africa (a South African perspective).

Chapter FOUR is a detailed description of the research methodology relevant to this study.

Chapter FIVE is an explanation of the analysis and interpretation of the data for this study.

Chapter SIX consists of an overview of conclusions, recommendations and implications.

1.9   REVIEW

This chapter gives a broad outline of the purpose, aim and need of this study as well as a detailed explanation of the concepts referred to throughout the study.   A brief description of the research methodology followed for this study is also included.   The goal of this study is to investigate and assess the learning needs of the tutors with the aim of contributing to the implementation of a more effective tutor system at TSA.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEED FOR AND IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TUTORS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990's there has been evidence of a paradigm shift from a focus on teaching and training to ongoing learning. According to Barr and Tagg (1995:14) this learning paradigm implies that the institution's mission should be to produce learning in stead of providing instruction or to teach. Producing learning means that the institution should take responsibility for the learning at two levels, namely institutional and individual learner outcomes.

Barr and Tagg (1995:14) further explains the purpose of this learning paradigm to create environments and experiences that bring the learner to discover and construct knowledge of themselves, to make learners members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems. An institution should thus aim for ever-higher graduation rates while maintaining or even increasing learning standards.

TSA attempted to change the lecturer-centred paradigm to a learner-centred paradigm in implementing the tutor system. The aim of the tutor system was a means to support the learners in their learning processes and to increase the pass rate. As a flexible distance learning institution, TSA has a responsibility towards all stakeholders (these are the learners, academic and support staff) to create a learning environment and the

researcher sees continuing professional learning as the *vehicle* to achieve this.

This chapter consists of a theoretical outline of the South African perspective on learning and the role and importance of continuing professional learning for tutors, as they play a very important role in the learning processes of the learners at TSA. Although tutoring is only a part-time job for the tutors they are part of the academic staff and should thus be exposed to the same kind of learning experiences as the lecturing staff. Furthermore, a discussion of various aspects of learning and development at TSA is included.

2.2. A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF LEARNING

In South Africa it is known that technikons should offer occupational-specific education and in terms of an act of government, the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC) was established to ensure acceptable and uniform standards for technikon qualifications.

A synopsis of the criteria promulgated by SERTEC (RSA, 1986 in Buitendacht, 1997:3) is:

- Teaching staff should keep abreast of developments and changes in their fields through regular and at times even prolonged contact.
- Techikon qualifications should foster experiential learning.

The **Skills Development Bill** issued by the Department of Labour (1997) envisages an overall skills development system which promotes economic and employment growth and social development through a focus on education, training and employment services. This bill provides for a skills development strategy which is flexible, accessible, decentralised, demand-led and based on a partnership between the public and private sectors, and for that purpose provides for:

- the establishment of a Research and Strategic Planning Unit to collect and disseminate information on labour market skills trends;
- the establishment of Employment Services to enable persons to be active participants

in the labour market;

- learnerships and other training programmes that lead to registered qualifications;

- high quality education and training by a system that is cost-effective, accountable and meets training needs;

- the financing of skills development by means of a levy-grant scheme; and

- the co-ordination of the strategy by Sector Education and Training Authorities, Education and Training Boards, the National Skills Authority and the Minister of Labour.

This act also emphasises the notion/importance of applied competence and describes three different kinds of competence:

- **Practical competence:** The demonstrated ability to perform a set of tasks.

- **Foundational competence:** The demonstrated understanding of what people are doing and why.

- **Reflexive competence:** The demonstrated ability to integrate or connect performance with understanding of those performances to learn from actions and to adapt to changes and unforeseen circumstances (Buitendacht, 1997:4).

According to Moore (1997:6) this broader definition of competence leads to **global thinking**. For instance, amongst the competencies listed by a keynote speaker at the World Conference of the World Association of Co-operative Education in Jamaica in 1995 were (Marini in Moore, 1997:6):

- critical thinking and problem-solving;

- self-confidence and adaptability;

- proven ability to work effectively in multi-disciplinary teams;

- communication skills; and

- computer literacy.

All the above are indicative of an emerging global consensus regarding the essential aspects of situations in which learning takes place in the most effective manner. According to Moore (1997:7) these situations are:

- flexibility in the provision of learning opportunities including learner-centred on-

demand learning as opposed to more rigid structured teaching practices;

- the use of the rapidly advancing and expanding communication and information technologies to increase access to learning and to enhance flexibility and the customisation of mass education; and

- partnerships between government, education, business and communities in the provision of world-class learning opportunities for large numbers of people.

Moore expressed this global consensus as a golden triangle and conceptualised it in the following diagram (Moore, 1997:7).

FIGURE 2.1
MOORE'S ILLUSTRATION OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

FLEXIBILITY

LEARNER/
WORKER

PARTNERSHIPS   TECHNOLOGY
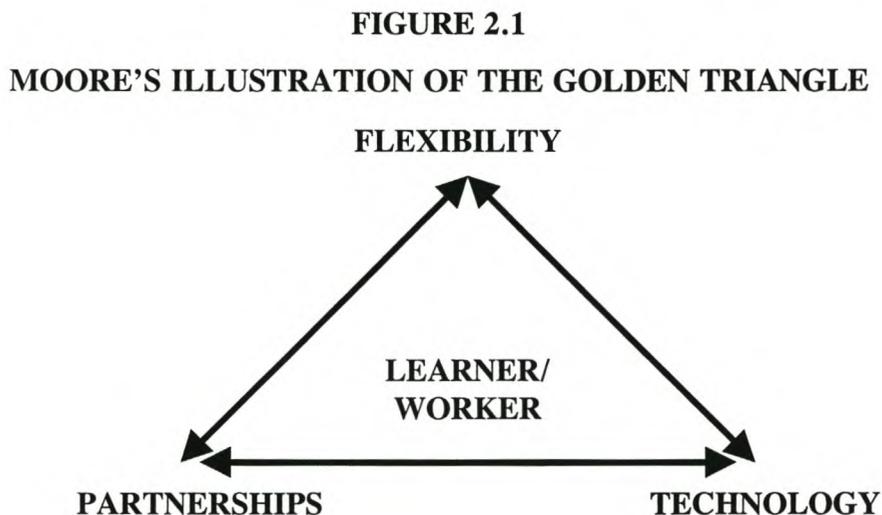
Source: Moore, 1997:7

This **golden triangle** can be applied to a variety of learning situations, including:

- formal education;
- staff development;
- workplace learning;
- lifelong learning for continuous professional development and personal enrichment; and
- non-formal community-based learning.

This golden triangle is specifically important to TSA as it needs to be on the cutting edge of flexibility, partnerships and technology in its attempt to be a world class

distance learning institution. It also supports the technikon principle of co-operative education where learners have the opportunity to put their knowledge and competencies into action through experience with employers in partnership with the institution.

With the South African perspective of learning in mind, it is important to review the concept of continuous professional learning by means of literature.

2.3. A LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The researcher is of the opinion that continuing professional learning refers to a whole range of learning activities/opportunities, such as people development, workplace learning, staff development, on-the-job-training (refer to figure 1.3). It is important to investigate the organisation's responsibility towards the learning and development of staff.

According to Houle (1989:7-13) every professional has a need to be able to carry out his/her duties according to the highest possible standards of character and competence. One way to meet this need is to engage in lifelong study and to achieve their greatest potential. Continuing education must fulfil the promise of its name and be truly continuing - not casual, sporadic or opportunistic. This means essentially that it must be self-directed and each professional must be the ultimate monitor of his/her own learning. Houle (1989:13) further argues that continuing education must be based not only on content-oriented goals of keeping up with the new development; it must also be designed to facilitate changes in life patterns or career lines. Fryer (1997:47) supports this by stating that learning at the workplace will need to accommodate the needs and interests of a variety of stakeholders, including employees, employers, customers, government and providers. It will contribute to competitiveness, skills enhancement, employability and capacity to deal with change.

The researcher supports the view of Thompson in Armstrong, Thompson and Brown

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(1997:2) that a culture of lifelong learning forms the foundation for new models facing radical changes in higher learning institutions. The reasons for this are:

- New knowledge is being required at a greater rate than ever before.
- Advances in technology are accelerating at a rate unimagined ten years ago, and the workforce has to change constantly to keep up to date.

This supports the factors, which contribute to the need for staff development as set out by Kapp (1994:1-2):

- The increasing **diversity of student populations** resulting from more open access to higher education.
- Greater demands for **accountability** from the community and from funding agencies as higher education becomes more expensive.
- The emergence of **performance appraisal** systems which ought to be aimed at improving performance.
- The challenge of **maintaining standards** when quality and excellence is part of an institution's mission and opening access is the policy.
- The increasing number of **part-time staff**.
- More and more **professions** have to, to some degree, become involved in higher education and demand some input in the curriculum. They would also want to know and have evidence that the training/education for their professions is done by **professionals** in a **professional way**.

The researcher posits that TSA has an interesting role to play in continuing professional learning. She refers to Watkins's (1995:3) viewpoint on workplace learning where she sees workplace learning as the largest adult education endeavour which is experiencing high-speed, exponentially escalating changes. The researcher finds this viewpoint very interesting and it opens up a twofold role for TSA regarding continuing professional learning, namely as an organisation and as an open distance learning institution. TSA has a responsibility towards its academic (both full-time and part-time) and support staff, learners, partners, and employers. The people need the competencies and information to be effective and to make an impact on the competitive market in which they are functioning. Both parties will benefit if they have a clear understanding of

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what TSA is and where they fit in with the system - the learners will understand that they are adult learners and should be able to master and demonstrate certain competencies while the staff (both academic and support) will be enabled to offer a better learner-oriented service. The two-fold role of TSA regarding continuing professional learning is explained in a conceptual framework in figure 2.2

FIGURE 2.2

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

VISION

MISSION

REALITY

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INTERVENTIONS (STAFF)

Focusing on specific strategic thrusts

CREATIVE TENSION

LIFELONG LEARNING INTERVEN-TIONS (LEARNERS)

Focusing on specific strategic thrusts

TSA WORLD CLASS FLEXIBLE LEARNING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
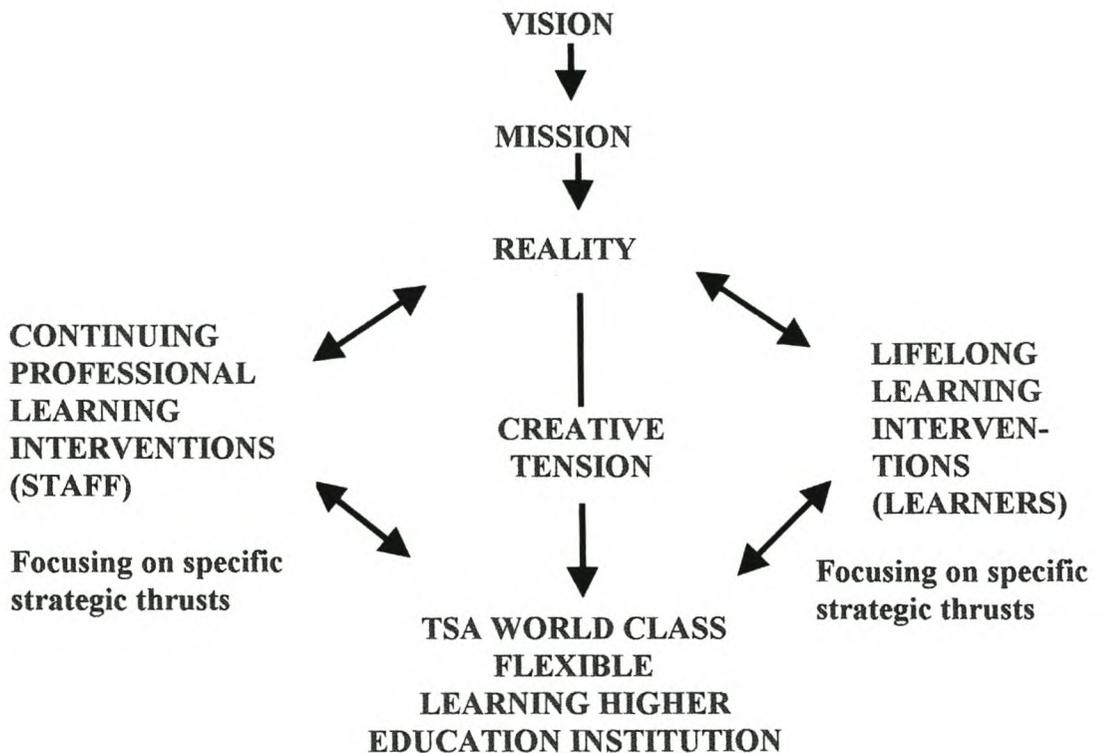
In the next paragraph the focus will be on the need for and the importance of continuing professional learning opportunities for tutors.

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2.4. THE NEED FOR AND IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TUTORS

According to the above literature-based information continuous professional learning opportunities are imperative. As in many organisations the human factor plays a very important role and while TSA is offering a service of learning opportunities to people it is important to have skilled and competent staff (academic and support). The staff can only offer a valuable input if they have support, resources and if they are competent. This leads to role clarification of and change from a traditional lecturer to a facilitator of adult learning. This also has implications for the tutors and their tutoring competencies and in the end effectiveness.

In open and distance learning institutions training and development of tutors are not as easy as it can be at residential institutions – at the latter tutors can obtain information and share experiences on a day-to-day basis. At distance learning institutions tutors do not have the opportunities to meet other tutors/lecturers/tutor managers as they work and live several kilometres away from the institution and/or the regional office. This stresses the important role of the institution in guiding, supporting, monitoring and developing the tutor so that the learner can really benefit from this costly support system (Freeman, 1997:62).

Rowntree (1994:248) is of the opinion that nurturing tutors in an open learning system may almost be as important as nurturing the learners. Just as packaged learning can dehumanise the learners, so too it can also deskill and alienate, or even supplant, the tutors. Peters in Rowntree (1994:249) warns that tutors may be alienated and threatened and this can be passed to the learners. Furthermore, he points out that large-scale distance education has been made possible only by introducing principles and practices, such as mass production of teaching materials, quality control, division of labour and mechanisation (Rowntree, 1994:249).

According to Randell and Bitzer in Latchem and Lockwood (1998:141) the growing awareness of the need to provide *a continuum of educational provision, in which*

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contact, distance, mixed-mode and dual-mode educational opportunities should be available to all learners, calls for a massive re-orientation to more learner-centred provision. Tutors and counsellors need to acquire new learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning and develop their diagnostic problem-solving and interpersonal skills in assisting culturally diverse students.

A tutor is a member of the teams of people who are responsible for the learning process. These teams usually consists of editors, language practitioners, graphic designers, administrative staff and very often the tutor has to take full responsibility while he/she was not involved in all the processes. The fact that so many individuals/team members are involved in the learning process can lead to problems. The institution should take responsibility and provide support for tutors so that they do not feel isolated, frustrated and uncertain. Tutors should have opportunities to learn new skills and maintain the high level of motivation expected of them in what may be an innovative and risky undertaking.

Martinez, Houghton and Krupska (1998:9) captured the following issues of a number of researchers on professional development, which could be applicable to tutor development:

- the complexity, speed, and unexpected or unanticipated nature of many professional tasks and hence the corresponding complexity and wealth of necessary propositional knowledge (*know what*) and the common sense ability to apply that knowledge (*know how*);
- the affective dimensions of learning in general and professional learning in particular;
- the length of time, breadth and depth of experience, and extent of reflection and active learning necessary to develop professional expertise;
- the difficulty of securing significant change in teacher behaviours and teaching methods particularly where these are associated with school improvement strategies or strategies to foster and promote more active student learning;
- the gap between staff development activity and carry over in changes in classroom practice, and the consequent need for sophisticated and complex training methods;

and

- the need for supportive conditions to promote learning in the workplace including:
    - opportunities to work with and learn from others;
    - open communications and a willingness to question assumptions;
    - participative decision-making and shared power and authority; and
    - variety, autonomy and choice in work roles and tasks.

The researcher is of the opinion that the implementation of the ILCDE model stresses the responsibility of the organisation towards continuous professional learning. The ILCDE model is part of progress at TSA and it will only be to the advantage of the staff and the learners if they have a variety of learning opportunities to grow and develop professionally. All tutors should have sufficient knowledge of a specific subject in order to be effective and successful tutors, but very often the tutors have an insufficient knowledge of facilitation of learning by means of tutoring. On the other hand some tutors do come from a school teaching background which can be counter-productive as they often have only been exposed to conventional school teaching methods. This paradigm shift can only be facilitated by means of learning opportunities.

Rowntree (1994:261) argues some colleagues will need a major shift in attitudes if they are to work effectively in their support roles. Examples of some of the attitudes which should change **from**:

- deciding what must be learned **to** helping the learner decide;
- conveying information **to** helping the learner learn;
- acting as the critical and impersonal expert **to** building relationships;
- using assessment in order to decide a grade **to** using assessment in order to help the learner learn (e.g. by written comments);
- face-to-face teaching **to** teaching in writing or on the telephone; and
- putting on a performance **to** nurturing a person.

Freeman (1997:75) also explains that most open learning providers use tutors who

already know their subject well and who are competent face-to-face teachers - tutor development then concentrates on what is new in open learning. These new competencies Freeman (1997:75) refers to are likely to be some combination of the following (depending on the type of open scheme):

- identifying individual learning needs;
- facilitating learning through demonstration and instruction;
- assessing learners' performance;
- maintaining contact with learners between assignments and/or tutorials;
- helping learners to respond to tutor feedback on their work; and
- evaluating and developing own practice.

The basic roles of tutors in the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing are to facilitate learning by means of:

- telephone tutoring to assist and support learners;
- conducting contact sessions; and
- assessing assignments and providing constructive feedback for effective learning.

It is thus very important that the tutors are well briefed and supported, but the tutors will also need knowledge of distance learning and distance learning related tutor competencies to support the learners. Developing these competencies at TSA, as in many open systems, is problematic, because tutoring tend to be part-time and thus not the primary career issue and the tutors are usually widely scattered.

Bearing all of this in mind, it is essential to explain a tutor development strategy facilitated for the tutors of the relevant subject group.

2.5. A TUTOR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Since the implementation of the ILCDE model the lecturers of the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing have been conscious of the important role the tutors play in the TSA structures, the subject group and the learning processes of the learners. Although the tutors were already part of the learning processes, this group of lecturers

realised that the training offered by TSA is insufficient. Consequently the researcher, assisted by a colleague, planned and facilitated a learningshop for all the relevant subject group tutors appointed for the registration period May 1998 to May 1999.

2.5.1 The purpose of the learningshop

The purpose of this learningshop was to:

- give guidance in facilitating adult learning effectively with the new learning material;
- stimulate new thinking frameworks for adult learning facilitators in Police Management and Leadership; and
- focus on general tutoring competencies.

2.5.2 The learning outcomes of the learningshop

The expected learning outcomes of the learningshop were to:

- enable and empower tutors to facilitate adult learning in the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing;
- have a shared vision towards learning in the subject; and
- establish open communication channels and a relationship of commitment and support.

2.5.3 The process

The researcher, assisted by a colleague, planned facilitated and evaluated the learningshop which is conceptualised in figure 2.3.

FIGURE 2.3

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FACILITATION PROCESS

TRANSFER OF LEARNING

New needs

Needs analysis

Evaluating

Marketing the programme

Planning for follow-up and application

Learning outcomes

New needs

Developing learning plan

Selecting media

Preparing assessment/evaluation

Arranging facilities

Selecting content and delivery methods

Preparing material to facilitate learning

New needs

Offering planned learning experiences

New needs

TRANSFER OF LEARNING

A summary of some of the steps that were followed during the process:

(a) A **needs analysis** was the first step. A questionnaire was sent to all the tutors who expressed the need to have the following areas addressed in the learningshop:

- Knowledge of adult learning principles and the adult learner
- Methods for facilitation of learning
- Clarification of the role of the tutor, i.e.
    - telephone tutoring;
    - conducting contact sessions; and

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- assessing assignments and providing feedback.

(b) **Marketing** the programme and **arranging facilities**. The learningshop was held at TSA's Conference Centre and it was a one and a half day session.

(c) Developing a **learning plan** in order to address the needs of the tutors and to structure the facilitation process.

(d) **Preparing material** to facilitate learning. All participants received a file with relevant learning materials.

(e) **Selecting content and delivery methods**. During the session the facilitators tried to facilitate learning by means of experiential, active and co-operative learning. The facilitators made use of different strategies, such as discussions, case studies, role-plays and presentations.

(f) **Evaluation/assessment methods**. The facilitators used different strategies, such as rainbow evaluation, reflection, mind maps, ideas log and evaluation forms.

(g) Planning for **follow-up and application**.

The planning of the follow-up sessions and application of the knowledge gained at the learningshop was the starting point of this study. The facilitators realised that the impact of this learning process had to be evaluated as this should determine the effectiveness of the learningshop and other learning needs which were not addressed. In the following paragraph the importance of evaluation of a tutor system will be discussed.

2.6. THE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION OF STAFF (TUTOR) DEVELOPMENT IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Evaluation is always imperative in managing any process effectively and therefore it is important to review the role of evaluation in the tutor system.

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2.6.1 The importance of evaluation

Thorpe (1990:5) defines evaluation as the collection, analysis and interpretation of information about any aspect of a programme of education and training, as part of a recognised process of judging its effectiveness, its efficiency and any other outcomes it may have. The researcher supports Thorpe's (1990:4) viewpoint on the **need for evaluation** in open learning. According to Thorpe (1990:4) evaluation of open learning is needed, because:

- as with the provision of learning opportunities, it is necessary to find out whether the means used have achieved their goal, and to prevent the danger of taking for granted assumptions about their effectiveness;
- it is integral to the improvement of quality in open learning which is still very much in the research and developmental phase;
- it has an important developmental role, not only for the quality of the learners' experience, but for the competence of practitioners and the programmes and courses offered by the organisations;
- it contributes towards an understanding of how people learn and in particular how to help adults learn while fulfilling other social and work roles for which they are responsible; and
- it is an important mechanism for effective programme implementation and management and may be required by external bodies and clients.

Lewis & Freeman (1994:100) summarised the **reasons for evaluation** as Rowntree sees it. Evaluation has to:

- find out what learning took place;
- find out what else happened;
- improve the materials;
- improve the teaching/facilitation;
- monitor the tutor performance;
- use resources better; and
- disarm criticism.

According to Freeman (1997:130) the choice of method for evaluating staff development is a difficult and technical issue. He identified the following requirements of the evaluation process:

- Evaluation must include measuring the outcomes against the original learning objectives or the original learning need.

- Wherever possible, agree with the learner (tutor) how the evaluation will be done.

- Wherever possible, ask the learner (tutor) to produce evidence of what he/she has learnt – this both involves the learners (tutors) in the evaluation process and is a powerful piece of reflective learning in its own right.

- Make sure that the evaluation process can detect unplanned outcomes from the development – both desirable and undesirable ones.

- Make sure that the evaluation is recorded in writing and signed by both parties.

- Consider the implications of the acquisition of skills and knowledge, i.e. are the team's systems and methods able to respond and adjust to the development?

2.6.2 An evaluation strategy

It is important to have an evaluation strategy. The evaluation process should be a continuous process on different levels. The facilitators divided the evaluation into three stages:

(a) The participants completed an **evaluation form** at the end of the learningshop. See annexure A for an example of the evaluation form.

(b) **Critical reflection** between the facilitators and in the subject group. In the reflection the subject group focussed on three questions as explained in table 2.1:

TABLE 2.1

CRITICAL REFLECTION OF THE LEARNINGSHOP

What did we do right?	What did we do wrong?	What can we do to improve in future?

• We created a safe and informal learning environment.
• Positive attitudes (lecturers and tutors).
• Commitment and support.
• Integration and holistic view.
• Learning from each other.
• Active learning.
• Useful handouts.
• Good planning of learning-shop and accommodation and travelling arrange-ments.
	• Time allocation.
	• More time spent on discussion of new textbook.
	• Not enough reference to:
	  * experiential learning
	  * co-operative learning
	  * active learning
	  * experience and application
	• Formal presentations on different levels by our lecturers were not very effective.
		• Pro-active planning of dates (2 day session).
		
		• More focus on the explanation of:
		  * experiential learning
		  * co-operative learning
		  * active learning
		  * experience and application
		• Groupwork.

After the critical reflection in the subject group a **reflection letter** was sent to each tutor as the lecturers feel it is important to have **open communication channels** between themselves and the tutors as well as between the tutors. A reflection letter was also sent to the programme group management, subject groups and tutor managers to facilitate them in assisting the subject group in the transfer of learning process and also with the evaluation process.

(c) **Impact evaluation** by attending contact sessions and co-facilitating these sessions.

It was decided that an **impact evaluation** should be done in a continuous manner:

- the lecturers monitor assignments assessed by the tutors; and
- the contact sessions will also be evaluated/co-facilitated by the researcher.

The main purpose of evaluating the tutors' performance after the learningshop is mainly measurement of achievement of the aims of the learningshop and to explore any unintended factors and needs of the tutors as facilitators of adult learning. The lecturers want to motivate the tutors by giving them a feeling of belonging to TSA, the programme group and the subject group for their interest as well as for a more effective tutoring process. Lastly, this evaluation is regarded as very important as this learningshop was a costly exercise for the programme group. The analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the interviews with the tutors and the observation sessions of the contact sessions will be explained in chapter 5.

2.7. REVIEW

This chapter examines a description of the South African perspective on learning, which focused on Sertec, the Skills Development Bill and Moore's golden triangle, that includes flexibility, technology and partnerships. It also includes a literature review on continuing professional learning and an explanation of the need for and importance of continuing professional learning for tutors. Furthermore, a detailed discussion on a tutor development strategy, which was the starting point for this study, is included. Finally, the importance of evaluation of staff (tutor) development in open and distance learning is discussed. In the next chapter a comparative review of three distance learning institutions will be explained.

CHAPTER 3

COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF TUTOR SYSTEMS AT THREE DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

While the purpose of this study is to investigate the learning needs of tutors of one subject group of TSA the researcher is of the opinion that it is important to have knowledge and understanding of the structures in which the tutors are functioning. In this chapter the researcher gives an outline of the structures at Technikon Southern Africa as well as the new vision and mission statements and the outcomes and demands of these new vision and mission statements.

The researcher reviewed the structures and procedures of two other distance learning institutions, i.e. the Open University (OU) IN THE United Kingdom and the University of South Africa (UNISA). The focus will be on these two institutions since they can respectively be regarded as good European and South African examples of open and distance learning institutions.

3.2. TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA AS AN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTION

3.2.1 Background

Technikon Southern Africa began as Technikon RSA (Technikon of the Republic of South Africa) in Braamfontein (Johannesburg) 19 years ago. In 1980 there were only 4000 students and a staff of 22 lecturers. By 1989, when the Technikon moved to the Florida campus (current campus), learner enrolment had reached 19 215.

In August 1993, the Technikon launched its identity with a new name, Technikon Southern Africa (TSA). This transformation process did not only manifest itself in a change of name, it also included new vision and mission statements which made provision for distance learning, rather than correspondence education. Technikon SA is currently the largest institute for career-related tertiary education in Southern Africa, and aims to serve learners throughout Southern and sub-Saharan Africa, and wherever in the world there is a need for its courses. TSA sees itself as a market leader in the application of cost-effective learner-centred distance education, which offers co-operative education, which means that the Technikon, in consultation with a particular industry, develops its programmes. Since TSA primarily uses the written word as medium of instruction, learners do not have to leave home to study, nor do they have to travel or be absent from work. TSA believes that the learners should have a total learning experience and this is provided by quality courseware through a decentralised delivery system and a tutoring system.

3.2.2 New vision and mission statements and statement of intent

A vision needs to give an organisation a clear idea/image of how things can be, what it should strive for and the knowledge that it is achievable. The mission on the other hand, should provide direction for the organisational objectives, goals and functions. The

vision and mission statements of TSA are reflected in figures 3.1 and 3.2 respectively:

FIGURE 3.1

VISION STATEMENT OF TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

Vision

TSA strives to be a world-class flexible learning higher education institution responsive to human development needs in Southern Africa.

Source: Technikon SA/26 November 1998/http://www.trsa.ac.za/campus/ aboutmis.

FIGURE 3.2

MISSION STATEMENT OF TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

Mission

TSA is a career-focused co-operative distance learning institution within a flexible higher learning system that will in collaboration with its partners:

- *provide broad-based affordable access to quality flexible learning opportunities to lifelong learners*
- *use appropriate technology effectively for open and distance learning courseware delivery and service provision*
- *engage in research and community research programmes*
- *play a transformative role in higher education in South Africa*
- *provide decentralised learner support systems*

Source: Technikon SA/26 November 1998/http://www.trsa.ac.za/campus/ aboutmis.

TSA's statement of intent reflects its commitment to what the White Paper on Higher Education calls for in 1997.

FIGURE 3.3

TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

STATEMENT OF INTENT

We are committed to socio-political change and a democracy recognising the rights of individuals in our country.

We are committed to playing a leading role in the transformation of education by addressing the imbalances created by an inequitable dispensation.

We are committed to providing student-centred distance education opportunities, primarily at tertiary level, in keeping with market requirements.

Our role in education, research and community service will be characterised by:

- *Education which is accessible, contextually relevant, legitimate and career-centred, liberating the full potential for personal growth of our student clients*
- *Applied research which is aimed at the prevention and solution of problems*
- *Community service which creates an empowering and enabling environment.*

We recognise all our staff as our greatest asset. We apply this principle by creating a climate of equity and tolerance, and by implementing affirmative action and opportunities for professional development.

We recognise human worth and growth and are committed to developing our students primarily by means of tertiary education technology, enabling them to compete effectively in the marketplace.

Source: Technikon SA/26 November 1998/http://www.trsa.ac.za/campus/

aboutmis.

3.2.3 Current structures within Technikon Southern Africa

TSA was urged to change its teaching methods with the change from the traditional correspondence institution to an open distance learning institution. In this paragraph the new thinking framework and its run-up to the tutor system as well as TSA programmes and structures are described.

(a) A rigid system versus an enabling framework

As TSA is striving to be *a world-class flexible learning higher education institution,* it also had to change its teaching method/method of transferring learning and had to transform from a rigid system to an integrated learning system. Moore (1996:9&14) proposed a new thinking paradigm and this new thinking framework implied changes in:

- the role of the institution;
- the role of the individual academic, and
- the teaching/learning paradigm.

The differences in the relatively rigid system and the new enabling framework is explained in table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1
COMPARISON BETWEEN A RIGID SYSTEM AND AN ENABLING FRAMEWORK

FROM A RELATIVELY RIGID SYSTEM	TO AN ENABLING FRAMEWORK
The role of the institution	
• absolute institutional autonomy	• mutual trust and support
• direct institutional control of all aspects of teaching and learning	• trust in partners
• institutional isolation	• partnerships

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The role of the individual academic	
• individuality	• valued member of the team
• tenure as the norm	• negotiated flexible employment practices
• technologically wary	• technology wise
• personal standards	• accepted external quality benchmarks
• lecturing	• facilitating learning
The teaching learning paradigm	
• lecturer centred	• learner centred
• rote learning	• understanding reflective learning
• content	• competence
• dependent learning	• independent learning
• *chalk and talk*	• technology enhanced learning
• a single lifetime qualification	• lifelong learning
• rigid instructional packages	• flexible learning opportunities

Source: Moore, 1996:10

These changes implied a totally new teaching method within the distance learning infrastructure of TSA. One of the integral changes was the implementation of the Integrated Learner-Centred Distance Education (ILCDE) model (refer to chapter 1, par.6.5) in 1994. With this model, TSA really started to define its role as a flexible distance learning institution, because this model should offer a greater variety of learning opportunities to corporate clients and learners (Moore, 1996:10). This model put TSA on the way to open learning and lead the way to the implementation of the decentralising process and the tutor system. Amongst other advantages this model comprises:

- modularised courses;
- new evaluation methods;
- integrated courseware packages; and
- integrated learner support encompassing part-time academic tutors and learning centres.

The decentralising process also implied the establishment of regional offices in different regions/parts of the country and as part of this process the tutor system was implemented. The implementation of the tutor system is an attempt to take the distance out of distance

learning by appointing tutors who can assist the learners in their learning processes. Technikon SA's 13 regional offices and 9 branch offices throughout South Africa, as well as its 236 examination centres, bring the institution closer to its learners. The main library and information centre (Florida), in collaboration with approximately 250 libraries countywide, are also working towards learner support. The libraries and information centre have recommended books and other learning material that learners can use in the learning process.

(b)   Technikon SA's programmes

TSA consists of four divisions:

- Public Safety and Criminal Justice
- Economics and Management Sciences
- Applied Community Sciences
- Applied Natural Sciences and Engineering

These divisions consist of 16 different Programme Groups, which again consist of different subject groups as set out in table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2

THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMME GROUPS OF TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

• Accounting	• Information Technology
• Applied Communication	• Law
• Applied Natural Sciences	• Logistics Management
• Business Management	• Marketing
• Correctional Services	• Police Practice
• Education, Training and Development	• Public Management and Development
• Engineering	• Real Estate and Economics
• Human Resource Management	• Security Management

Source: Technikon SA/26 November 1998/http://www.trsa.ac.za/sindex.htm.

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A National Senior Certificate or a recognised equivalent qualification is required for admission to a nationally recognised programme. TSA caters for the different needs of everyone, everywhere. Qualifications range from National Certificates, National Diplomas, BTech, MTech and DTech degrees. TSA also instituted a three-cycle registration system to make the learning programmes more flexible for the learners.

3.3 A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON A TUTOR SYSTEM - THE OPEN UNIVERSITY (OU) IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

3.3.1 Background

During the 1960's Government leaders and educationalists of the UK became concerned about the numbers of adults who could have benefited from a university education, but who had *missed out* for various reasons or for whom the conventional universities were inappropriate. The establishers of the OU originally came with the idea of a University of the Air where television and radio would have been used as the main teaching medium. Further discussions lead them to the combination of media, i.e. correspondence text, tutorials, practical work and discussion groups in addition to radio and television. The idea of anyone, irrespective of previous educational, work or social experience should be able to study at a university level was developed here and these notions came together in the Open University (Regional Centre Staff Handbook, 1995:2).

Lord Crowther became the first Chancellor of the Open University in 1969 and in his inaugural address he described the Open University as being open *as to people,... as to places, ... as to methods,... and... to ideas*. Since its foundation in 1969, the Open University has become one of the great success stories of the United Kingdom higher education system (Open University, 1998).

3.3.2 The Open University's tutor system

The Open University is based at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes and consists of thirteen Regional Centres in the United Kingdom (UK) which between them manage 290 study centres and employ over 7,700 associate lecturers. The OU was established to provide degree studies for part-time students. It embodies the belief that access to higher education and training should be available to all, whatever their circumstances, so that each person has an equal opportunity to realise their full potential (Open University, 1998).

The following aspects describe the core of the OU:

- The OU is the UK's biggest university with 23 percent of all part-time higher education students in the UK and offers approximately 250 courses.

- The OU offers courses, teaching and research provided by five Faculties (Arts, Mathematics and Computing, Science, Social Sciences and Technology), three Schools (Education, Health and Social Welfare, and Management) and the Centre for Modern Languages.

- In 1997, the OU had a central and regional academic staff of 900 of whom 60 held professional appointments. The OU is both a teaching and a research university. Research students are both part-time and full-time (the only full-time students are research students).

- The OU is a European and world-wide university, with students registered in 23 countries. It provides direct teaching and support to undergraduate and postgraduate students in other European Union (EU) member states (and elsewhere in Europe), and, through local partners in Central and Eastern Europe, delivers courses in business and management in these areas. A growing OU degree programme is offered in Singapore and some courses are now presented world-wide via the Internet.

Most OU study programmes, - including undergraduate study programmes leading to BA and BSc degrees - is open to everyone over the age of eighteen. No qualifications are needed for admission to most courses, but entry qualifications are required for higher

degrees, and for most professional studies, including the Postgraduate certificate in Education (Open University, 1998).

The delivery of teaching to the OU learner relies on an academic partnership between the Faculties and Schools at the headquarters in Milton Keynes and the Regional Centres. Each Regional Centre is headed by a Regional Director and depending on the size of the region, there may be as many as eighty full-time staff. They include staff tutors and other academics representing faculties and schools in the regions, senior counsellors, administrators and secretarial and clerical staff. The staff at headquarters is mainly responsible for the production of course material, while the regional staff have to relate these materials to the circumstances and needs of the learners in their locality. The staff at the regional centres is thus responsible for organising the tutorial, counselling and support services.

Every new undergraduate learner is assigned to a local tutor counsellor for the first year's study in order to support inexperienced adult learners. After this foundation year the learners are assigned to specialist tutors appropriate to their courses.

3.4 A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON A TUTOR SYSTEM - THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (UNISA)

3.4.1 Background

The University of South Africa (UNISA) was established in 1873 as the University of the Cape of Good Hope. In 1916 its name was changed to the University of South Africa. Under its auspices several colleges became autonomous universities.

Over fifty years ago, in 1946, UNISA pioneered tertiary distance education in the western world, a move, which heralded the beginning of UNISA as we know it today. Distance education provides a unique opportunity to all who wish to further their studies and who

cannot attend residential institutions because of personal circumstances or occupational obligations.

UNISA is located in Pretoria, and its impressive campus on Muckleneuk Ridge is a major landmark of the capital city. It has provincial centres in Cape Town, Durban, Pietersburg, Nelspruit and Umtata and learning centres in a number of provinces.

3.4.2 UNISA's tutor system

UNISA offers internationally recognised certificate, diploma and degree courses up to doctoral level in six faculties: Arts, Economic and Management Sciences, Law, Science, Education and Theology and Religious Studies. UNISA is constantly reappraising itself and improving its study material and teaching methods to meet the needs of its students. UNISA has established a network of learning centres and study centres located in certain community-based facilities.

A tutorial support programme is offered at the different learning centres. This is done by linking the students with well-trained tutors, who support and complement the learning material by means of one-hour tutorial sessions per week. This tutorial support programme is integrated into the overall academic work of the different academic departments. Learners who are registered for first and second year courses are advised to enrol at a learning centre at a minimal fee.

The University is also utilising the latest technology and recently launched the first phase of its Students-On-Line service on the Internet. This service enables students who have access to the Internet to communicate with their lecturers and fellow students via electronic mail. It also provides controlled access to students' personal and assignment information and the library catalogue. The increasing number of research publications issued by the University mirrors UNISA'S contribution to research. Links are being forged with the international community of scholars (University of South Africa/3 March 1999/http//www.unisa.ac.za/general/index.htm.).

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3.5 A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE TUTOR SYSTEMS OF TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE OPEN UNIVERSITY AND UNISA

In the following table the researcher attempts to determine the effectiveness of the tutor system in the three institutions by focussing on the following aspects:

- Aims of the tutor system
- Roles and competencies of tutors
- Recruitment and appointment processes
- Induction, training and development of tutors

TABLE 3.3

A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE TUTOR SYSTEMS AT TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE OPEN UNIVERSITY AND UNISA

	TECHNIKON SA	OPEN UNIVERSITY	UNISA
Aims of the tutor system	TSA has implemented the tutor system to support its learners and to overcome the barrier of learner isolation, which is commonly experienced by learners involved in distance learning. The tutor is a subject specialist and the purpose of the tutor is to: • facilitate the learning process of learners by offering a direct, personal and subject-related learner support service; • develop the employ-ability and non-subject	The delivery of teaching to the OU learner relies on an academic partnership. Entry to the OU is open, and thus offers the student population a range of ability, academic back-ground and study circum-stances. The OU meets both the teaching and counselling needs of individual students through a network of full-time and part-time staff working in the regions. The standard OU teaching model is a combination of high-quality learning	The philosophy of UNISA's tutorial system could be captured in one word: Heurism. Heurism describes something where growth arises out of exploring. In a way projects, which grow heuristically, are perfect companions to the University system - which exists to promote and to foster the tradition of open and critical thinking (Oosthuizen, 1998:1). The **main function of the tutorials** would be to relieve the anxiety of the

	skills of learners; and • interact with learners to ensure their retention as learners and to motivate them to achieve success. The tutor is a subject specialist jointly chosen by the subject group/lecturers (at main campus). Tutors are appointed as close as possible to the learners to render appropriate, effective and efficient support services to TSA's diverse audience in order to achieve academic advancement through learner support.	materials and personal learning support provided by associate lecturers (tutors) or tutor-counsellors. Learners study in their own time, drawing on the range of teaching and supporting options available. This includes: • correspondence teaching • face-to-face group teaching • telephone teaching/tutoring • computer conferencing	distance learner, when faced with a learning difficulty and to facilitate comprehension. **The tutor's main function** is to assist the learner over the many bottlenecks and hurdles he/she encounters when attempting to explicate material for themselves. Flexibility is the key to the UNISA Tutorial Support System. It must contain within itself the capacity to adapt to local conditions, which are the needs of its learners in a particular locality. For this reason it should take into account the diversity of individual needs originating, inter alia from different cultural backgrounds (Oosthuizen, 1998:1).
Roles and competencies of tutors	**Roles** The tutor has to fulfil three roles, namely: • Telephone tutoring • Conducting contact sessions • Assessing assignments and providing feedback. The tutor represents the lecturer in the region and he/she:	Each year the University recruits associate lecturers and they may be engaged in the role of **tutor** or **tutor-counsellor.** **Roles** The **tutor** has to fulfil the following roles: • provide correspondence tuition, assessing students' work according to given	**Roles** The roles of the tutors are threefold, namely: • Subject/course facilitation • Counselling • Administrative As subject specialists, tutors help learners in a variety of ways to understand their course material to acquire the knowledge, skills and

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• helps the learners with academic and other subject specific problems; • will in most cases assess the learner's assignments and give feedback on the assignments to enable the learners to improve their work; • is available to help the learner telephonically at specified hours; • should be able to offer advice on study methods and study skills; • helps the learners to form study groups in different areas; • conducts contact sessions where problems, regarding the subject matter can be discussed. **Competencies** The tutor should have: • a professional qualification in a specific subject area; • knowledge of the adult learner; • the ability to motivate the adult learner; • effective and appropriate	marking schemes and giving written feedback to help them in their learning; • provide tuition in person and at a distance; • help students to be effective learners and to understand and benefit from the different elements of the University's teaching system; • monitor the study progress of students, including contacting students who do not submit the first tutor-marked assignments, and authorising late submission of assignments as appropriate; • evaluate individual student needs for additional support; and • contribute to evaluation of the course design and presentation. (Open University, 1998:15) The additional duties of a **tutor-counsellor** are to: • identify study needs of new students by initial individual contact; • help students to prepare for attendance at any	attitudes necessary in their fields of study. The tutor's role in face-to-face tutorials is **facilitative** and entails encouraging dialogue between tutors and learners, among learners, and between learners and the academic and administrative structures of UNISA. In this **facilitative** role, the tutor, in con-junction with and guided by the expectations of the respective academic depart-ments, complements the learning material by: • developing confidence on the part of learners to interact with the learning material so as to develop skills which will enable them to learn independently; • assisting learners to interact with and understand the key issues and problematic sections of the course as well as the overall themes; and • encouraging learner participation in tutorials, through the formation of study groups and appreciation of the value thereof.

communication skills;

- the ability to facilitate learning by means of telephone tutoring, personal contact and giving constructive and meaningful feedback in assignments;
- the ability to work with diverse groups of learners; and
- the ability to support learners with their study needs and problems.

residential schools and examinations;

- give general advice on future course choice; and
- provide a personal point of contact for students previously allocated for counselling, by offering general advice and support at the request of students.

(Open University, 1998:15)

Competencies

The OU has developed a generic person specification for associate lecturers and according to that a **tutor** should have:

- a degree or the equivalent, or a professional or vocational qualification in an appropriate subject area;
- an appreciation of how adults learn;
- the ability and willingness to promote the learning of adults through correspondence, telephone and face-to-face tuition;
- the ability to work with students from diverse educational, cultural and work backgrounds;

Counselling role

The counselling role focuses on the identification of more general problems of learners, by exploring ways of solving these problems, and by assisting learners to develop the necessary learning skills which will make them autonomous. Ideally, this role should be an extension of the counselling services provided by the Student Services Bureau.

Administrative role

The administrative role of tutors is to ensure the efficient delivery and monitoring of tutorial support through up-to-date and correct record keeping, and through communication with learners. This involves liaison with the Learning Centre staff, with the central administration and with academic departments in:

- organising the tutorial group;
- confirming of tutorial times;
- monitoring student attendance and ensuring that the tutorial attendance

| | | | • a commitment to learner-centred learning;

 • an understanding of and commitment to equal opportunities policies and practices;

 • an organised and systematic approach to work;

 • the potential for working successfully in a team and the potential for working independently;

 • good written and oral communication skills;

 • a commitment to personal staff development;

 • availability and accessibility to students; and

 • ability to travel to designated centres.

 (Open University, 1998:13).

 In addition, **tutor-counsellors** must have:

 • the potential to develop basic counselling skills;

 • a broad appreciation of study skills.

 (Open University, 1998:13). | register has been collected and signed by students;

 • endorsing the tutorial attendance schedule by signing and dating it;

 • facilitating tutor payment by completing the tutor register.

 (Ngengebule, 1998:55-56)

 Competencies

 The tutor should (Oosthuizen, 1998:22-31):

 • be well qualified in the subject which (s)he tutors; hence a basic degree and/or a post-graduate qualification in the particular field is a prerequisite;

 • have a sound knowledge of the course content, and of the didactic processes and academic expectations upon which the material is based;

 • display good communication skills;

 • knowledge of the characteristics of the adult learner;

 • knowledge of the special characteristics of the distance learner;

 • knowledge of the distance learner in a |

			social context;
			• be able to secure a niche in the academic environment; and
			• be committed to preparing adequately so that the tutorials are well structured, and are well delivered in the available time prescribed. The bottom line is that the tutor must, through the tutorials, empower learners to be independent and autonomous learners.
Recruit-ment and appoint-ment processes	TSA employs a collaborative approach to the employment of tutors. The stakeholders involved in the process are lecturers, tutor managers, human resources representatives, unions and the student representative council. • Advertisements are placed in public media. • Applicants send their applications and CV's to the regional offices. • These CV's are forwarded to the Human Resources department at main campus in Florida where they are sorted and sent to the relevant programme groups for	The selection and appointment of associate lecturers take place in the regions, although the recruitment campaign itself is initiated from the OU's headquarters in Milton Keynes. The OU developed a guide for the appointment of tutorial and counselling staff and assistant staff tutors and assistant senior counsellors because the OU needs to: • identify the best people available for the tutoring and counselling of its learners. • follow fair and effective procedures in making these choices; • find efficient ways of	The tutor co-ordinator of each Learning Centre recruits tutors by: • contacting the various academic departments at UNISA, and requesting the names of suitable candidates who possess Honours degrees, or who are reading for their Masters' or Doctoral degrees; • placing advertisements in the local newspapers; • word of mouth; • liaising with other tertiary institutions. Academic departments are, therefore, not only requested to supply the

	screening and shortlisting purposes according to qualifications and experiences in the subject groups. • These shortlisted summaries are sent to the tutor managers at the different regional offices to arrange interviews. • After completion of the contracts the successful applicants are appointed as part-time employees of TSA.	handling a task which is becoming increasingly demanding; • enhance its accountability as employers, and follow equality assurance procedures in the staffing area; • develop realistic and defensible ways of coping with complex recruitment situations. This guide is a working document to help regional colleagues to make better and fairer appointments (Guide, 1994:2). This guide also represents good law practices as it is written according to the principles set in the Labour Law.	Tutorial Co-ordinator with names of prospective candidates, where possible, but are also expected to approve the appointment of candidates who are to be employed as tutors. The overall decision regarding the employment of tutors rests with the academic departments concerned. This ensures that the local tutors and facilitators (where applicable) are an extension of the academic function of departments. The administration of the process is handled by the Department of Student Support. The tutors are employed as part-time employees of UNISA. The tenure of the employment is renewable on an annual basis, extending from mid-February to mid-October.
Induction, training and develop-ment	Currently the Department: Technikon Teaching is responsible for training and enabling the tutor managers to offer an induction course and **generic training** to tutors. The generic training entails training in administrative procedures and expectations at a local level by tutor managers.	The OU offers initial induction and regular opportunities for continuing development thereafter. Staff development comprises the full range of activities, contacts and resources that help all tutorial and counselling staff to develop their understanding, abilities and	**Tutor induction** Before commencing with the presentation of tutorials, tutors need to be inducted by the Learning Centre Coordinator concerning the functioning of the Learning Centre. Tutor induction entails the following: • General orientation

| Tutors are supposed to receive training within a period of two months after their contracts have been signed.

In these training sessions tutor managers should:

• establish a lifelong learning environment for tutors;
• clarify the role of tutors as facilitators of adult learning;
• explain the administration procedures; and
• explain an understanding of the environment in which the tutors find themselves, i.e. an open/ flexible, distance learning environment.

The lecturers of the different programme groups are responsible for **subject specific training**, which includes:

• clarification of the facilitative role that the academic department expects the tutors to play when conducting contact sessions;
• explanation of the various sections/ modules, which make | skills so as to undertake their OU roles effectively. The staff development **policy** aims to:

• ensure that tutorial and counselling staff are competent in their OU roles;
• encourage tutorial and counselling staff to become reflective learners striving for continuous improvement;
• assist tutorial and counselling staff to fulfil their potential and thus to increase their job satisfaction;
• provide appropriate support for tutorial and counselling staff; and
• ensure the quality of services to OU students in so far as these depend on tutorial and counselling staff.

Principles

• Staff development is a continuing process for all staff.
• Feedback from tutorial and counselling staff on their needs and experiences should inform the planning of staff development. | • Tutor agreement
• Class visits
• Self-evaluation
• Student study skills workshops
• Counselling
• Links with lecturers in Academic departments

(Student Support Services – an information manual, 1996:27)

A training strategy

A training strategy is important to bring together the three major roles of the tutor.

Course content

• Course expectations, as outlined by academic departments.
• Assessment processes and procedures.
• Communication lines.
• Delivery strategies.
• Needs assessments, implementation strategies, monitoring and the evaluation of tutor performance.
• Administrative processes related to course delivery.

It is important to stress the role of teaching departments in working out concrete strategies to deal with the above-mentioned. |

	up the course, the objectives, methodology used and intended learning outcomes; • overview of content of the learning material and related materials; • basic understanding of subject-related terminology; and • explanation of the assessment strategies, rules and regulations, such as assignment due dates, weight of assessed assignments, feedback on assignments that is expected from the tutors, exam preparation, etc. Tutors are remunerated when attending generic and/or subject specific training sessions. TSA does not have a monitoring process for tutor performance or an evaluation programme for staff development in place.	• The staff development offered, provides a model for the variety of approaches and media used by tutors and counsellors to help learners to learn. • The **evaluation** of staff development in terms of individual performance, of regional plans and of resources expended is essential to effective staff development. **Responsibilities for staff development** • The OU has a **policy** of staff development of which the main implementation is delegated to the thirteen regions. • Each Regional Centre has a group of staff with a particular interest in staff development and is called the **Staff Development Working Group**. This group includes representatives of Associate Lecturers in the region and the regional staff involved with staff development. The	Lecturers or course leaders will have to take responsibility for this part of tutor training. **Counselling strategies** The following aspects should be emphasised: • Identifying and addressing learning problems. • Identifying the psychological issues, which are affecting a learner's study programme, and referring learners for specialist assistance. • Identifying the broad environmental issues affecting learners' studies. **Tutoring skills (Facilitating learning through active student engagement)** A tutor must be provided with skills to help students learn their material effectively, while at the same time assisting them to develop confidence and the necessary skills so that they are able to learn autonomously and independently (Student Support Services – an information manual, 1996:29-31). **Evaluation processes and**

		group is responsible for planning, resourcing and evaluating staff development in each region. The group reports to the Student, Tutor and Counsellor Support Sub-Committee and hence to the Regional Committee. • Line Managers are re-sponsible for ensuring that both the initial and the continuing staff development available to each member of the tutorial and counselling staff meet their needs. • Tutorial and Counselling Staff have a key responsibility for their own staff development. For continuing staff the OU undertakes to provide: • ongoing support; • a range of opportunities for staff development, • opportunities for staff to identify and provide feedback on their staff development needs; • opportunities for tutorial and counselling staff to contribute their expertise and	**procedures** Evaluation is viewed as a quality assurance mechanism and is done on two levels, namely formative and summative. • Formative – class visits. • Summative – forms part of the annual academic cycle (at the end of an academic year) and leads to recommendations for reappointment of tutors. It also helps learning centres to make more effective operational and administrative plans for delivery of tutorial programmes (Ngengebule, 1998: 19-20).

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		experience; and • study centre or day school visits, for support and feedback. **Tutorial and counselling staff responsibility** Each continuing member should: • make use of the above as best fits his/her own needs; • request staff development to meet any needs not being adequately met by discussing this with relevant full time staff; • contribute to the evaluation of staff development. **Orientation of new tutorial and counselling staff** • Briefing in adult education to be able to support open learning. • The member of staff has a contractual obligation to participate in staff development, as the University has to provide it. • Staff new to a course or to a role receives a payment for participation in a programme of staff	

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		development. For all staff who are new to the OU, within their two-year probationary period, the Region undertakes to provide all or most of the following: • A meeting held before the start of the first academic year. • A course-based briefing. • A package of staff development materials, together with a range of regional materials. • Visit(s) to the study centre or day school with the purpose of providing feedback and support. • Opportunities to review progress and to discuss future needs. • A mentor to provide advice, confirmation and support. • Formal acknowledge-ment when probation has been successfully completed.	

3.6   FINDINGS OF THE COMPARATIVE REVIEW

3.6.1   Aims of the tutor system

According to research the distance education learner has an imperative need for close contact with the University and its lecturers. The research also shows that distance learners feel strongly about their isolation and the estranging effect of distance teaching, and that they would greatly appreciate contact with other persons or groups with similar needs and problems. Many other affective needs came to light, for example the lack of and/or maintenance of intrinsic motivation, role discontinuity, role diffusion and tension, academic anxiety and fears, identity crises and identity confusion. There is a serious lack of self-knowledge, and therefore a great need for guidance concerning correct subject and career choices (Oosthuizen, 1998:3).

Oosthuizen (1998:3) states that a tutor system for distance learning should be aimed at:
- establishing contact between lecturer and learner by means of tutors;
- accompanying learners through their tutorial matter, particularly with a view to dealing with problem areas;
- instituting affective accompaniment; and
- accompanying learners towards becoming independent, autonomous learners.

In presenting the aims of the three institutions, it is clear that the aims of all three institutions correspond with the aims identified in research/literature and needs of distance learners. TSA's ILCDE model implies a decentralised process with regional offices where tutors are appointed to support learners with integrated courseware packages. The OU has thirteen regional centres with various study centres where associate lecturers are available to support learners. UNISA has provincial centres as well as learning centres where tutors are available to assist learners. At both TSA and OU the tutor support is included in the fees, while at UNISA learners have to register and pay a specific fee to participate in the learning centre activities. UNISA has two

processes in place, namely the tutorial support system and the lecturing systems. These two systems are not the same and are not competing. The Student Support System enables learners, who are registered for first and/or second year courses, to enrol at a learning centre where they will receive one-hour tutorial sessions per week over a period of 30 weeks. The discussion classes are part of the academic process and take place once or twice a year and are facilitated by the lecturers.

3.6.2   Roles and competencies of tutors

According to Kember and Murphy in Oosthuizen (1998, 4-8) the tutor is an indispensable link between the teaching institution and its learners. The role of the tutor should therefore focus on:

- Knowledge of the distance learner's specific situation
- Evaluating assignments
- Presenting group classes/tutorials
- Telephonic guidance/counselling
- Telephonic/video tutorials
- Course evaluation
- Learner advice services
- Accompaniment towards becoming independent learners

Oosthuizen (1998:14-16) identified the following competencies involved in supporting distance education learners:

- Induction, which includes introducing the learner to the course and assisting the effectiveness of learning.
- Tuition, which includes course content, group tutorials to enhance learning and helping learners to learn.
- Assessment, which includes self-assessment activities and tutor-marked assignments.
- Record-keeping.

The roles of the tutors/associate lecturers of TSA and the OU are similar, but at UNISA the major role of the tutor is to conduct contact sessions. The competencies required of the tutors/associate lecturers are more or less the same. Both the OU and UNISA have clearly described roles and competencies for tutors, which should simplify and facilitate the recruitment and appointment procedures.

3.6.3   Recruitment and appointment procedures

All three institutions have a clear description of the procedures that should be followed in recruiting and appointing tutors/associate lecturers. The OU has developed a guide/working document to assist them to be consistent and effective in the recruitment and appointment procedures. TSA can learn from both these two institutions, as it seems that although the procedures are set out clearly there is still a lack of consistency and effectiveness in its recruitment and appointment procedures. All three institutions recruit the tutors/associate lecturers as part-time staff, which implies that training and development opportunities should be facilitated.

3.6.4   Induction, training and development of tutors

Regarding this issue, TSA can learn from OU and UNISA as these two institutions have clear strategies and processes for the induction, training and development of their tutors/associate lecturers. In the processes of the OU and UNISA it is clear that induction of tutors play an important role and that it should be done before tutors commence with their tasks. At TSA there seems to be a co-ordinating problem as each programme group is responsible for the subject-specific training for tutors and the managing of this process, while in the regions each tutor manager is responsible for tutor training and development. Currently, there is no clear and shared tutor development plan in TSA.

The OU and UNISA also have clear evaluation programmes of their tutor performance/staff development programmes, which currently do not exist in TSA.

3.7   CONCLUSIONS

It seems that all three institutions are basically following the same principles. It seems, however, that at both the OU and UNISA clearly explained processes and procedures are implemented and although TSA implemented its ILCDE model three years ago, it is still struggling to implement and manage the tutor system successfully.

While reviewing the tutor systems of the three institutions, the researcher came to the following conclusions:

- TSA should learn from the successes and failures of specifically the OU and UNISA as well as other institutions.
- TSA should benchmark its systems against other successful systems and learn from others.
- TSA can utilise the Colisa partnership with UNISA to its advantage and overcome many stumbling blocks in implementing its tutor system effectively.
- TSA should work on clear procedures and strategies to appoint, develop and evaluate the tutors in order to ensure quality learner support.
- TSA needs to create opportunities for its tutors to participate in processes to assess and address their learning needs.

3.8.   REVIEW

In this chapter the researcher gave an outline of three open and distance learning institutions and focussed specifically on the tutor systems of each of these institutions. This outline included discussions on the background of each of the three institutions and brief explanations of the structures of the tutor systems of each of these institutions. A comparative review was done in table format and four categories were reviewed. These categories are the aims of the tutor system, the roles and competencies of tutors, the recruitment and appointment processes and the induction, training and development of tutors.

In the next chapter the researcher will give a detailed description of the research methodology and design used for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the focus will be on the research design and methodology used in this study.   The researcher will explain and describe the aim of the research, the data collection methods, data analysis, reliability and validity of the study, limitations and delimitation of the study and ethical considerations.

4.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used a qualitative research approach and focussed on ethnographic techniques. Ethnographic techniques are the methods researchers use to uncover the social order and meaning a setting or situation has for the people actually participating in it (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:104). Ethnography can also be regarded as an account that interprets the data within a sociocultural framework (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:107).

According to Mouton (1996:174) a research design is an exposition or plan of how the researcher plans to structure the research problem that has been formulated. In this study the researcher investigates and analyses the learning needs of the tutors of the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing.

The researcher followed a qualitative approach with a combination of exploratory and descriptive strategies, but also included a comparative review.

- **Exploratory**, because it includes an overview of the existing tutor system, investigates learning needs and identifies shortcomings. This type of strategy is usually focused on the gathering of insight, comprehension and gathering of accurate data (Mouton and Marais, 1992:45).

- **Descriptive**, because it includes facts that describe the establishment/realisation of the tutor system and the current role of the tutor in the system.

- **Comparative literature review**, because the researcher wants to support her findings and recommendations with both a European and a South African perspective. This lead to a description of the tutor systems of TSA, the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom and UNISA in South Africa.

4.3   SAMPLING METHOD

A sample is a strategically and systematically identified group of people or events that meets the criterion of representativeness for a particular study (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:57). Mouton (1996:134) describes a research population as a collection or set of elements of various kinds. These populations can include populations of:

- individual human beings;
- organisations;
- institutions;
- collectives;
- social activities or events;
- cultural objects; and
- interventions.

For the purpose of this study the subjects under study are individual human beings, i.e. tutors of the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing appointed for the registration period May 1998 - May 1999. The study was carried out in the different regions of TSA and the sample consisted of 18 tutors of different racial groups.

4.4   DATA COLLECTION

As this study has an ethnographic nature the researcher used ethnographic techniques to collect data. The process of data collection involved two methods, namely interviewing and participative observation. The researcher specifically used these methods since interviewing usually follows, or is integrated with partcipant observation in ethnographic research (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:106).

The researcher obtained data by means of interviews with and participative observation of tutors in contact sessions as well as official documents and discussions/interviews with relevant people involved in the ILCDE-model/tutor system of TSA. In the following paragraphs the researcher elaborates on the participative observation and the interviews.

4.4.1   Participative observation

According to Mouton and Marais (1992:166) participative observation can be described as the process whereby the researcher links the reality with its theoretical presumptions. This technique can be used for comprehensive investigation of events/behaviours/skills in their natural setting (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:165).

The researcher attended contact sessions conducted by tutors to observe the actions of the participants. The facilitation skills of the tutors of the Subject Group: Management Leadership: Policing were observed during the contact sessions. In practice it is impossible to describe/include all the components of the learning needs of tutors in one research project. Therefore a checklist was used to document and itemise events/behaviours/skills. One of the most basic ways to collect data is by counting how many times something occurs (Sanger, 1996:52) and this can be done by asking the questions why and what (e.g. why is this so and what are the consequences?). According to Sanger (1996:53) checklists are usually straightforward and relatively unambiguous as they give an indication of the basic structure of events, but they do not indicate the

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quality of those events.

Participant observation provides certain unusual opportunities for collecting data, but it also involves major problems. The most distinctive opportunity is related to the researcher's ability to gain access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation. The major problems related to participant observation revolve around the subjectivity and the potential biases produced. Therefore the same checklist was used for all observation opportunities and the data gained was indicated on a checklist and hard copies were filed.

The researcher was concerned about the discrepancies in the research, but Ronty in Sanger (1996:51) is of the opinion that researchers *should not worry too much over the discrepancies between research reconstructions and the realities. Rather, the issue lies within the power of these reconstructions to act as catalysts, or changing individuals' patterns of engagement with the reality.* According to Sanger (1996:51) the significance of the research lies within its power to enrich debate, challenge our suppositions, or try new forms of action. Thus it is that details of working practices, whether they are in the form of tick sheets or narrative accounts, that tend to be pored over animatedly by the workers, themselves.

The checklist was a guide in the observation process and included a list of elements/components, which are regarded as important for the facilitation of the learning process. The test sample for this study was compiled by collecting information on important aspects in the facilitation of a learning process during the first opportunity, that is the first contact session that was fundamental to the participative observation process and which impacted on the rest (refer to annexure B for an example of the checklist).

In the following paragraph the role of the researcher in the observation sessions is explained.

(a)   The role of the researcher in the contact sessions

Junker in Merriam and Simpson (1995:105) describes four variations of participative observation as a research method:

- complete participant;
- participant as observer;
- observer as participant; and
- complete observer.

Use of this technique requires the observer to take the role, at least partially, of a participant. In this study the researcher had the opportunity to participate in the contact sessions and she took the role of co-facilitator. She was thus a participant as observer while observing the tutor's actions/skills.

4.4.2   Interviews

Dexter in Merriam and Simpson (1995:106) refers to an interview as a conversation with a purpose and it can be used for the assessment of facts, attitudes and opinions from research participants (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:164). Benny and Hughes in Ferreira, Mouton, Puth, Schurink and Schurink (1988:136) see interviewing as more than a tool and object of study. It is the art of sociological sociability, the game we play for pleasure of savoring its subtleties. It is our flirtation with life, our eternal affair, played hard and to win, but played with that detachment and amusement which gives us win or lose, the spirit to rise up and interview again and again. Guba and Lincoln in Merriam and Simpson (1995:106) is of the opinion that the ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilising their value and belief frameworks, is virtually impossible without face-to-face and verbal interaction with them.

Interviews have two major types of formats (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:150), namely structured and unstructured. In this study the structured interview was used. The main

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reason for choosing this format is that a relatively large number of tutors, in different regions and over a short period of time, had to be interviewed - both personal and telephone interviews were conducted. The questions were based on the experiences, needs, insights and opinions of the participants as tutors. The interview questions were open-ended and by using an open-ended format, investigators hope to avoid predetermining the subjects' responses and, hence, their *views* of reality (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:106).

Although interviews should be considered as verbal reports, they are subject to problems of bias, poor recall and poor or inaccurate articulation. This is one reason for using participative observation to corroborate interview data with other sources. The same questions were asked to all the tutors who were interviewed (personally and telephonically) in an attempt to be consistent. 18 of the 27 tutors, who have been appointed in the Subject Group, participated in this study - 3 tutors have been interviewed telephonically and 15 personally. For all the personal interviews the researcher ensured:

- a quiet place in order to create an informal, relaxed and tranquil atmosphere;
- that all the required resources, i.e. paper, pens, tape recorder, batteries and tapes were available;
- that all the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis; and
- that appointments/arrangements with the tutors were made in advance.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted, audiotaped and transcribed for this study. Hard copies of the transcribed interviews are filed (refer to annexure C for an example of the questions asked in the interviews).

4.5 LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

The researcher is conscious of the fact that the methods she used are limited in some

ways, but on the other hand they also have advantages. She summarised these limitations and advantages relevant to this study in tables 4.1 and 4.2.

TABLE 4.1

LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATIVE OBSERVATION

LIMITATIONS	ADVANTAGES
• A time-consuming method. • The researcher cannot manipulate events and has to wait for important issues, central to the study, to happen. • While the participative researcher is part of the group's activity he/she can find it difficult to be objective. • It can be experienced too personally. • The influence of the researcher's presence as a participant may result in limited/inauthentic responses. • The lack of training and experience of the researcher may influence the effectiveness of this method.	• The findings of participative observation can be combined with information from interviews to produce qualitative data. • Participants may be encouraged to respond more naturally in greater depth. • This method gives the researcher the opportunity to be actively involved in the investigation/process. • Checklist data can easily be coded and analysed.

TABLE 4.2

LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF INTERVIEWS

LIMITATIONS	ADVANTAGES
• A time-consuming method. • A lack of skilled and experienced interviewers may influence the effectiveness of the method/investigation.	• Structured interviews can increase the consistency from one interview to another. • Data can be compared later and can easily be coded and analysed.

• Structured interviews do not offer the opportunity to explore **all** possibilities.	• The structured interview can become an extension of the schedule of questions. Clarification, restatement and explanation are all available for use in eliciting responses from participants (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:150).
• Note-taking may result in missed information and influence the validity of the interview results.	
• Some research participants (tutors) may be sensitive to electronic recording devices.	• Data of interviews and the results of participative observation can compliment or compromise each other. Interviews are also helpful when the chance for observation is limited.
• The direct interaction of the researcher can be a disadvantage.	• Interviews will ensure direct interaction between the researcher and the participants. The interaction also gives the researcher the opportunity to assess non verbal communication of the participants/tutors.
	• This method is adaptable.

In the next section the method used to analyse the data is explained briefly.

4.6   DATA ANALYSIS

According to Mouton (1996:168) qualitative analysis focuses on:

- understanding rather than explaining social actions and events within their particular settings and contexts;
- remaining true to the natural setting of the actors and the concepts they use to describe and understand themselves;
- constructing, with regard to the social world, stories, accounts and *theories* that retain the internal meaning and coherence of the social phenomenon rather breaking it up

into its constituent *components*; and

- contextually valid accounts of social life rather than formally generalisable explanations.

Because of this emphasis on the integrated, meaningful and contextual nature of social phenomena, qualitative researchers have had to develop new methods and strategies of *analysing*, *interpreting* and *understanding* the social world (Mouton, 1996:168). Some of these approaches are:

- the grounded theory approach;
- analytic induction;
- phase induction;
- phenomenological analysis;
- discourse analysis; and
- conversation analysis.

In qualitative research, the investigator usually works with a wealth of rich, descriptive data, collected through methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing and document analysis. This implies a focus on the individual case in its specific context of meanings and significance. Analysis in these cases means reconstructing the inherent significant structures and the self-understanding of individuals by staying close to the subject. This approach is known as the insider perspective. The overall coherence and meaning of the data is more important than the specific meanings of its parts (Mouton, 1996:169).

According to Morse in Denzin and Lincoln (1994:231) the qualitative report must be a convincing argument, systematically presenting data to support the researcher's case and to refute alternative explanations. Morse (1994:231) further argues that there are two main approaches to qualitative articles/reports, namely:

- to write the article as though the reader is solving the puzzle with the researcher, and
- to present a summary of the major findings and then present the findings that support the conclusion.

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In this study the researcher attempted to present summaries of the interviews as well as the participative observation sessions. The interview questions were clustered in four categories and the corresponding answers were integrated by means of colour coding. The researcher worked through the data on the checklists of the participative observation session and noted tendencies, shortcomings and concerns.

4.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THIS STUDY

The researcher realised that the trustworthiness of the findings of this study is dependent upon the validity and reliability of the study and tried to implement methods to make the findings valid and reliable.

4.7.1 Reliability

According to Mouton (1996:144) reliability is the requirement that the application of a valid measuring instrument to different groups under different sets of circumstances should lead to the same observations. Consistency is thus a key aspect of reliability.

Merriam and Simpson (1995:102) ask the question of the extent to which one's findings will be found again. One of the problems in this study is that human beings were used as subjects and human behaviour is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one person experiences (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:102). The researcher tried to be consistent in collecting data by using the same checklist and posing the same questions in the interviews.

The researcher believes that the way in which the data was collected is reliable as the same checklist was used in all the contact sessions and the same questions were posed to all the tutors who were interviewed. The approach in all the interviews and contact sessions was informal and all the participants were informed about the aim and purpose of the interview.

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4.7.2 Validity

Validity is an epistemic criterion, which means that it is a quality of the elements (data, hypotheses, theories and methods) of knowledge (Mouton, 1996:109). Mouton (1996:110) also stresses that a number of methodological criteria ought to be followed during the process of data collection. These include suspension of personal prejudices and biases, systematic and accurate recording of the observations, establishment of trust and rapport with the interviewee and creating optimal conditions in terms of location or setting for the collection of the data.

Merriam and Simpson (1995:101) distinguish between internal and external validity. To determine **internal validity** the following question should be asked:
How congruent are one's findings with reality?
In qualitative research individuals construct this reality because the researcher gives an interpretation of somebody else's interpretation. In this study the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in the form of interviews and observations which means that the researcher is closer to reality than if an instrument had been interjected between the researcher and the researched. For this reason internal validity is considered a strength in this study (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:101).

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995:102-103) **external validity** does not refer to the extent to which findings can be generalised to other situations, but to the extent to which findings from an investigation can be applied to other situations. The people in those situations determine this and it is not up to the researcher to speculate how findings can be applied to other settings. Mouton (1996:112) identifies the following dimensions of invalidity or error:

- conceptual vagueness;
- measurement error;
- biased samples;
- unreliable data; and
- invalid conclusions.

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The researcher believes that some of the above errors could influence the validity of the study, as the interview questions could be vague.

4.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995:195) research in applied fields such as adult education and human resource development nearly always involves collecting data from human beings. Thus, issues of informed consent, privacy, deception and protection are important concerns regardless of the design of the study.

Merriam and Simpson (1995:194) also give guidelines for dealing with the competing values, that centre around protecting participants from harm, preserving their right to privacy, making sure that their consent to participate is informed, and eliminating or minimising deception. In this regard the researcher informed each participant, that is each tutor, about the purpose of the research and she made arrangements for the interviews and observation sessions in advance.

Participant observation has its own ethical problems. Diener and Crandall in Merriam and Simpson (1995:196) recommend the following safeguards for ethical problems:
- deceive as little as possible;
- enter private spheres with the research goals;
- plan procedures that absolutely guarantee subject anonymity; and
- review the potential influences of the observer on the group.

Compared to observation, interviews seem to have fewer ethical problems *as they afford the participants more control in that they can refuse to answer troublesome questions* (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:197). In this regard the researcher used structured interviews where she asked all the tutors the same questions and the questions merely gave the participants/interviewees opportunities to share their own experiences, expertise, opinions and concerns.

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The possibility for unethical behaviour in qualitative data analysis is great if the researcher does not have a moral obligation to minimise the possibility of error by checking and rechecking the validity of the data and the conclusions that are drawn from the data (Jackson in Merriam and Simpson, 1995:199).

4.9   DELIMITATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The researcher is aware of the delimitation of this study and is aware of the limitations that may have an influence on the findings of this study.

4.9.1   Delimitation

The study is confined to the tutors of one subject group of one specific Programme Group, namely the tutors appointed in the Subject Group: Management Leadership Policing for the registration period May 1998 – May 1999.

4.9.2   Limitations

The following limitations of this study should be recognised:
- TSA is only one of the many distance learning institutions in South Africa;
- the majority of the learners of the Programme Group and the tutors are primarily from the South African Police Services (SAPS). The fact that this is just one organisation with its own inherent culture and subcultures, can have an influence on the findings;
- structured interviews were conducted and thus all the opportunities that had arisen could not be explored;
- the researcher took notes during the interviews which could have distracted her;
- the researcher took the role as observer and co-facilitator which could lead to

subjectivity;

- the researcher's inexperience as an interviewer and observer may have an influence on the findings of the study;
- the fact that in many cases no learners attended the contact sessions and only a few participants' skills/performance could be observed; and
- the lack of diversity in the test sample who participated in this study.

4.10 REVIEW

This chapter gives a detailed description of the research, the strategies used by the researcher and the research design. The researcher also describes the methods used to collect the data – this description includes the limitations and disadvantages of both the interviews and participative observation. She explains the methods she used to collect and analyse the data for this study as well as the validity and reliability of this study. A brief discussion on ethical considerations is included as this was taken into account throughout the study. Finally she focussed on the delimitation and limitations which can have an influence on the findings of the study.

In the next chapter the researcher analyses and interprets the data for this study.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The central theme of this study is the functioning of the tutors of a specific subject group within the broader tutor system of TSA in order to determine whether the tutors have need(s) for professional learning opportunities and if so, what kind of learning opportunities. The emphasis of this chapter will be on the analysis of the data obtained through interviews with the tutors and observation of the tutors' performance in contact sessions.

The researcher analyses the interview data in a descriptive manner in table format according to different themes and subthemes. The observation data is also explained in a descriptive manner according to the different components of the checklist (annexure B) that was used during the observation sessions. In the interpretation of the data the researcher points out comparisons and differences between the responses of the participants. She also identifies possible problem areas and addresses them by means of critical questions.

5.2 A SUMMARY OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATION SESSIONS

Table 5.1 is a summary of the participants who were interviewed and whose performance were observed in the contact sessions. The table also indicates the regional offices from where the participants operate.

TABLE 5.1
SUMMARY OF THE PARTICIPANTS WHO WERE INTERVIEWED AND/OR OBSERVED

TUTOR	REGIONAL OFFICE	INTERVIEW	OBSERVATION
A	Middelburg	Personal	No learners
B	Nelspruit	Personal	No learners
C	Pretoria	Telephone	No contact session
D	Florida	Personal	Contact session
E	Pietersburg	Telephone	No contact session
F	Pietersburg	Telephone	No contact session
G	Durban	Personal	No learners
H	Ulundi	Personal	No learners
I	Cape Town	Personal	Contact session
J	Cape Town	Personal	Contact session
K	Port Elizabeth	Personal	Contact session
L	Umtata	Personal	Contact session
M	Mmabatho	Personal	Contact session
N	Kimberley	Personal	Contact session
O	Kroonstad	Personal	Contact session
P	Bloemfontein	Personal	No learners
Q	Bloemfontein	Personal	No learners
R	Florida	Personal	No learners

5.3 FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEW DATA

Three participants were interviewed telephonically while 15 interviews were conducted personally. Table 5.2 contains the 12 questions that were posed to the participants during the interviews:

TABLE 5.2

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you apply for the tutor post?

2. Where did you find out about this post?

3. How did you experience the interview/appointment procedures?

4. Did you receive a job description?

5. Did you know what was expected of you as a tutor when you first started?

6. Did you have any training and development/learning needs when you started initially?

7. Did you receive and kind of generic (excluding subject specific) training as a tutor?

8. Did you find the learningshop valuable?

9. What are your current training and development needs?

10. Do you have knowledge about:

   - Cognitive levels

   - Learning styles

   - Group dynamics

   - Other

11. How important is evaluation? How do you evaluate yourself and the learners?

12. General problems and recommendations for improvement?

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These twelve questions were clustered into four themes and in some cases subthemes:

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                        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                        │  Applications and appointment of the tutor │
                        │           (Questions 1-5)                  │
                        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                        │   Training and development needs          │
                        │           (Questions 6-10)                │
  ┌────────────┐        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
  │            │
  │  THEMES    │        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
  │            │        │  Evaluation of learners and self evaluation │
  └────────────┘        │           (Question 11)                   │
                        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                        │  Academic and administrative problems     │
                        │   experienced by the participants         │
                        │           (Question 12)                   │
                        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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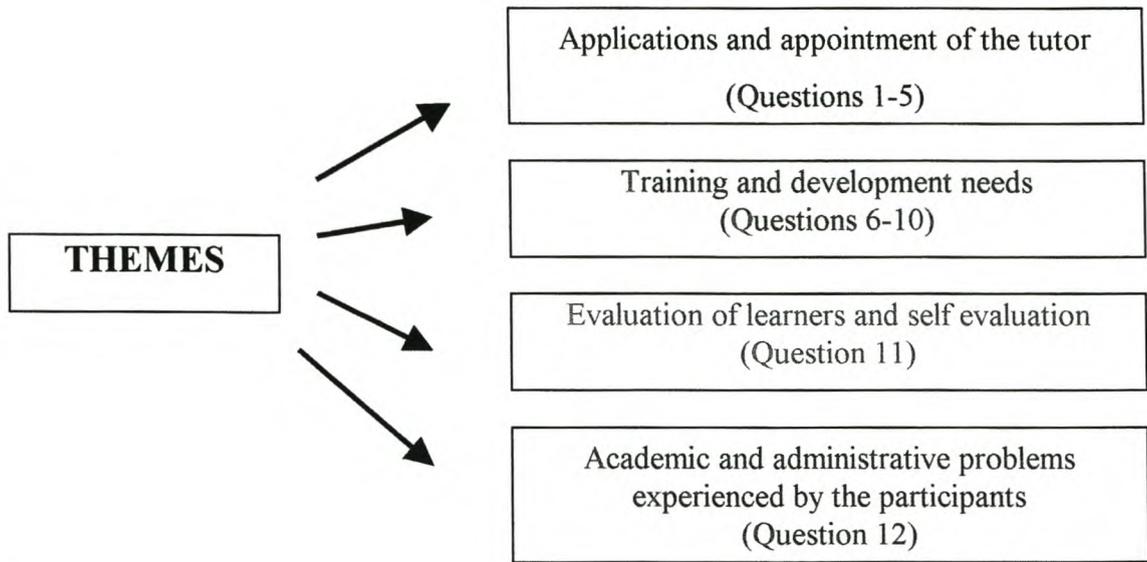
The responses of the participants to the interview questions are reflected in table 5.3.

TABLE 5.3

THE RESPONSES TO THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THEMES	SUBTHEMES AND RESPONSES
Application and appointment of the tutor	**Question 1 – Application** • The participants shared a number of reasons for applying for the tutor post. The participants felt that the tutor post would provide opportunities for: ▪ self–development; ▪ broadening own perspectives and knowledge; ▪ keeping up to date with the new trends; ▪ enhancing own learning; ▪ sharing knowledge with learners; ▪ motivating learners; and ▪ assisting learners.

	- 3 Participants claimed that the financial benefit is important. - 1 Participant responded: *I applied because I was a tutor for many years.*
	Question 2 – Source of information for the post The purpose of this question was to determine how the participants came to know about the post. - 7 Participants saw the advertisement in local newspapers and 6 in national newspapers. - 3 Participants were informed by a lecturer/friend and 1 participant got the information at the regional office. - 1 participant responded that he was asked to apply for the post.

	Question 3 – Interview and appointment procedures
	- 7 Participants felt that the **interviews** were done professionally. Some interviews were described as formal and others informal.
	- 5 Participants described their interviews as an interesting/positive experience and conveyed the following reasons:
	    ▪ General information and an explanation of the process was provided.
	    ▪ Relevant questions about the SAPS were posed.
	    ▪ There were only women on the panel.
	- 1 Participant claimed that a large panel interviewed him, and in another region 1 participant claimed that only the tutor manager interviewed him.
	- 4 participants were dissatisfied with the **appointment proce-dures** and the following problems were raised:
	    ▪ *I was uncertain about the tutor functions and contract*
	    ▪ *I did not get feedback after the interview and suddenly I had to start tutoring.*
	    ▪ *I was confused, as I had to complete two or three contracts.*
	- 2 participants claimed that they were not interviewed. 1 of these participants *only had to submit a curriculum vitae.*

	• 1 tutor was unsure and *just wanted the learning experience.* • 1 participant mentioned his satisfaction with the administrative system at the regional office.
	Question 4 – Job description • 16 participants claimed that they did not receive a job description. However, 12 of these participants assumed that the functions and tasks stipulated in the 1998 contract served as a job description. • 2 participants indicated that they received (vague) job descriptions from the regional office. • 3 participants felt it is very important to have a clear job description for reasons of professionalism and possible disciplinary actions.

	Question 5 – Clear expectations
	
	• 8 participants supplied a number of reasons for answering no to this question:
	
	   ▪ *I only had an idea of tutoring.*
	
	   ▪ *Everything was a surprise. I also think that the tutors and tutor managers have different perceptions of the role and functions of tutors.*
	
	   ▪ *I had a perception of tutoring, but I was not sure that it was the same as the organisation's.*
	
	   ▪ *Initially I felt that the lecturers did not want the tutors to be part of the process.*
	
	• 6 participants responded in the affirmative:
	
	   ▪ 2 attended workshops based on administrative procedures.
	
	   ▪ 2 claimed that the process was explained during the interview.
	
	• 1 participant asked questions during the interview to clarify some issues.
	
	• 3 participants did not respond to this question.

Training and development needs	**Question 6 – Initial training and development/learning needs**

	• 8 participants answered yes to this question and outlined the following needs:
	
	  ▪ *facilitation of learning;*
	
	  ▪ *I had a need to know more about the institution, its structures and procedures. I also felt that an orientation program would have been helpful;*
	
	  ▪ *I was not sure what my role as a tutor was and what the organisation expected of me;*
	
	  ▪ *I needed guidance on my role as a tutor and skills to facilitate learning. I did not have experience in training;*
	
	  ▪ *the role of the tutor;*
	
	  ▪ *marking of assignments;*
	
	  ▪ *I wanted a clear picture of what is expected of me as a tutor; and*
	
	  ▪ *I had no experience in training (or any educational knowledge).*
	    I had no idea where to start and what to do and I did not get any help regarding this.
	
	• 5 participants responded negatively to this question and conveyed the following reasons:
	
	  ▪ *I had experience as a part-time lecturer at a university; and*
	
	  ▪ *I had experience in training.*
	
	• 5 participants did not answer yes or no to this question, but made the following interesting comments:
	
	  ▪ *I had knowledge of the subject and the fact that a lecturer facilitated the first contact session helped me a lot.*
	
	  ▪ *The first contact session was chaotic, but I think I was competent to help the learners.*
	
	  ▪ *Initially I felt that the tutors did not get guidance from the*

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		lecturers. • *It would have been easier it the roles and functions of the tutor were clarified when I started – my own experience of distance learning made it easier.* • *The new prescribed book lead to a need for guidance.*
		Question 7 – Generic training • 15 participants did not receive generic tutor training. 5 of these participants received tutor manuals and 6 attended sessions/workshops/discussions on the administrative procedures of the process. • 3 participants claimed that they did receive generic training. • 9 participants felt that this type of training is very important for tutors and can be very helpful to new tutors specifically.

		Question 8 – Value of the learningshop
		
		All the participants were invited to the learningshop as discussed in chapter 4. Only one of the participants did not attend.
		
		• All (17) the participants found the learningshop to be valuable for a number of reasons:
		  ▪ the importance of facilitation of learning;
		  ▪ rainbow evaluation;
		  ▪ strategies and methods used in the learningshop;
		  ▪ adult learning principles;
		  ▪ group dynamics;
		  ▪ role play;
		  ▪ communication with learners;
		  ▪ the importance of networking with and interaction of the tutors;
		  ▪ sharing of and listening to experiences;
		  ▪ needs of the learners addressed;

		- recognising the human aspect in the learning process; - appreciation of adult learners and what they can bring to the learning situation; - it strengthened the confidence of the tutors; - it was an effective orientation course, and - it showed the whole picture – it should have been done at an earlier stage. - 1 participant indicated that the *tutors do not need skills on such a high level*.

		Question 9 – Current training and development needs
		
		- 6 participants responded that they do not have any training and development needs, while 3 participants indicated that their needs were addressed in the learningshop.
		
		- 9 participants shared the following needs:
		   - guidance on the new prescribed book;
		   - the needs of the black adult learner;
		   - alternative assessment;
		   - marking of assignments;
		   - learning styles;
		   - motivation of learners;
		   - conducting contact sessions; and
		   - discussions on assignments.
		
		- 1 participant felt that he has the skills to assist learners and to address their needs.

		Question 10 – Specific knowledge - 10 participants indicated that they have knowledge of these aspects; - 7 participants felt that all these aspects are important and that workshops/sessions will be helpful, and - 1 participant did not respond to this question.

Evaluation of learners and self evaluation	**Question 11 – The importance of evaluation** • 14 participants felt that evaluation plays a very important role. According to them evaluation can: 　▪ be an indication of the successes and failures of the tutor; 　▪ provide feedback from learners that can be helpful; 　▪ be used to set standards; 　▪ be a tool to manage the process; 　▪ help in determining the achievement of goals; and 　▪ assist in self-evaluation of the tutors. • 3 Participants ask learners to complete the standard evaluation form after each contact session. • 2 Participants do not use the standard evaluation form and according to 1 participant, *the learners tend not to give negative comments on these forms.* • 1 participant was not sure what should be evaluated – *the tutor's performance or the learners' success? What are the criteria?* • 3 participants did not respond to this question.
Academic and administrative problems experienced by the participants	**Question 12 – General problems/concerns** • The participants identified the following **administrative problems**: 　▪ confusion with contracts; 　▪ cellphone numbers given to learners; 　▪ three subjects in one contact session (Level III); 　▪ lack of resources at venues where contact sessions should be conducted; 　▪ too much paperwork; 　▪ learners receive the information on contact sessions too late; 　▪ tutors do not receive learning material to assist the learners; 　▪ bad service delivery at the regional offices; 　▪ marketing of the tutor system seems to be ineffective; and

	• no or late payment.
	• The participants identified the following **academic related problems**:
	▪ low attendance at contact sessions - it could be lack of interest or motivation on the learners side;
	▪ the new textbook can be difficult; and
	▪ sometimes lecturers do not respond to messages.

5.4 FINDINGS OF THE OBSERVATION DATA

The researcher made use of a checklist to assist in observing the behaviour/ skills/performance of the participants during the contact sessions. Five components are highlighted in the checklist and each component has subheadings. The participants, who were observed, were exposed to almost all the components during the learningshop (explained in chapter 4). The purpose of the observation was to evaluate to which extent the participants could apply the new ideas and strategies shared in the learningshop in the tutoring process.

Many practical problems were experienced in attempts to attend the contact sessions:
- As late as October 1998 no dates for contact sessions were arranged between the tutors, the tutor managers and the learners.
- In 6 cases and for various reasons learners did not attend the contact sessions and the performance of the tutors could not be observed.
- In some regions there was overlapping of contact sessions and the researcher could thus not visit all the tutors.
- At some sessions learners arrived so late that they could not gain anything from the sessions.

The researcher visited 15 participants, which provided opportunities for observation during 8 sessions. In 7 regions no learners attended the sessions and in all the cases the participants waited for one hour. Most of the contact sessions were conducted on

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Saturday mornings, but according to the needs in some regions, the contact sessions were conducted during the week (late afternoons/evenings). The duration of the contact sessions varied between 2-3 hours.

Table 5.3 reflects the components and findings of the checklist:

TABLE 5.4

FINDINGS OF THE OBSERVATION SESSIONS

A. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- *Welcoming/Introduction*
- *Icebreaker/Energizer*
- *Needs//Goals/Expectations (Learners)*
- *Goals/Expectations (Facilitator)*
- *Continuation of session*
- *Conclusion – follow-up contact session*

- None of the 8 participants made use of icebreakers and energizers.

- Participants welcomed the learners and 1 participant introduced the researcher as the facilitator of the session (he was unprepared as he assumed that it is the purpose of the researcher's visit).

- Only 2 participants established the learner's needs/goals/expectations and 6 participants shared their goals/expectations with the learners. 2 participants did not touch on these aspects.

- None of the participants discussed the continuation of the session and only 2 participants negotiated with the learners about a follow-up contact session.

B. PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS

- *Groupwork:*   *Small groups*

                       Large group
- *Group dynamics*
- *Reflective learning*
- *Experiential learning*
- *Interaction*

- In two sessions only one learner attended the sessions and both participants worked on an individual basis with these learners. The rest of the participants made use of small groups.
- In 2 sessions the participants did not give the learners opportunities to interact and share their experiences. Both these participants lectured and shared their own experiences.
- In the sessions where small groups were used, it was not clear that the participants were aware of the importance of group dynamics in these situations.

C. FACILITATION SKILLS

- *Preparation*
- *Knowledge of subject/content*
- *Use of resources*
- *Strategies*
- *Stimulation of:*   *Learning*

                       Thinking skills
- ***Skills:***   *Listening*

                   Communication

                   Motivation

                   Guidance

                   Feedback

- 4 participants came prepared to the sessions, but 4 participants claimed that they could not prepare, as they did not know the needs of the learners. None of these participants determined the needs of the learners at the beginning of their sessions – they focussed on the assignment questions and the learners seemed to be satisfied.

- It is clear that the participants have knowledge of the subject and some of them do have a wealth of experience in the SAPS.

- In 6 sessions the venues had flipcharts available and the participants could have arranged for overhead projectors or other aids. No other resources were utilised.

- None of the participants used any other method/strategy other than lecturing – although they made it clear that they were facilitating the process. All these participants were exposed to different strategies implemented at the learningshop and learning materials on different methods/strategies were handed out at the learningshop.

- All the participants tried to stimulate learning – 2 participants did ask questions and gave opportunities for dialogue.

- In general the participants did not have problems in communicating with the learners, but because they only used lecturing as a teaching method (method of facilitation) they tend to talk mostly throughout the session. The participants in general really tried to motivate the learners by means of individual attention and attending to specific problems.

- The participants only guided the learners on the assignment questions and not necessarily through specific chapters/study units.

D. EVALUATION

- *Self-evaluation (learners)*
- *Peer group evaluation*
- *Problem-solving questions*
- *Case studies*
- *Group evaluation of contact session*

- 2 participants did not evaluate the learners in any way.

- Where learners worked in groups the participants made use of problem-solving questions.

- In only one session group evaluation of the session was done.

E. ADMINISTRATION

- *Arrangements:*   *Rooms*

                                  Directions

                                  Resources

- *Attendance list*

- In all the sessions the venues were reasonably acceptable to present contact sessions and could be transformed into conducive learning environments. Almost all the sessions were presented at the regional offices and directions to the venues were given.

- As indicated in all the venues, flipcharts were available and overhead projectors could have been arranged.

5.5   INTERPRETATION OF THE INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION DATA

In this section the findings obtained from the interviews and observation sessions are interpreted.

5.5.1   The interview data

The interview findings were interpreted according to the responses of the participants in the themes and sub themes indicated by the researcher.

Theme 1 – Application and appointment of the tutor

This theme consisted of five sub themes and the researcher has specific reasons for asking these five questions. She contends that the success of the tutor depends to some degree on selecting the *right* person and this can only be done by the institution/programme group if the following procedures/processes/strategies are in place:

- Marketing strategy
- Recruitment and selection

- Interviewing and appointment
- Job description
- Induction, training and development programmes

The reasons given by the participants for applying for the tutor posts are very noble (question 1). However, the researcher is of the opinion that these reasons do not correspond with the performance of the tutors, who were observed during the contact sessions. Many factors could have an influence on this, but she sees a direct link to an ineffective training and development programme.

Question 2 refers to the effectiveness of the marketing strategy of TSA's tutor system. The researcher is of the opinion that the advertisements for the tutor positions do not reach a diverse group of people who could become part of the system/process. She also urges that the wording of the advertisements could be more attractive to urge professional and well-qualified people to apply for these positions.

The researcher indicated in chapter 2 that one of the limitations of this study is the fact that almost all the tutors are members of the SAPS. Her viewpoint is that this is not a healthy situation, as the SAPS learners should be exposed to other professions, organisation cultures, experiences and practices.

The responses of the participants to question 3 highlighted the issues of transparency and consistency. The researcher is concerned about the **interviewing process** as the participants' perceptions, ideas, feelings and experiences regarding the interviewing processes differ in so many ways. Six participants indicated that the interviews were done professionally and although the other participants did not indicate that their interviews were done unprofessionally, the researcher is concerned about the fact, that different criteria are formulated and implemented in the different regions. One participant was only interviewed by the tutor manager and another participant only had to submit a curriculum vitae. The researcher holds the opinion that the same stakeholders should be part of the interview panel in all regions – these stakeholders should interview

all candidates in order to establish standards and to select the most suitable candidate. These stakeholders should be briefed on the expectations and aims of the institution/the programme group and the subject group.

The tutors of the relevant programme group are supposed to fulfill three roles, namely:

- telephone tutoring;
- conducting contact sessions; and
- assessing of assignments and giving constructive feedback.

The support, monitoring and evaluation processes have not been clarified effectively.

The researcher has also experienced that there are many problems with the administrative procedures, especially regarding the management of the contracts. Contractual mistakes can end up in financial losses or have unnecessary legal implications.

The researcher is of the opinion that the subject group, the programme group and the institution at large should attend to the following aspects:

- Determining the stakeholders/panel for interviewing the candidates.
- Determining the selection criteria for appointing tutors.
- Determining the procedures that should be followed in selecting and appointing tutors in all the regions.
- Determining the institution's viewpoint on professionalism.
- Determining the type of information (e.g. role and functions) that should be shared with tutors before they are appointed.

A **job description** (question 4) is supposed to indicate the specific tasks and functions of a position as well as the competencies and characteristics needed to complete these tasks and functions. The contracts that the participants had to sign indicated the tasks and functions of the tutor for the period that he/she is appointed. According to the responses to this question, the participants assumed that the contract served as a job description. If the contracts were to serve the purpose of a job description, it should have been communicated to the tutors. This obviously caused confusion for some participants, as they did not know exactly what was expected of them as tutors. This is a very concerning

factor as the lecturers in the subject group and the institution at large expected the tutors to support the learners in the learning processes. According to the responses, only 4 of the participants claimed that they had been briefed on the administrative procedures and processes. The researcher's view on this issue is that a clear job description should be formulated and shared with the tutors when they are contracted or during orientation sessions as tutors cannot be blamed for ineffective learner support if they do no know what is expected of them.

Theme 2 - Training and development needs

Questions 6, 7 and 9 go hand in hand as all three questions dealt with **training and development/learning needs**. Eight participants indicated that they initially had training and development needs and these needs were related directly to generic training needs. As indicated in chapter 3, the tutor manager in each region is responsible for the generic training of tutors as well as clarification of administrative issues. It is disturbing that only three participants indicated that they received generic training. These participants also indicated the need for subject specific training.

Most open and distance learning institutions that make use of tutors as part of their learner support systems, appoint subject specialists and often one of the additional requirements is an educational background/educational experience. It is then the institution's responsibility to create opportunities for the tutor to gain knowledge about the learners and their needs, distance learning teaching methods, etc. Unfortunately TSA and the relevant subject group do not necessarily appoint tutors with a background in training and development. The main requirement is thus subject-specific knowledge.

Unfortunately, in the relevant subject group - and in the broader system as well, in the researcher's opinion - these processes and procedures are not in place, as no structured training and development programme for tutors exists. Apparently each tutor manager is expected to develop and facilitate a training programme for the tutors in his/her region, and at the same time each tutor is expected to receive a tutor manual with his/her appointment. This manual includes (although it is overloaded with information) relevant information about TSA, the tutor system and the tutor function.

The responses to question 7, which dealt with **generic training**, indicated that more than half of the participants did not receive any generic training and only five participants received tutor manuals. The researcher concluded that no needs assessment for learning needs was done after the appointment of the tutors and therefore the tutor managers could not create opportunities for the tutors to address these needs. The researcher sets out that an orientation/induction course for all newly appointed tutors should be compulsory and that this opportunity should be used to encourage the tutors to take responsibility for their own development. Some participants indicated that they attended sessions/workshops/discussions on administrative procedures. It seems, however, that different procedures are followed in the different regions and in order to offer an effective learner support service to the learners, the researcher suggests structured training and development programmes and opportunities for all tutors.

In the responses to question 8, the participants indicated that they found the **learningshop** valuable. In the needs analysis done for the learningshop, it became clear that the needs were of a generic nature, and although it was not the responsibility of the lecturers, those needs were addressed during the learningshop. A disturbing factor was that it seemed as if the learningshop did not make the impact hoped for as the participants did not apply the knowledge they had gained or did not change their attitudes and methods. The learningshop was a (very costly) once-off intervention and therefore impact evaluation seemed to be important in order to determine to which extent the participants apply the new competencies and ideas in practice. A practical problem seemed to be the fact that the tutor managers cannot cope with the training, evaluation, monitoring and moderating of more than 100 tutors of different programme groups. The researcher is of the opinion that this problem can be solved if the tutor system is managed on a partnership basis between the different departments within TSA.

Once again, almost half of the participants indicated in question 10 that they already have knowledge of the indicated issues/aspects. However, the participants who could be observed in the contact sessions, applied these aspects in varying degrees during the contact sessions.

Theme 3 - Evaluation of learners and self evaluation

The purpose of this question was to determine whether the participants were aware of the importance of evaluation as it is an important aspect in any learning process. According to the responses of the participants, they realised the importance of evaluation. It seemed, however, that they did not know how and when to evaluate the learners and themselves. According to literature, both the tutor and the institution have a responsibility towards evaluating and monitoring - the tutor in his/her scheduled contact with the learners and their learning processes, while the institution needs to ask questions about:

- the total tutor system;
- the market;
- each learning programme;
- learning material;
- the tutorial system; and
- each tutor.

The researcher is of the opinion that the implementation of a clear evaluation and monitoring programme of tutors could be a starting point to solve some of the problems in the tutor system. Such a programme could contribute to the following aspects:

- the learner support system;
- learner pass rates;
- empowered and enabled tutors; and
- educational standards.

It is also important to share the purpose of such a programme with the tutors so that they can be conscious of the criteria that will be used to evaluate and monitor their performance.

Theme 4 - Academic and administrative problems experienced by the participants

There is a close relationship between questions 11 and 12, and the researcher is of the opinion that if the monitoring and evaluation processes were implemented effectively, these kinds of problems identified by the participants would be solved. The researcher has found that these problems indicated the importance of questions 1-5, because many of these problems caused stumbling blocks in the system regarding motivation,

commitment, service-delivery and responsibility of the tutors. The researcher urges that TSA identify the real problems in the system, transfer these problems into challenges and then find ways to address them.

5.5.2   The observation data

The components identified by the researcher for the observation sessions should form a holistic picture of the role of the tutor in a contact session and all these components are interrelated. One should bear in mind that personalities and facilitation skills differ from individual to individual and therefore the researcher tried to be as flexible as possible during the observation sessions.

Each participant/facilitator needs to assess the group/audience in order to determine what the needs and feelings of the learners are. The participants indicated that if only one learner attends the sessions it is problematic, as they cannot implement different teaching strategies. The researcher is of the opinion that this is not necessarily true and that tutors should be briefed/retrained on facilitating learning with individuals and groups. This again indicates the necessity of an evaluation and monitoring programme for tutors.

The researcher suggests, that the participants in some sessions did not realise the importance of establishing a conducive learning environment. In one session, where only one learner attended, the participant did not use the lecture room at the regional office - the session was conducted in the foyer of the regional office. In another region the participant arranged for the sessions to be in his (rather small) office. Tutors need to be trained on their responsibility to establish a conducive learning environment and all barriers for learning should be removed by the institution.

It also seemed as if the participants still prefer to function in the comfort zone of the traditional lecturer, instead of changing to a facilitator of learning. A conducive learning environment, where real learning is facilitated, should lead to learner participation. Opportunities should be established to get the learners to participate and share their

experiences/problems/perceptions. The institution has a responsibility to identify and address the learning needs of tutors and assist the tutors in their own development programme so that the learners can benefit in the end. The tutor should thus understand and establish the important relationship between the tutor, the learner and learning.

During the observation sessions, the participants only used the lecturing method, while they were exposed to different teaching methods and methods of facilitation during the learningshop. The researcher came to the conclusion that the tutors preferred to remain in their comfort zones as it is easier. However, they need to take responsibility and it should be part of the tutor support structures within the institution.

The researcher also realised that the learners do not understand their roles and responsibilities regarding their own learning processes in a distance learning environment. The researcher suggests that TSA implements counselling or any other support mechanism to help TSA learners to realise that they are adult learners and that as such, they are to take responsibility for their own learning processes.

During the interviews most of the participants indicated that evaluation is important. However, during the observation session, only one participant asked the learners to complete an evaluation form for self-evaluation purposes.

In general the participants did not experience administrative problems and it is interesting that the one administration function that deals with payment had been focussed on in all the contact sessions. The researcher views this as an indication of the tutors' commitment, which does not correlate with the reasons given to the first question regarding the reasons for applying for the tutor post. However, the researcher is of the opinion that the practical problems experienced by the researcher are a sign of the organisational chaos, which is currently being experienced at TSA.

5.6 REVIEW

In this chapter the researcher indicated the data gathered during the interviews and observation sessions. According to the responses of the participants, the researcher could identify possible problem areas. In the next chapter she will come to some conclusions and make recommendations which TSA/the relevant programme group could implement in order to solve the organisational and specifically the tutor system problems.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1   SUMMARY

The following components of this study are summarized in the following paragraphs.

6.1.1   The context and purpose of the study

TSA defined its role as a flexible distance learning institution with the implementation of the ILCDE model. As explained in chapter 1 this model implied the establishment of regional offices in different regions of the country and the implementation of the tutor system. This was an attempt to take the distance out of distance learning and implied appointment of tutors who could assist the learners in their learning processes on a more personal level.

At the time the tutor system was implemented, no structured learning programme for tutors existed and it was against this background that this study was undertaken. The broad purpose of this study was thus to investigate and analyse the learning needs of the tutors of a specific subject group at TSA. This study was furthermore stimulated by some critical questions as explained in chapter 1. Throughout the study the focus was on these critical questions. The following critical questions, however, formed the basis of this study:

- What is the role of training and development in the tutor system in a flexible learning approach?
- Do tutors have a need for (a) continuing professional learning programme(s)? If so, what should be the nature of such learning programmes?
- What should be the criteria to evaluate and monitor the development of tutors?

Chapter 1 included a broad outline of the purpose, aim and need of this study as well as a detailed explanation of the concepts referred to throughout the study.

6.1.2   The need and importance for continuing professional learning for tutors at Technikon Southern Africa

In chapter 2 the researcher explained the need and importance for continuing professional learning for tutors within a literature framework. The researcher started off by explaining the South African perspective on learning competencies and then reviewed the concept of continuing professional learning according to literature. As part of a tutor development strategy, a learningshop which was facilitated for the tutors of the relevant subject group, was described in detail. Finally, the importance of evaluation in open and distance learning was explained and the researcher referred specifically to the evaluation and monitoring of tutors.

6.1.3   Comparative review

In chapter 3 the researcher gave an outline of the structures and procedures of TSA's tutor system and compared these structures and procedures to the tutor systems of the Open University (United Kingdom) and UNISA (South Africa). With this comparative review the researcher attempted to find some solutions for the problems experienced by TSA as TSA should be able to learn from successful practices at other open and distance learning institutions.

6.1.4 Research design and methodology

Chapter 4 consists of a detailed explanation of the research methodology and design followed for this study. The researcher followed a qualitative research approach and focussed on two ethnographic techniques, namely interviews and participative observation to investigate and analyse the learning needs of tutors in a flexible learning system. The subjects of the study were the tutors of one specific subject group appointed for the registration period May 1998 – May 1999.

6.1.5 Data analysis and interpretation

In chapter 5 the results of the data obtained during the interviews and observation sessions are described, analysed and interpreted. During the interviews the 12 structured questions, which were used in all the interviews, were clustered into four categories and integrated by means of color-coding. The four categories were:

- Application and appointment
- Training and development needs
- Evaluation
- Problems

During the observation sessions the researcher made use of a checklist, which consisted of the following five components:

- Learning environment
- Participation of learners
- Facilitation skills
- Evaluation
- Administration

From the results, the researcher came to some conclusions and formulated recommendations that should enable the institution to implement a more effective tutor system.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

In view of the literature and findings of the interviews and observation sessions, the following conclusions were formulated.

6.2.1 Organisational structures

Organisational structures should be in place regarding systems and processes when a tutor system (learner support system) is implemented. It seems, however, that the following processes regarding the tutor system need attention:

- Criteria for recruitment and selection of tutors
- Guidelines for interviewing and appointment of tutors
- Job descriptions for tutors
- Orientation programme for newly appointed tutors and training and development programmes for experienced tutors
- A marketing strategy for the tutor system

6.2.2 Role clarification

Role clarification at organisational level is important to ensure effectiveness and success in any process. This is also applicable to TSA's tutor system. According to the findings it seemed that although it is the tutor managers' responsibility, they do not attend to important issues like generic training, training on administrative issues, monitoring the effectiveness and the performance of the tutors. It also became clear that the roles of the tutors are not clarified and shared and subsequently they could not offer a quality learner support service. This lack of role clarification lead to the lack of clarification of tasks and responsibilities, which should enable the institution to monitor the performance and quality of learner support as well as determining the learning needs of the tutors. Clarification of tutor roles in the form of a job description should be explained and shared

with newly appointed tutors before they start their tutoring processes.

Clarification of tutor roles in the form of a job description should be explained and shared with newly appointed tutors before they start their tutoring processes.

6.2.3 Structured training and development and monitoring and evaluation programmes

Although the tutors are seen as subject specialists they should still be exposed to structured training and development programmes. These programmes should include orientation courses and focus on the distance learning institution, its goals regarding learner support, its learners and their needs and adult learning practices. According to the findings, the participants indicated a need for training and specifically generic training. The implementation and facilitation of training and development programmes go hand in hand with the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation programme of tutors. Such a programme does not exist currently and thus hampers attempts to determine learning needs of tutors in order to enable them to support the learners effectively.

6.2.4 Learningshop

The learningshop, that was facilitated as part of a tutor development strategy for the tutors of the relevant subject group, seemed to be valuable, but because it was not the responsibility of the lecturers to facilitate generic training sessions, it was a once-off intervention. The ideal would have been to have follow-up sessions for the learningshop. Although the tutors found the learningshop valuable, the performance of the tutors who were observed, did not correlate with the outcomes of the learningshop.

6.2.5 Administrative problems

The types of administrative problems experienced by the tutors and the researcher are factors of concern as it could lead to organisational chaos. Some of the problems that need immediate attention are:

- Support from the regional offices to the learners and the tutors was insufficient, as they could not provide the learners and the tutors with the necessary material/information.
- Learners do not attend contact sessions. Many factors can, however, play a role in this. Some possibilities are:
  - learners do not want to take responsibility for their own learning processes;
  - a lack of a learning culture in the SAPS;
  - learners do not want to attend contact sessions facilitated by tutors, as they seem to prefer the lecturer to act as facilitator;
  - learners do not want to attend contact sessions facilitated by tutors, who are in a managerial position at the workplace at the same time; and
  - learners do not receive information regarding contact sessions in time.
- Tutors do not get paid monthly for their services as contracted.
- Lack of commitment to the learning process from lecturers, tutors and learners.
- Ineffective support to tutors from the lecturers.

6.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focussed on a specific area of TSA's tutor system, namely the learning needs of tutors in a flexible learning system. The following recommendations could assist the institution in addressing some of the problems in its tutor system.

6.3.1   The recruitment and appointment processes

TSA should develop a guide for the recruitment and appointment processes of its tutors.

This guide should be a working document that represents good legal practices and include standards for tutor qualifications and experience in specific subjects in order to recruit tutors according to those standards. Such a guide could help TSA to identify the best people for the tutoring positions and to have fair and effective procedures in place.

6.3.2 Learner support systems

The tutor system is part of TSA's learner support system and it has the infrastructure to support its learners effectively in their learning processes. It is, however, important to identify and determine the real learner support needs of its learners. This recommendation was stimulated by the fact that so few learners attended the contact sessions during the registration period May 1998 – May 1999.

6.3.3 Establishing a continuing professional learning unit

TSA needs a framework for continuing professional learning and development and therefore the establishment of a Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) unit where all academic, support as well as part-time staff are included, is recommended. Such a unit could:

- have a working group consisting of people interested in staff development;
- provide for regional academic staff to support the tutors in the regions;
- facilitate workshops/seminars/learningshops/courses (centralised and decentralised);
- provide a consultation service as well as centralised and decentralised staff training programmes;
- offer mentorship programmes for newly appointed tutors;
- develop a tutor toolkit for tutor training purposes on a modular basis; and
- focus on the following themes for tutor development:
  - Orientation programme
  - Open and distance learning

- Adult learning principles
- Facilitation skills
- Tutor roles
- Active learning
- Assessment techniques
- Telephone tutoring
- Conducting contact sessions
- Assessing assignments, portfolios and learning guides and providing constructive and meaningful feedback
- Learner needs
- Diverse learner groups

6.3.4   A conceptual framework of continuing professional learning at TSA

This recommendation is an extension of the previous recommendation as the researcher is of the opinion that there is a link between establishing a continuing professional learning unit and creating a culture of learning within the framework of a learning organisation.

In figure 2.2 the researcher explained the twofold role of TSA regarding continuing professional learning. She also explained the responsibility of TSA towards its academic (both full-time and part-time) and support staff, learners, partners and employers. According to literature the people need competencies and information to be effective and to make an impact on the competitive market in which they are functioning. In figure 6.1 she explains some learning interventions which could assist TSA in creating a climate in which individual staff members are encouraged to learn and to develop their full potential. It should also extend to a learning culture, which includes customers, suppliers and other significant stakeholders. It should make the human resources development (people development) strategy central to business policy, which would stimulate a continuous process of organisational transformation.

In view of this the researcher recommends some serious learning interventions for academic staff (part-time and full-time) as well as support staff. This will, however, mean that TSA should commit itself to change from a bureaucratic, hierarchical institution to an intelligent, learning organisation and create continuous learning opportunities for its staff (both academic and support).

FIGURE 6.1

LEARNING INTERVENTIONS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT AT TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

STAFF ←→ **LEARNERS**

Interactive learning materials

↓

Alternative assessment

↓

Tutoring

↓

Acceptance of responsibility for own learning

Academic

Shared vision

Support

Flexible learning

Academic:
- development of course material
- tutoring
- facilitating learning

Learning interventions:
- workshops/ learningshops
- development of specific competencies
- culture change

Support:
- service delivery
- administrative systems/ processes
- registration
- production of courseware

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6.4 FINAL REFLECTION

The research goal was to investigate and analyse the learning needs of tutors, which has been addressed. Although the researcher could not find answers to all the critical questions, that stimulated this study, she could formulate satisfactory conclusions and recommendations. The researcher believes that this study could make a contribution to the institution at large in its endeavour to become a world-class, flexible, higher education institution, responsive to human development needs in Southern Africa.

At the moment TSA is facing many challenges such as declining student numbers, low pass rates of learners, demotivated staff, lack of leadership on various levels and restructuring of different departments. The researcher is of the opinion that one of the solutions to these problems lies in the creation of effective support mechanisms. An example of such a support mechanism is continuing professional learning programmes where the staff (academic, supporting and part-time) can be provided with new skills and competencies.

The fact that TSA makes use of many part-time staff who directly work with the learners, stresses the importance of having competent and well-equipped academics and tutors to accept the challenges facing distance learning institutions.

The key to any change is the ability to transform a problem into an opportunity. It further implicates that the organisational leaders should display a positive commitment and a long-term approach towards continuing professional learning as the ad hoc approach offers staff nothing more than survival skills (Cowan, 1994:149).

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ANNEXURE A

EVALUATION FORM USED IN THE LEARNINGSHOP

Please complete the evaluation of the learningshop anonymously. Use the following scale to indicate your rating of each aspect by writing a number in the appropriate space next to each question. Please also write any comments or recommendations you might have in the space below.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unsatisfactory		Satisfactory	Very satisfactory	

1.	General organisation of the learningshop.	
2.	Achievement of goals.	
3.	The level of the learningshop.	
4.	The capability of the facilitators of the learningshop.	
5.	How much I have learned during the learningshop.	
6.	Relevance of the material to my personal circumstances.	

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7.	Extent to which I am able to implement what I have learned.	
8.	Overall evaluation of the learningshop.	
9.	In retrospect, which aspect of the learningshop could: 9.1 be emphasised more (more time allotted to). 9.2 be emphasised less (less time allotted to). 9.3 be left out (unnecessary).	
10.	Other recommendations	

ANNEXURE B

CHECKLIST USED DURING OBSERVATION SESSIONS

OBSERVATION			
FACILITATION OF CONTACT SESSIONS	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT			
• Welcoming/Introduction			
• Icebreaker/Energizer			
• Needs//Goals/Expectations (Learners)			
• Goals/Expectations (Facilitator)			
• Continuation of session			
• Conclusion – follow-up contact session			
PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS			
• Groupwork: Small groups			
Large group			
• Group dynamics			
• Reflective learning			
• Experiential learning			
• Interaction			
FACILITATION SKILLS			
• Preparation			
• Knowledge of subject/content			
• Use of resources			
• Strategies			
• Stimulation of: Learning			
Thinking skills			
• **Skills:** Listening			
Communication			
Motivation			
Guidance			
Feedback			

EVALUATION			
• Self-evaluation (learners)			
• Peer group evaluation			
• Problem-solving questions			
• Case studies			
• Group evaluation of contact session			
ADMINISTRATION			
• Arrangements: Rooms			
Directions			
Resources			
• Attendance list			

COMMENTS

_____

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ANNEXURE C

THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tutor's name _____

Region: _____

Personal/Telephonical:_____

1. Why did you apply for the tutor post?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Where did you find out about this post?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. How did you experience the interview/appointment procedures?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Did you receive a job description?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Did you know what was expected of you as a tutor when you first started?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Did you have any training and development/learning needs when you started initially?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Did you receive any kind of generic training as a tutor?

_____

_____

_____

8. Did you find the learningshop valuable?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. What are your current training and development needs?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you have knowledge about:

- Cognitive levels
- Learning styles
- Group dynamics
- Other

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. How important is evaluation? How do you evaluate yourself and the learners?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. General problems and recommendations for improvement?

_____

_____

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