

**THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO
ADULT DISTANCE LEARNING AT TECHNIKON SOUTHERN
AFRICA**

DAYALAN GOVENDER

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Study Leader: Prof. CA Kapp

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DECLARATION

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE WORK
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SUMMARY

THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING AT TECHNIKON SOUTHERN AFRICA

Distance education is increasingly being regarded as a possible solution for some of South Africa's educational problems. The Literature, however, illustrates no concrete research that has been conducted in terms of the creation of an environment conducive to adult distance learning institutions like Technikon Southern Africa. There are perhaps numerous reasons for this, however being a 'distance learning setting' is probably one the most prominent reasons for not seriously considering the learning environment as both an essential and vital determinant governing the learning process.

In this research an interpretative study has been done of the programme group Police Practice of Technikon Southern Africa. The purpose of this study was to establish whether an environment conducive to adult learning does in fact exist in Police Practice and to develop a set of recommendations/criteria which could be used by this programme group of TSA.

Various critical questions stimulated this study. These questions were in turn used to generate interview questions, which were used during the interview process. A qualitative approach was followed and data was obtained by means of interviews. The subjects of the study were educators of the programme group Police Practice of Technikon Southern Africa.

There were a number of conclusions drawn from this study. Some of the most prominent of them were as follows:

- ◆ This is a lack of meaning given to the open / flexible approach.
- ◆ Considering adult learning principles in distance learning is of vital importance.
- ◆ A more personalized approach to distance learning is necessary.
- ◆ There is a crucial need for in-service training and staff development.
- ◆ Technological advancements should be adopted with caution.
- ◆ There exists a need to create a much more challenging environment for learners.

Various recommendations were generated from both the conclusions and the literature study of this research. Some of the most important of them were as follows:

- ◆ An open learning approach should be used.
- ◆ The implications of adult learning principles should be carefully considered.
- ◆ Personalising learning through the use of the text should be implemented.
- ◆ Appropriate in-service training for educators should be made available.
- ◆ A challenging environment should be created.

In addition to this a possible checklist was proposed for the creation of an environment more conducive to adult learning (distance education).

OPSOMMING

DIE SKEP VAN 'N OMGEWING WAT BEVORDERLIK IS VIR LEER AAN TECHNIKON SUIDER-AFRIKA

Afstandsleer word toenemend beskou as 'n moontlike oplossing vir sekere Suid-Afrikaan onderwysprobleme. Volgens die literatuur is daar egter geen bewys van konkrete navorsing oor die skep van 'n omgewing wat bevorderlik is vir volwassene onderwysinstansies soos Technikon Suider-Afrika nie. Een van die hoofredes waarom die onderwysomgewing in afstandsonderwys nie as 'n noodsaaklike bepalende faktor in die leerproses beskou word nie is juis dat dit binne 'n "afstandsleer-konteks" val.

In hierdie navorsing is 'n interpretatiewe studie van die Programgroep: Polisiepraktyk van Technikon Suider-Afrika uitgevoer. Die doel van die navorsing was om vas te stel of daar wel 'n onderwysomgewing wat bevorderlik is vir afstandsleer by polisiepraktyk bestaan. Verder was die doel ook om riglyne te ontwikkel wat deur die Programgroep van Technikon Suider-Afrika gebruik sou kon word.

Verskeie kritieke vrae het hierdie navorsing gestimuleer. Hierdie vrae is op hulle beurt gebruik om vrae wat in die onderhoudproses gebruik sou word, te genereer. 'n Kwalitatiewe benadering is gevolg en die data is deur middel van onderhoude ingesamel. Fasiliteerders/dosente van die Programgroep: Polisiepraktyk van Technikon Suider-Afrika vir die onderhoude gebruik.

Verskeie gevolgtrekkings/afleidings het uit die navorsing gespruit. Van die mees prominente gevolgtrekkings sluit in:

- Daar is 'n gebrek aan sinvolheid met betrekking tot oop/plooibare leer.
- Dit is duidelik dat volwassene leerbeginsels in afstandsleer belangrik is.
- 'n Meer persoonlike benadering tot afstandsleer is noodsaaklik.
- Daar is 'n deurslaggewende behoefte aan indiensopleiding en ontwikkeling.
- Omsigtigheid in die benadering tot tegnologiese vooruitgang is noodsaaklik.

- Daar bestaan 'n behoefte aan die skep van 'n veel meer uitdagende omgewing vir leerders.

'n Aantal aanbevelings is op grond van die gevolgtrekkings en die literatuurstudie van hierdie navorsing gegenereer. Voorts is 'n moontlike kontrolelys vir die totstandkoming van 'n omgewing wat bevorderlik is vir volwassene afstandsleer, voorgestel. Die belangrikste daarvan was die volgende:

- Die gebruik van 'n oop-leer-benadering
- Die inagneming van die implikasies van volwassene leer-beginsels
- Die verpersoonliking van leer deur die gebruik van die teks
- Toepaslike indiensopleiding vir opvoeders
- Die sken van 'n omgewing wat uitdagings bied.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1997 the White Paper on Higher Education called for an open and flexible learning system and significant change 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)

Because of a number of political, economic and social factors, Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) which used to be a correspondence study institution had to transform. The result was a new vision and mission statement for TSA in 1994. The new vision and mission statements were based on issues raised by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE:1993:23)

According to Moore (1996:4) the South African educational system was characterized by a number of deficiencies, for instance where the teaching strategies and delivery modes were not adapted to meet the needs of the larger intakes of learners and the diversity of lifelong learners. This in essence raised the concern over environments conducive to distance learning. This study attempts to highlight the importance of creating an environment conducive to learning for a distance learning institutions like TSA.

TSA defined its role as a flexible distance learning institution with the implementation of the Integrated Learner Centered Distance Education (ILCDE) model in 1994. This model should offer a greater variety of opportunities to corporate clients and learners.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

TSA	Technikon Southern Africa
ILCDE	Integrated Learner Centered Distance Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
SAPS	South African Police Services
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
PP	Police Practice

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Is this model being optimally utilised at Police Practice with regard to making the courses more learner centered? In view of this critical question the aim of this study has been formulated focussing on the Programme Group Police Practice.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THIS RESEARCH:THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In the literature review the researcher has identified a number of studies on learning environment pertaining to the residential / classroom settings. There appears to be no specific study done on conducive adult learning environment from a distance education perspective. It is in light of this that the researcher has focussed on the study of this particular nature.

The learning environment which is inclusive of some of the following, – lecture halls, individual study areas, libraries, instructional materials, support services and options available must not simply permit learning to occur in the educational institution. All environments should be conducive in a way so as to enhance the learning process.

According to Donald (1997:xi) the learning environment should be productive rather than merely neutral. The learning environment can predictably affect adults learning – positively if designed well but negatively if attention has not been paid to the conditions under which learning best occurs. In reality its importance has been underplayed. Measurement of educational institution effectiveness tends to ignore the context of learning, focussing instead on the selection and performance of staff and learners. Educationally productive environments are structured to enable learners to concentrate on their studies, free from distracting elements. In an open learning institution like TSA, the learning environment should facilitate access to knowledge. It is thus imperative that educators have an in-depth understanding of the impact that an environment has on the learner and the learning process as a whole.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

The research would conduct an interpretative study of the Programme group Police Practice to establish whether an environment conducive to learning does exist. The purpose of this study would be to address the issues surrounding a conducive environment for adult learning and to develop a set of criteria which could be used by Police Practice or other distance learning institutions as a whole.

1.4 RESEARCH GOAL

In this study the researcher attempts to establish whether the Programme group Police Practice and its complement of staff function in an environment conducive to adult learning.

1.5 AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO ADULT LEARNING

Distance education is increasingly being regarded as a possible solution for some of South Africa's educational problems. Because of South Africa's specific socio-political situation, research results pertaining to the creation of a conducive learning environment abroad cannot simply be applied in this country. The application of various technological instructional media as a means of creating such a learning environment in South Africa is perhaps the best example (Mills & Tait, 1996:28).

According to Mills & Tait (1996:25) many learners who undertake distance education programs at secondary and tertiary levels do so on the basis of very negative experiences of secondary education.

Their schools have operated sporadically, their teachers have been alienated, unmotivated, and authoritarian, and rote learning will have been the norm. The

prospective learners are likely to lack many essential learning skills, and, in general, are under prepared.

According to Donald (1997:xii) the most frequent response to the complexity of the learning environment in post secondary institutions is to create committees of stakeholders, that is, all those who might have some responsibility for the solution of problems. Committees, in their turn, produce policies but cannot directly implement the practices based on these policies.

A major goal of many educators in facilitating learning is to use effective organizational arrangements and interaction processes. This goal, coupled with growing knowledge regarding self-directed learning and the importance of maximizing learner inputs, relates to a need to establish learning environments that will facilitate and enhance learner commitment (White, 1972:2).

In the literature review leading to this study, it became apparent that no research (Nexus Search) has been done specifically in terms of the creation of conducive adult learning environments for a distance learning institution like TSA. Being a “distance learning setting” is perhaps one of the reasons for not seriously considering the learning environment as a vital determinant of the learning process. In this study the researcher will, however, attempt to prove the contrary. In addition the researcher is of the opinion that this area should not be ignored and that there is an urgent need to start focussing on creating a conducive learning environment for these learners.

In an attempt to address the establishment of conducive adult learning environments at a distance learning institution, the proposed study focuses on the Programme Group: Police Practice . The researcher would engage in an illumination study with the ultimate aim of making proposals for the programme group in moving towards the establishment of an environment more conducive to adult learning. In order for this to materialize certain critical questions need to be posed.

1.6 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

The structured interview questions were based on these questions below:

- What constitutes an environment conducive to learning?
- What are the learning “environment needs” of the learner?
- Is the environment conducive to learning at Police Practice – TSA?
- Is there a need for the adult educators of a distance learning institution to concern themselves about the issue of creating conducive learning environments?
- What attempts have lecturers in their respective subject groups made in terms of the following?
 - Needs analysis?
 - Context analysis (instructional planning) ?
 - Setting learning outcomes?
 - Organizing learning activities?
 - Selecting learning techniques?
 - Evaluation / assessment?
- What possible additional guidelines or recommendations could be proposed for the creation of an environment more conducive to learning
- Is there a need for some form of in-service training (for educators) on the creation of an environment conducive to adult learning?
- To what extent do lecturers consider adult education principles in your daily responsibilities as a distance adult educator?
- To what extent is active learner involvement encouraged in the instructional design and delivery?
- What are the views pertaining to the “personalizing” of learning material?

1.7 NEED FOR THE RESEARCH

This research will be of the utmost value to the Programme Group: Police Practice and the TSA in general as well as to other distance learning institutions for the following reasons:

- ◆ To establish the extend to which the environment at Police Practice is conducive to Adult Learning.
- ◆ It should to a large extend sensitize academic / administrative and management staff to the importance of considering the adult learning environment as a crucial element of the learning process.
- ◆ It could challenge the attempts made by TSA in regard to support systems, which are intended to promote an environment conducive to adult distance learning.
- ◆ It could help to identify the various environmental factors – physical, social, political, psychological, institutional. – on which the Programme Group can have an influence.
- ◆ It could in a way compel Police Practice to align its functioning to adult education principles.
- ◆ It could assist academic staff in identifying their roles in the creation of adult learning environments.
- ◆ It could lead to the creation of a more conducive adult learning environment for the Programme Group.
- ◆ It could clarify the importance of the tutor system for all staff of Police Practice in this regard.
- ◆ Other programme groups or even other institutions of distance learning could use the findings of this research as a set of criteria to assess whether their setting or environment is conducive to adult learning.

In order for the goals of this study to be addressed it is imperative that certain terminology be outlined at a very early stage of the research.

1.8 EXPLANATIONS OF CONCEPTS

What follows is a clarification of concepts and terminology used throughout this study.

1.8.1 *Learning Environment*

According to Hiemstra (1991:8) a learning environment is all of the physical surroundings, psychological or emotional conditions, and social or cultural influences affecting the growth and development of an adult engaged in an educational enterprise. Taking the above definition into cognizance the question could be raised about the possibility of addressing these in terms of a distance educational institution. It should however come as a surprise that the environment in which learning takes place plays a crucial role in the whole learning process. What is perhaps more surprising for the researcher is that very little has been written about the physical, psychological and social dimensions of the **adult** learning environment.

Taken together, the physical, psychological, and social elements of the learning environment are an important arena for improving adult education practice.

Fraser (1993:3) tends to follow a broader perspective in maintaining that the learning environment refers to the social, psychological and andragogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affect learner achievements and attitudes.

Hiemstra (1991:96), in his many contributions towards learning environments, has offered several recommendations – in essence, for the researcher, the key point that underlies these is that the learning environment is an area ripe for research and innovative practice. Knowles (1985:4) goes on further to say that a climate that is conducive to learning is a pre-requisite to effective adult learning, although not much attention is paid to climate in traditional education.

In reviewing the literature, it became clear to the researcher that the few research findings that are available are confined primarily to the physical and psychological environments. There is however a need to address the spectrum of dimensions that constitute an environment conducive to adult learning.

Donald (1997:xi) relates to a more holistic and acceptable definition of the learning environment which aligns itself more appropriately in terms of the focus of this study: “The learning environment consists of the entire setting in which learning takes place – the campus and the social milieu, the disciplines that provide the knowledge environment, the learners and the arrangements made for them, the teaching and learning process, and the assessment of learning, institution and programs.”

1.8.2 Facilitation

Facilitation is about helping. The term has become almost synonymous with training since many trainers regard themselves as facilitators of learning. However, there is a little more to it than that. Facilitation is a process whereby the facilitator acts as a catalyst and takes a person from being a passive learner and forms him or her into a person possessed of power to take charge of change. (Hart, 1992:25)

The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1993:903) describes the concept “**facilitate**” as, “to make easy or easier, promote, help forward.” Webster Comprehensive Dictionary (1992:453) adds to this by describing it as “to assist, aid.”

Facilitating means to help make the learning process proceed at an enhanced pace. One of the purposes of this research is to create a positive learning climate through the interaction between educator and learner, with the ultimate aim of making the learning more effective, purposeful and understandable for the learner.

1.8.3 Distance Education

Distance education is a concept that is made up of “distance” and “education.” According to Collins Dictionary and the Thesaurus (1989:287) the word distance is outlined as “ the state of being apart, separation or remoteness in relationship”

Holmberg (1985:9) defines distance education as “...the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but who, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization.

There exists no consensus between educators, as far as the term distance education is concerned. Garrison (1991:3) maintains that “...it is not a simple task capturing the essence of the field.” Keegan (1986: 49-50) on the other hand compiled a descriptive definition which perhaps gives the study some sound foundation as far as TSA is concerned. The definition comprises of the following:

- ❖ quasi-permanent gap between the educator and the learner;
- ❖ structured instructional design and organization;
- ❖ support systems for the learners;
- ❖ the use of media technology;
- ❖ the creation of two- way communication; and
- ❖ quasi-permanent absence from a group.

Furthermore, the time aspect should be regarded as crucial. Learning takes place according to the learner’s programme instead of the programme of the facilitator of learning consequently the format ought to be learner-centered (Greyling, 1993:39).

For the purpose of this study “distance education” means: a teaching method that takes place over a distance, which implies that the facilitator and the learner are separated by distance, and that the facilitation of the learning process will be achieved by means of the written word, minimum face-to-face contact and multi-media technology.

1.8.4 Flexible / Open Learning

Simmonds (1995:25) argues that flexible learning is 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.

This is an approach to 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).

Holmberg (1985:17) makes a very relevant distinction between open learning and distance education which is perhaps pertinent for the focus of this study.

It is claimed that open learning is a principle or philosophy while distance education is a mode of delivery – thus open learning is an end, and distance education (and contact teaching) should be regarded as a means to an end.

Moore (1996:8) in his focus regards open/flexible learning as a strategy towards a deep approach and intentional understanding of the learning content. Accordingly such a strategy should be seen as a window through which aspects of the reality become visible and more intelligible.

1.8.5 The Integrated Learner Centered Distance Education Model (ILCDE)

In 1994 Technikon SA identified three focus areas as the basis for a well-functioning Educational Institution. These are:

- ❖ Quality Learner Support
- ❖ Quality Courseware
- ❖ Quality Support Services

At this same stage a goal has been set to considerably increase learner throughput by the year 2001. In light of these focus areas and the throughput goal, a new model has been developed by an inclusive process involving students, academic staff and outside stakeholders in close co-operation with the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE). This is the Integrated Learner Centred Distance Education model (ILCDE) that combines the best open learning with Learner –Centred Distance Education developed by TSA.

ILCDE consists of the following major focus areas:

- ❖ A decentralized learner support delivery system.
- ❖ A development of quality courseware.
- ❖ Aligning the technikons administrative system and service with the proceeding two initiatives.

TSA sees the ILCDE as a challenge to provide excellent service to its clients.

The implementation of this model facilitates the concept of open learning, which provides for:

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

1.8.6 Adult Education / Adult Learning / Adult Development

The concepts adult education, adult learning and adult development are often misconceptualised as having one and the same meaning. In order to come to some consensus on the differences in meaning between these concepts Rothwell and Sredl

(1992:4-7) outline the following explanation which would probably be best clarified in a tabular format:

TABLE 1.1

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CONCEPTS ADULT EDUCATION,
ADULT LEARNING AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT**

ADULT EDUCATION	ADULT LEARNING	ADULT DEVELOPMENT
Learning focussed on future job	Learning related to present job	Learning experiences
Change in knowledge	Provided by employers to employee	Employer to employees
Intermediate learning intervention	Change in skills	Not always job related Change in attitudes or value
Help individuals in qualifying for advancement	Planned learning	Long-term learning intervention
Initiated by individuals rather than organizations	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Stimulating new ideas/insights through planned learning
Primary emphasis on career preparation	Short-term learning intervention	Focus on the creativity and experience of the individual

Titmus, in (1991: 48) restates the UNESCO definition of adult education as follows: “Adult education consists of the entire body of educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and

bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two-fold perspective of full personal development and participation in a balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.” (1991:48)

1.8.7 Programme Design

Designing and delivering distance learning programmes means organizing and controlling the work of many specialists: subject authors; instructional technologists; illustrators; television, recording, and other media specialists; librarians and photo-librarians and editors. The purpose of their work is to structure the content so that it can be studied effectively by distance learners. Devices to ensure feedback and to provide for the different paces at which students learn should be constructed, and instruments for the evaluation of learning activities coupled with the assessment of the learning process must be designed.

Finally, multiple copies of course material must be produced and distributed either as printed packages or by electronic means (Moore, 1997:5). This brings the researcher to outline course design as the concept that includes all aspects related to the drafting, compilation and packaging of material in order for the learning process to be facilitated.

1.8.8 Learner Support

One of the main requirements for successful distance education may be a carefully designed and maintained learner support system. In such a system, educators who are highly qualified and experienced in the understanding of adult learning, help learners by providing skilled diagnostic counseling and orientation programs; assisting learners to organize their time and develop their study skills; providing active tutorial assistance during the courseware (face to face if possible and feasible); monitoring written work not only for cognitive achievement, but also for affective responses; ensuring that educators actively involve learners in the course; and giving assistance and support when illness,

financial, family, or work difficulties threaten to overpower the motivation to study (Moore, 1997:6).

1.9. CHAPTERS THAT FOLLOW

This research will progress in the following format:

Chapter two deals with a literature review pertaining to learning environments with special emphasis on a critical overview of adult learning environments in distance learning.

Chapter three focuses on the research philosophy underlying this study. An explanation of the design and methodology of this study would be covered.

This will be followed by the presentation of collected data and research findings of this study in chapter four. Finally in chapter five an overview of the study, followed by a summary, conclusions and recommendations will be covered.

1.10. SUMMARY

In chapter one the foundations of this study in terms of the aim, goals and need for such a study have been touched upon. In the following chapter attention will be given to the literature review relating to the focus of this study.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF TECHNIKON SA (TSA)

In the overview of TSA various aspects are discussed under specific headings that follow

2.1.1 Background information regarding TSA

Technikon RSA was established as an autonomous tertiary education institution in 1980 under the House of Assembly, prior to which it had functioned as the external studies facility of the Technikon Witwatersrand. It came into existence as a result of the report of a committee appointed by the minister of National Education to investigate the need for, and desirability of a Technikon for distance education. In 1993 the institution changed its name to Technikon SA (standing for 'Southern Africa') to reflect a commitment to playing a key role in the educational upliftment of the entire subcontinent. From a total of 5039 students, Technikon SA has grown in size to a total of 85039 students in 1996. Having in place the three registration cycle period, the numbers are approximately 62000 in 2001.

Considering the fact that this study focussed particularly on the programme group Police Practice some attention will be paid to the programme group Police practice and its respective constituents.

2.2 Programme Group: Police Practice

This programme group is one of the largest at Technikon SA and what follows is a brief overview regarding its very existence at TSA.

2.2.1 Background information regarding Police Practice

The Programme Group: Police Practice has been involved in the presentation of the policing diploma since 1986. At present the programme group offers a National Diploma: Policing, which is a three-year programme, and a National Higher Diploma: Policing, which is a one-year programme. The main focuses are Investigation of Crime, Management, Community Policing and Law. The curriculum was developed in collaboration with members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) to ensure that their education, training and development needs were addressed. During 1998, 18,000 learners were enrolled for the programmes.

The Programme group is divided into five subject groups, namely:

- Management Leadership
- Investigation of Crime
- Integrated Justice Studies (focus on community policing and crime prevention)
- Law
- Languages

The Programme group has 3 managers, 33 lecturing staff and 9 administrative staff members. In the course of 1999, 340 tutors have been appointed nation-wide to supply learner support by way of telephone tutoring, contact sessions and the marking of assignments, portfolios or projects.

Police Practice are currently in the process of re-writing most of the contents of the diploma and changing the National Higher Diploma to a B Tech Degree for presentation in 1999/2000. The B Tech package provides for four exit levels, with four subjects each on the first three levels and five subjects on the B Tech level, bringing the total number of subjects to seventeen.

2.2.2 Assessment

Lecturers in the different subjects use various methods of assessment such as assignments, projects and portfolios. The purpose of these is, firstly, to improve the preparation of the learner for the examination and to enhance learning, and secondly, to provide a means of assessing learners with a view to obtaining a year mark and admission to the examination. The year-mark counts 10% towards their final mark.

2.2.3 M and D Tech: Policing

At this stage of 2001, the M and D Tech: Policing has been approved by the various educational bodies and the Minister of Education. The programme envisages presenting these two-degree packages at the beginning of 2002.

2.2.4 Short Courses

Since the different branches of the South African Police Service (SAPS) as well as the individual members have differing training and development needs, the programme group is currently engaged in identifying what these specific needs are, so as to develop short courses. These will include basic Investigation of Crime, Community Policing, Victim Empowerment, Management and Human Rights.

Before focusing on the concept of distance education, it would perhaps be useful to focus on some of the aspects that constitute an environment conducive to learning.

2.3 THE CONSTITUENTS OF AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO ADULT LEARNING

The conception of learning environments according to Lorschach and Tobin (1995:16), is the construction of the individuals in a given social setting, an individuals socially mediated beliefs about the opportunities he or she has to learn, and the extent to which the social and physical milieu constrains learning. Learning environments are personal. However, an individuals construction are constrained by the actions of others and by the characteristics of the culture in which the learner is situated.

This is supported by Hiemstra (1991:12) who claims that interactions among those who participate in an educational setting shape individual constructions of the learning environment. The nature of a learning environment depends on what happens in a given period of time, who is present when it happens, and the physical, psychological and social setting in which it occurs (Lorschach & Tobin 1995: 22).

Therefore, learning environments are constrained by history. Beliefs about what should or ought to happen determine how an individual acts in a particular situation. Individuals actions are also based in part on the roles assigned to him or her world and the roles assigned to others. In terms of the constructivist learning principles, learning serves an adaptive function; its role is top help the individual operate within his or her personal world; thus learning is not the storage of "truths" but of useful personal knowledge. This is based on the premise that individuals actively construct knowledge (Lorschach & Tobin, 1995: 33).

However, according to Hiemstra (1991: 95), the conceptualization of a learning environment should extend beyond constructivism, to take account of social phenomena such as power, control and oppression. In this regard, distance facilitation / education

needs to always maintain the learning environment as a crucial element in the learning process.

2.4 AN OVERVIEW OF DISTANCE LEARNING

TSA has established itself as one of the few distance learning institutions in South Africa. It would probably be useful for the purposes of this study to engage in a brief discussion regarding the concept of distance learning.

The image of distance learning seem to have improved a great deal over the past years, due to the increasing popularity and competition regarding distance education. Garrison (1987:108) stresses the fact that education will be lifted out of the restriction of formal schools, and will be delivered through knowledge networks, personalized, lifelong, self-directed, and knowledge-creative in future.

Garrison (1991:108) stresses the importance of distance learning as follows: “...distance education institutions are likely to play a leading role in the way educational programmes are delivered in the information age” and “to put it another way, the “distance education” tradition puts correspondence schools at a distinct advantage in the competition for designing new, imaginative, and effective delivery systems over the next decade and indeed into the next century”.

There is little doubt that distance education will be able to fulfil its expected role in future.

One of the advantages of distance learning is its student-centred approach to learning, as it can accommodate individual student needs, varying learning styles, diverse geographic locations, and erratic time schedules (Smith & Kelly, 1997: 108). Garrison (1991:13) highlight the individualized function of the distance teaching institution as follows:

“The future task for education at a distance is to design and direct personalized information to specific target audiences. The industrialized form of distance education, with its mass consumption ideology and approach, will become less dominant in the future”.

According to Holmberg, (1985:84), subject content, which is personally relevant to the learner, will also motivate the student and contribute to effective learning.

Individualization is also an important criterion to keep in mind when feedback systems are designed. The less ill defined a task is (essays, critiques, design tasks) the more individualized the feedback needs to be (Galbraith, 1991: 34).

It is often the case that very little emphasis is placed on the educator's role, as the creator of the learning environment. For the purposes of this research the researcher wishes to concentrate on the adult educator as being instrumental to the issue on the learning environment.

2.5 THE DISTANCE EDUCATOR AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Holmberg (1985: 3) refers to distance education as a mediated form of guided didactic conversation. Interaction / link between the educator and the learner in a distance education environment takes place primarily via written feedback, tele-media communication and minimum face to face contact.

It is in the hands of the educators to create a conducive environment in which to maximize these opportunities to promote the learning process. As a result of the above the distance educator is confronted with numerous obstacles / problems. Facilitators /

educators should always maintain the learning environment as a crucial element in the learning process.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983: 27) are of the opinion that instructional design needs to consider the environment in order for the learning to be effective.

Adults in higher education respond to the educational climate / milieu with varying levels of interest, expectations, motivations and personalities (Knowles 1980; 50; Knox 1980; 76; Gravett, 1991: 16; Entwistle and Ramsden 1983: 3).

In order to support the learners in a distance educational milieu it is imperative that the distance educator possess not only skills in facilitating, but also skills and experience in facilitating the learning process through the creation of an environment conducive to adult learning (Gravett, 1993:4). This supported the claim of Dunn and Dunn (1975: 49) in maintaining "...if you want learners to succeed, be certain that they are placed in an educational environment that capitalizes on the way they learn best." This would in turn promote some principles of Adult Learning (self-directedness, self-motivation, self-concept and self-determination) with an ultimate path to learner development. Having briefly discussed the adult distance educator, focus would now be placed on the adult learner in a distance learning environment.

2.6 THE ADULT LEARNER IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education is just beginning to establish itself as an important field of study but will surely be limited without a critical mass of researchers. Garrison (1991:112) maintains that with this in mind, perhaps there is something to be gained from a closer alliance with adult education.

Adult educators could gain considerably by taking greater notice of the ways that distance education theory and practice could be used to facilitate and support areas such as self-directed and lifelong education. Through such cooperative activities distance educators might co-opt much needed researchers to work on the problems of distance education.

Adult educators, historically, have worked with non-traditional delivery systems. In some ways, the synergy of adult and distance education apparent during the early years of development has been lost. Today both seek to establish themselves as disciplines of study when; in fact, they are a part of a larger discipline or field of study.

The methods of distance education are becoming increasingly more essential to adult educators and an understanding of the adult learner is essential for the successful design and implementation of many distance education programs. There is subsequently a natural and mutually beneficial alliance between adult and distance education.

In discussion of issues in adult education, (Galbraith, 1991: 64) found strong support in literature for flexibility of delivery format and the need for institutions to "reach out to the very heart of locales where adults live and work. This has been, of course, largely the domain of distance educators. However, if we are to meet the increasing needs of adult learners, distance educators must become an integral component of adult education and begin working more closely with adult educators in reaching mutual goals. Technological methods will be deficient without the knowledge of the learner to guide design of these systems; and knowledge of the learner is deficient without the appropriate technological methods to support the communication process in educational transaction.

According to Keegan (1994: 44) if we are focused on an integral future then both adult and distance educators must eliminate the dualistic thinking about formal institutional and natural societal settings for learning. Traditional and distance education programmes, must become increasingly integrated for the benefit of all learners.

Having discussed some of the problems confronting distance facilitators it would be imperative at this stage to focus on some of the specific problems experienced by the distance learner which has direct bearing on the learning environment is existence.

2.7 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY A DISTANCE LEARNER

Learners in a distance learning milieu are confronted with various problems. According to Fraser (1993: 31 – 33) and Andrew (1998: 39 – 40), distance learners have no participation / involvement in a formal contact learning environment. They are excluded from critical reflection, very little opportunity to engage in dialogue with subject specialist education, there is no structured group of interacting and they are excluded from experiencing leadership opportunities in a student community.

There are a numerous problems experienced by distance learners. This is supported by Garrison (1991: 41); Mills & Tait (1996: 29); Darkenwald & Merriam (1982: 136-137) and Galbraith (1991: 103).

According to the above writers the consequent result is that the learners have problems to effectively manage their own learning. For instance time management and the ability to formulate ones thoughts on paper becomes a constraining issue. Lack of development in the ability to sufficiently comprehend the subject content is perhaps another.

The misconception/misinterpretation of certain concepts or objectives; personal problems like the availability of time for study purposes; unavailability or access to libraries; work commitments that makes studying difficult or impossible; commitments to family that clashes with study times are only few examples of the possible problems experienced by distance learners.

All learners do not necessarily have the experience of being self-directed. The education system in most distance learning institutions does however take this for granted (Galbraith, 1991: 80). This perception leads to the fact that these are no realistic expectations being set.

What follows are some general concerns or problems of distance facilitation which could possibly affect the learning environment.

2.8 GENERAL PROBLEMS OF DISTANCE FACILITATION INFLUENCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The greatest problems experienced by distance educators according to Smit (1994: 108); as well as Van Zyl, Steyn and Coetzee, (1993:19) is a feeling of isolation of both facilitators and learners which makes the possibility of a trusting relationship between both parties, so much a difficult one.

The desperation of engaging in conversation via distance education modes with the learner is perhaps another great frustration. It is possibly due to the fact that a majority of distance educators are “products” of a contact /residential institution:

- a) They do not possess any training and experience as far as the setting of study material is concerned.
- b) They have not experienced the frustration that a distance learner does.

The consequent result of the above is that the distance educators have very little sympathy with the learners (Adey, Kampman and Heese, 1990: 15 – 20).

Boredom and routine of the task to be performed by learners is perhaps another serious problem, which leads to frustration of both learners and educators (Fraser, 1985:8).

Ways in which to overcome this problem could perhaps be by:

1. Developing effective / efficient communication channels.
2. Acknowledge that learners have different learning styles and accept them as they are.
3. Maximize the use of learning material and written feedback with an eye to promote a trustworthy relationship with the learners.
4. Ensure that the tutors are fully supported with their task of “taking the distance” out of distance education.

Fraser (1993:19) attributes student attrition rate in distance education to some of the following factors, which has direct bearing on the type of learning environment in existence:

- Teaching, at the majority of distance education / learning institutions, focus on traditional contact teaching.
- The majority of lecturers are products of contact teaching.
- Insufficient / inadequate and in some cases no in service training of lecturers.
- Educators have insufficient knowledge of the theories and strategies for facilitating adult learners.
- Content, that promotes a superficial approach towards learning and inhibits an in-depth holistic approach towards learning is stressed.
- Shortcoming of competencies to apply the theory in practice exists.

Keegan (1986:87) finds distance education as unnatural; it breaks the process of communication, artificial mechanical substitutes for inter personal communication are provided. This changes the teaching behaviour and learning behaviour. This is a definite propensity to alienation.

Most limitations of distance education are associated with the delayed form of communication. Because feedback is slow, there is often a feeling of isolation and lack of motivation.

In general, level of knowledge or learning style preferences are not adequately addressed at a distance learning institution. This in essence means that an attempt in creating an environment conducive to adult learning is being stifled.

Having had an overview of the problems experienced in distance learning, it would be interesting to establish the approach adopted by the renowned United Kingdom Open University in addressing some of these concerns.

2.9 THE UNITED KINGDOM “OPEN UNIVERSITY” MODEL

The Open University model upon which most other “open learning institutions” model are based associates itself with some of the following aspects (Thorpe and Grugeon, 1987: 205):

- registration is open to all learners;
- studies could be started at any time of the year;
- learners participate in the design of the facilitation objectives and curricula;
- attendance of class is initiated by the central campus but is however not compulsory;
- lessons are structured through the contact classes in the form of group discussions;
- learners are contacted via telephone (individuals or groups);
- lessons are presented via videos, radio, tape recordings, printed study guides and various other modes; and
- seminars in the form of workshops are presented over weekends or even during vacation.

The above are embedded in firmly placed institutional structures.

Having discussed the problems encountered in distance learning at great length it becomes apparent that a lack of proper communication is a major concern underlying most of these problems. What follows is a brief discussion on issues surrounding the communication process in distance learning.

2.10 COMMUNICATION AND DISTANCE LEARNING

While most distance learning educators argue for the necessity of providing two way communications, the reality is that not enough is done to facilitate it. According to Moore (1996: 11) the effectiveness of distance education is determined by a complex interaction of variables which include learner variables, educator variables, subject variables and communication variables. The magnitude of distance in educational transaction,

according to Moore (1996: 12), depends on dialogue and structure. Dialogue is very much concerned with two-way communication during the educational transaction. On the other hand, structure is concerned with the preparation of course materials and the flexibility of the programme in general. It would appear that the existing structure of distance education as in the case of Technikon SA, needs to be carefully assessed.

2.11 PROVIDING CHALLENGING TEACHING AND LEARNING INTERACTION

The teaching and learning interaction suggests that the educator and the adult learner be engaged in an active, challenging, and supportive encounter. It suggests that both be involved in the planning and the learning process of the educational activity. Providing challenging interactions requires an understanding of the programme planning process and how to implement each component of it to bring about appropriate desired learning outcomes (Knox, 1986: 18). Understanding adults as learners and how to respond to their diversity and learning needs is also essential.

One of the most important aspects is to understand learning styles of adult learners and the implications they have for improving educational practices (Galbraith 1991:34). A challenging teaching and learning interaction is also predicated on understanding your philosophical orientation as well as your teaching style and whether it is conducive to an educational activity that requires collaboration and challenge among learners and yourself.

In addition to the acquisition of programme planning skills, a philosophical orientation, and understanding learning and teaching styles, what are the major elements that are involved in a teaching and learning interaction that make the interaction challenging and meaningful? How do you bring about this challenge? First, you need to take care enough to maintain standards and have high expectations of the adult learner (Moletsane, 1992:78). To build an effective teacher learner interaction, you must be supportive.

You must care enough about your learners to set up challenging tasks that call out for closure, while at the same time provide insight to how new knowledge can be applied to their lives or jobs. Providing realistic and varied opportunities will help the adult learner to persist and to apply what is learnt. In a collaborative manner, you can carefully subdivide and sequence learning tasks from simple to more complex and establish a pace for the learning that allows for individualization.

Throughout the entire activity the educator and the learner should be engaged in a continuous process of feedback (oral, written, or directed observation) about how the learning activity is progressing (Knox, 1986: 17). Finally, you must provide reinforcement for satisfactory performance and accomplishments and make note of exemplary achievements. As Moletsane (1992: 81) suggests, you should provide a “mirror” for your learners which allows them to see themselves in a different way; to see how they have changed and developed as a result of their accomplishments.

Exposure to standards of good practice and excellence and having encounters with role models can serve as a re-inforcement, challenge, and motivation for improvement.

According to Brookfield (1986: 91) for the above climate to materialize it is essential that an adult educator acquire various necessary skills:

- The ability to establish a climate that could possibly enhance the learning process.
- Knowledge of the programme planning process and how to implement its various components.
- An understanding of adults as learners and their diversity.
- The ability to develop caring, supporting, and challenging teaching and learning interactions.

The above clearly suggests that the learning environment plays an integral role in the learning process of adult learners. Helping adults can be a challenging, exciting, creative, passionate, and rewarding experience. A basic understanding of a variety of skills can

enhance and help guide those involved in this journey. A mentorship system is another component of the learning environment that would be discussed.

2.12 MENTORSHIP AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO ADULT LEARNING

When students come to higher education, they are in a real sense *changing environments*. If the institution is doing its job, it expects more rigorous thinking as well as more considered moral actions from its learners. If education is what it should be, it represents an intensification of and expanded reflection upon the best aspects of everyday life (Galbraith, 1991: 193).

As such it requires of its learners a different way of being if they are to adapt successfully to the new environment.

In such a situation, mentors are individuals who serve the important function of introducing learners to the new world, guide them in interpreting it for themselves, and helping them to learn what they need to know to flourish in it.

Mentors are, thus, interpreters of the environment. They help learners to understand how higher education works and what it expects of them (Galbraith, 1991:207).

Mentors are also an important part of the environment itself.

They may be doing some of the teaching, they model expected behaviour, and most certainly they speak the language of the new world and understand its peculiarities. They thus provide a special “test environment” for their learners. According to Keegan (1986:22) mentors affect human environment in three ways:

- ◆ they conform (its okay to be where you are);
- ◆ they contradict (it’s not okay to be where you are); and
- ◆ they provide continuity (when you move, I’ll still be there).

If we translate these three functions of what a mentor does, we see that mentors can do three things for their learners as they work. Mentors can *support* their learners in their present ways of being. They can challenge their learners towards more appropriate adaptations to the higher education environment, and they can *provide vision* for learners to help them see where they have been and where they are going. It is no surprise that the work of mentorship has been described as a “balancing act” Keegan, (1986: 31), for mentors spend much of their energy helping their learners to negotiate the learning process. Mentors provide a personal connection in an often impersonal and threatening world.

They replicate certain and appropriate aspects of an earlier parenting relationship and as such help the learner to resolve earlier separation / attachment issues and to continue “growing up” emotionally as well as intellectually. They offer a powerful form of role modeling, a direct form of teaching and an effective means of making the transition in a new and wider world. Mentors can work in a truly responsive and interactive way with the learner, shaping their responses directly to the learners, blending support and challenge in an optimally appropriate way. Moreover, the rewards of seeing a learner share ones own excitement about a subject, of re-visiting familiar intellectual pathways with a new companion, of being an important part of another’s growth, can be rich.

2.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has concentrated on the background of TSA and more specifically the programme group Police Practice. Focus was placed on the possible constituents of an environment that is conducive to adult learning. Much emphasis has been placed on both the adult learner and educator and the accompanying challenges that both parties encounter in a distance learning milieu. Emerging from the literature review is the fact that there are many obstacles and problems experienced in distance learning. In view of this an environment conducive to adult distance learning would be one which is cleansed of these attributes. This would subsequently enhanced the learning process in distance learning. In addition various propositions related to means of addressing the issue of

learning environments in distance learning have been covered. The importance of a mentorship process is another aspect that has been discussed in much detail. Chapter three will describe research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher focuses on the research methodology utilised. The following aspects will be explained in this chapter:

- ◆ Research design and technique;
- ◆ Descriptive Research;
- ◆ Explorative research;
- ◆ Sampling method;
- ◆ Data collection;
 - Observation
 - Interviews
- ◆ Advantages and limitations of the methods and techniques used;
- ◆ Data analysis and interpretation.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND TECHNIQUE

Seeing that the study is focused on meaning rather than comparison the researcher engaged in a qualitative research study. Creswell (1994:45) maintains this approach in explaining how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. According to Merriam and Simpson, (1995:107) Ethnography can also be regarded as an account that interprets the data within a socio-cultural framework. In following a qualitative approach the researcher focussed specifically on the use of interviews.

According to Mouton (1996:174) a research design is an exposition or plan of how the researcher plans to structure the research goal that has been formulated. In the case of this study this is to investigate whether an environment conducive to adult learning exist in the programme group: Police Practice.

A set of critical questions of this research have been formulated into a group of semi-structured interview questions in an effort to investigate the conduciveness of the environment. These questions have been scrutinized and reviewed by all lecturers of the Subject Group Management Leadership: Policing. In using such an approach these critical questions as well as the ILCDE Model served as the criteria against which the conduciveness at Police Practice was assessed.

The researcher followed a qualitative approach with a combination of exploratory and descriptive strategies. This will be explained further on page 37.

The researcher obtained information from lecturers / adult educators of Police Practice at Technikon SA. As mentioned earlier a qualitative approach will be followed and this study will be both descriptive and explorative in nature.

3.2.1 Descriptive Research

A study is descriptive when it intends to describe a phenomenon accurately within its specific context, and when it is based on collected data. The emphasis is on an in-depth description of an individual, group, situation or organization (Mouton, 1996:44). Merriam (1998:7) sustains that descriptive research is undertaken when description and explanation of a phenomenon are needed and not a prediction based on cause and effect. It is in this light that the researcher will attempt to establish the structures of Police Practice that promote an environment conducive to adult learning.

3.2.2 *Explorative Research:*

Mouton and Marais (1990:43) state that exploratory research aims to acquire new insights into a phenomenon rather than to collect and replicate data; to explicate the central concepts; to determine priorities for further research and to develop new hypotheses about existing phenomenon. The research design of an exploratory study tends to be open and flexible. It is in this regard that the researcher will attempt to explore the aspects of Police Practice that are associated with an environment conducive to adult learning.

This research has no interest in comparing or predicting because of the qualitative nature of this study. This study will therefore deal with questions of an explorative and descriptive nature.

3.3 SAMPLING METHOD

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995:57) a sample is a strategically and systematically identified group of people or events that meets the criterion or representativeness for a particular study. 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
- ◆ organizations
- ◆ institutions
- ◆ collectives
- ◆ social activities or events
- ◆ cultural objectives
- ◆ interventions

More specifically, for the purpose of this study the subjects under study are individual beings i.e. educators of the Programme Group: Police Practice presently serving as lecturers of the mentioned division.

The study is carried out on the premises of TSA itself. The sample involves the entire compliment of adult academic staff at Police Practice available at the present point of the research. The study was based primarily from an Adult Educators (Lecturers) perspective regarding the learning environment. The researcher acknowledges that the environment is dependent on the views of others as well. This has been identified as a limitation to the study which will be discussed at a later stage in Chapter 3. This study thus involved lecturers comprising of **10 males and 10 females** of diverse age groups, race and cultural backgrounds.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher adopted the method of interviewing in this research. Interviews were conducted in the programme group Police Practice of TSA. The interviews were conducted on the premises of TSA.

3.4.1 Interviews

According to Merriam and Simpson, (1995:164) an interview is a conversation with purpose and it can be used for assessment of facts, attitudes and opinions from research participants.

Merriam and Simpson (1995:106) goes on further to maintain that the ability to tap into the experiences of others in their own natural setting, while utilizing their value and belief framework is virtually impossible without face to face and verbal interaction with them.

Creswell (1994:150) distinguishes between two types of interviewing method viz.

- ◆ Structured instructional, open ended, face to face, one-on-one, in-person interview, and
- ◆ Semi-structured, open-ended, face to face, one-on-one, in person interview with the key informant people.

In this study all of these interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, face to face, one-on-one, in-person interviews with educators from the programme Police Practice of TSA. The following table provides details of the educators who gave consent and became respondents for the mentioned interview.

TABLE 3.1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

NO	CAPACITY	SUBJECT GROUP	NUMBER OF YRS AT POLICE PRACTICE	RACE	GENDER	LANG
1.	Lecturer	Management Leadership: Policing	5	White	Female	Afrikaans
2.	Lecturer	Management Leadership: Policing	4	White	Male	Afrikaans
3.	Lecturer	Management Leadership: Policing	1	White	Male	Afrikaans
4.	Lecturer	Management Leadership: Policing	10	White	Female	Afrikaans
5.	Lecturer	Management Leadership: Policing	5	White	Female	Afrikaans

6.	Lecturer	Management Leadership: Policing	2	Black	Male	English
7.	Lecturer	Community Policing	7	White	Male	Afrikaans
8.	Lecturer	Community Policing	5	Asian	Male	English
9.	Lecturer	Community Policing	4	Coloured	Female	English
10.	Lecturer	Community Policing	4	Black	Female	English
N0	CAPACITY	SUBJECT GROUP	NUMBER OF YEARS AT POLICE PRACTICE	RACE	GENDER	LANG
11.	Lecturer	Community Policing	5	White	Female	Afrikaans
12.	Lecturer	Law	3	Asian	Female	English
13.	Lecturer	Law	4	White	Male	Afrikaans
14.	Lecturer	Law	3	Black	Male	English
15.	Lecturer	Police languages	8	White	Male	English
16.	lecturer	Police languages	4	White	Female	English
17.		Police languages	4	Coloured	Female	English
18.	Lecturer	Investigation of Crime	5	Black	male	English
19.	Lecturer	Investigation of Crime	9	White	Female	Afrikaans
20.	Lecturer	Investigation of Crime	8	White	Male	Afrikaans

Interviews were conducted in the respondent's office so as to create a comfortable and relaxed climate. All interviews were briefed on the focus and purpose of this study. The

researcher engaged in a dialogue with the interviewee's around the semi- structured questions. (Refer to Table 4.2 for the interview schedule).

All respondents were asked the same questions (see annexure). These responses were transcribed and categorized in an attempt to arrive at valid conclusions.

3.5 LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE METHODS AND TECHNIQUES USED.

As with any method used in research the researcher takes cognizance of the fact that there are both advantages and limitations to the methods used in this study. What follows is an outline of the advantages and limitations of interviews as a research method that could possibly influence the findings.

3.5.1 INTERVIEWS

(a) Advantages

In terms of this study the advantages of interviews could be summarized as follows:

- The researcher interacts directly with the research participant that permits assessment of non-verbal communication.
- Encourages participation by the subjects.
- Data can be coded and analyzed.
- According to Merriam and Simpson, (1995:150) the structured interview can be an extension of the scheduled questions. Clarification, re-statement and explanation are all available for use in eliciting responses from participants.
- Structured interviews can increase the consistency from one interview to another

(b) Limitations

Having used the interview method in conducting the study, the identified limitations could be listed as follows:

- Taking notes may result in missing information and influence the validity of the interview results.
- Structured interviews do not offer the opportunity to explore all possibilities.
- A fairly time consuming exercise.
- A lack of experience, skill and knowledge regarding interviews could negatively influence the effectiveness of this method.
- Some participants appeared uncomfortable with the idea of using the tape recorder thus possibly affecting the feedback.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of qualitative data is a creative process, which is managed differently by different researchers, and because of this, it is impossible to provide a “recipe” for analyzing data (Yin, 1991:11). Creswell (1994:153) also mentions that data analysis requires that the researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts. It also requires that the researcher be open to possibilities and see contrary or alternative explanations for the findings. The researcher also took a voluminous amount of information and reduces it to certain patterns, categories, or themes and then interprets this information (Creswel, 1994:154). Tesch (1990:97) calls this process *decontextualisation and re-contextualisation*. Much work in the analysis process consists of “taking apart” (into smaller pieces), while the final goal is the emergence of a larger, consolidated picture. Mouton (1996:111) concurs by viewing data analysis and interpretation as identifying patterns and themes in the data and drawing certain conclusions from them.

3.6.1 Content Analysis

Audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim into a written format by the researcher. Recordings will be retained for reference purposes. The data from the interviews, were *content analyzed*.

3.6.2 Analysis of Responses

Responses of interviews were then analyzed using the following eight steps which Tesch in Creswell (1994:155) consider when analysing textual data:

1. Read through all documents/ transcriptions and get a sense of the whole.
2. Select one document and read through, concentrating on the underlying meaning. Record thoughts in the margin.
3. List the topics and cluster similar topics together.
4. Select codes for the different topics and record these next to the topics in the documents.
5. Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and relate to each other.
6. Decide on the final codes for each category.
7. Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8. If necessary, re-code your existing data.

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE METHODS USED IN THE RESEARCH

Through gaining knowledge from reading and active dialogue with other academics at Police Practice (TSA), the researcher made every attempt to ensure that the findings were valid and reliable.

3.7.1 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 results. Consistency is thus the key aspect to reliability. In terms of this study, various precautions have been taken by the researcher in ensuring that consistency was maintained throughout the data collection process. Some of these precautions are as follows:

- a) Consistency in collecting data was assured by the researcher posing the same questions in all the interviews.
- b) The researcher ensured that the participants interviewed were justifiably representative in terms of race, gender, language, age, number of years of service, and the various subject groups.
- c) The interviews were all conducted in a similar environment. This was done behind a closed door in the interviewee's office with minimal disturbances. Although notes were being made, all the interviews were audio recorded.

Despite the attempts that were made, the researcher has identified a few limitations in the use of interviews in this particular study.

- The researcher is a member of the lecturing staff at Police practice and this creates an avenue for subjectivity.
- The researchers lack of training and experience in the method of interview.
- The interviewees were confined specifically to Police Practice i.e. only one programme group of TSA.
- Clustering of data was done from only 20 interviews that were conducted.
- Since structured interviews were conducted issues concerning the learning environment could not be sufficiently "tapped."

- Interviews were conducted at the workplace in the interviewee's office, during normal working hours, which inevitably placed a limitation upon the interview duration.
- Notes were being made during the interviews, which could have been a distraction for the interviewee in engaging in reflective dialogue.
- With internal conflicts and the present morale of academic staff being at a low – responses during the interviews could have been negatively “influenced.”

The researcher is of the opinion that the manner in which the data could be deemed collected is reliable since the very same approach was used for all the interviews conducted.

In addition to this, all interviewees possessed the same job description and belonged to one specific programme group.

3.7.2 *Validity*

Mouton (1996:110) 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 data, establishment of trust and rapport with the interviewee and creating optimal conditions in terms of location or setting for the collection of data.

Merriam and Simpson (1995:101) sustained that internal validity could be examined by posing the following questions; *how congruent are ones findings with reality?*

According to this explanation the researcher views this study as having a high internal validity. This is supported by the fact that the researcher collected all data personally.

External validity refers to the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other situations. Seeing that no other research of this exact nature has been conducted – it becomes difficult for the researcher to discover meaning by means of any comparison or reference to other research conducted.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Interviews seem to have few ethical problems *as they afford the participants more control in that they can refuse to answer troublesome questions* (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:197). With regards to this the researcher used structured interviews where interviewees were all asked the same questions and the questions in their very nature merely gave participants an opportunity to share their own experiences, insights, opinions and concerns.

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995:195) research in applied fields such as adult education 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.

In an attempt to satisfy this concern the researcher briefed every interviewee of the purpose and rationale behind this study. Individuals were assured of the confidentiality regarding their responses.

In an effort to minimise the possibility of error by merely checking and rechecking the validity and conclusions the researcher, through co-operative learning groups submitted all findings for peer review.

3.9 DELIMITATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

3.9.2 ***Delimitation:*** The study is confined to the programme group Police Practice of TSA.

3.9.2 ***Limitations:*** The limitation of this entire study needs to be recognized because the study will be confined to one programme group.

The results could thus be subjective. This could consequently be seen as a limitation to its general relevance. Having being associated with TSA for approximately five years, the researcher makes the following deductions / observations:

- ◆ A large number of educators are subject specialists with very little or no experience in adult education. Those who possess some experience in the education field – have been primarily involved in child education (pedagogics).
- ◆ This study is based primarily on the views of the Adult Educators (lecturers) regarding the learning environment. The “conduciveness” of the learning environment is obviously dependent on the views of many other stakeholders.
- ◆ Police Practice is only one amongst the 12 programme groups of TSA.
- ◆ The majority of the learners of the programme group are primarily from the South African Police Services. The fact that this is just one organization with its own inherent culture and sub-cultures could perhaps be another limitation of this study.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has given an overview of the research methodology used in this study. The research design and technique of this entire study has been discussed in this Chapter. In addition to this the interview technique used in this study has been sufficiently discussed. In chapter four the data obtained through the interviews would be analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The emphasis of this chapter will be on the presentation analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through interviews with the educators.

The data is presented in a descriptive manner in the same sequence as the interview questions were posed. The researcher interprets the data in the same sequence, where significant aspects pertaining to the responses have been highlighted and deductions made.

4.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVIEWEE'S

Table 3.1 on page 39 was a brief summary of the participants who were interviewed from the program group Police Practice of Technikon SA. The table indicated the following information regarding the participant's capacity (to highlight the consistency in terms of the interviewees position); subject group the individual belongs to; the number of years experience with the programme group; race; gender; and the first language of the participant.

Table 3.1 on page 39 depicts the diversity of the population sample chosen in terms of race, gender subject group and the number of years experience. It is useful to note that there has been representation from every subject group, which comprises the programme group Police Practice. The language aspect reflects the first language spoken by the interviewee.

4.3 INTERVIEW FORMAT / STRUCTURE

All 20 participants were interviewed personally and confidentially in their own offices. Although all 8 questions had some relevance to each other, the researcher chose to handle them as separate entities in order to promote clarity and clear understanding as far as presenting findings and making conclusions were concerned.

Questions 1 & 2 were perception questions addressing adult learning principles and the learning environment, respectively. Questions 3 & 4 were specific questions pertaining to TSA as a distance learning institution. Question 5 focused on the delivery mode as a contributory factor to the learning environment, while question 6, 7, 8 placed emphasis on initiatives and interventions that could promote an environment conducive to adult distance learning. Table 4.2 represents a list of the structured interview questions that have been used in this research.

TABLE 4.2**A LIST OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

QUESTION NO.	STRUCTURE OF QUESTION
1.	What is your view on the importance of the Adult Learning principles in your daily responsibilities as an Adult Educator?
2.	What aspects in your own opinion constitute an environment conducive to adult learning?
3.	Do you think there is that responsibility for adult educators of a distance learning institution like Technikon SA to concern themselves over the issue of creating conducive learning environments? Explain
4.	From your experience at Police Practice (TSA) do you feel that the environment is conducive to adult learning? Substantiate
5.	In terms of delivery, what are your views pertaining to a) the use of technology in distance learning? b) “personalising” of learning material?
6.	Could you briefly explain any attempts that your subject group recently made with regards to creating an environment conducive to adult learning?
7.	Could you briefly explain your view on the introduction of in-service training/ staff development programmes (for you as the adult educator) with regards to conducive learning environments?
8.	What possible guidelines or recommendations could you propose in working towards a more conducive learning environment?

Section 4.4 looks more closely at the analysis and interpretation of the responses and findings pertaining to the interview questions.

4.4 RESPONSES AND INTERPRETATION OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

4.4.1 QUESTION 1 The importance of adult learning principles

A large number of the respondents considered the knowledge of adult learning principles as being of paramount importance in their daily responsibilities as adult educators. Almost each and everyone elaborated on the numerous advantages as to why knowledge of these principles were important for them, a great number felt that all educational practices should be guided by these principles. The general response that emerged was that subject specific facilitator exists in isolation from adult learning principles. It was interesting to note that all respondents felt that the TSA staff development component was not equipping them sufficiently with the necessary skills of aligning their teaching to adult learning principles. A few respondents felt that it was of minor importance compared to that of subject knowledge. One respondent commented on the principles as being of very minimal importance in a Technikon setting.

The following were some of the common responses obtained:

- the adult learning principles forms the foundation or basis of our core responsibilities as adult educators;
- these principles impact on everything we present and the very manner in which we present these;
- the principles are crucial to our responsibilities as adult educators especially in the way we handle our learners;
- the principles are of extreme importance and one cannot really function effectively as an adult educator by paying mere lip service to these;
- an educator is not thoroughly equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge if he/she is not orientated on the importance of considering adult learning principles;
- all adult educators need to ensure that they understand the characteristics of adult learners and the implications of these on distance learning;

- These principles are imperative to our core business as adult educators and should be carefully considered in designing study material, facilitating workshops, providing telephonic support, giving assignment feedback and others.

Gauging from the above the research is apparent that the majority of the educators view adult learning principles as fundamental to their functioning at TSA. Interestingly some were of the opinion that educators need to consider and explore adult learning principles from a South African perspective. The researcher views this as an opportunity for further research in the field of adult learning.

4.4.2 QUESTION 2 The aspects constituting a conducive environment

There were wide ranges of responses to this question. The following were some of the predominant responses recorded:

- user friendly learner material;
- sufficient contact and support for the learners;
- more research and consideration for what learners regard as conducive;
- professional –service orientated approach;
- acknowledgement of prior learning;
- access and availability of lecturers/tutors/library facilities / study groups/discussion classes;
- efficient and effective administrative process;
- empowering and enabling environment;
- more independence;
- flexibility in delivery and assessment;
- the learning should be geared towards being continuous, challenging and stimulating.

It is apparent from the above that educators see a direct relationship between different forms of support for the learners with the “conduciveness” of the learning environment. A number of respondents claimed that educators should move away from what they (as lecturers) feel is conducive and rather to what learners regard as conducive.

A great number of the respondents highlighted the following requirements as being of paramount importance for a conducive environment:

- An approach or system that values own opinions and where critical thinking is encouraged.
- Group work and reflective activity is promoted.
- A climate that is safe (least amount of frustrations/stress).
- A setting which accommodates various learning styles.

From the responses stated it is evident that a substantial proportion of the respondents have been able to touch upon a number of aspects relating to adult learning principles where specific emphasis is placed on a more flexible / accommodating system. The researcher is however not clear as to whether all educators fully support and are in favour of the implementation of such measures at TSA.

4.4.3 QUESTION 3 Responsibility of adult educators with regard to the learning environment

Most of the respondents felt it was very important for educators to take on this responsibility – since they have direct contact with the learners.

Some common responses were as follows:

- we are facilitators of the Learning Process and should thus be responsible for this;
- we are a distance learning institution where there is very little contact with our learners which makes it more the reason for us to assume this responsibility;
- this should be a priority for Adult Educators and cannot be side-tracked as a separate responsibility; and
- the entire Technikon should allow for initiatives – although educators should take the learning role on.

A few respondents felt the task of creating a conducive learning environment is more of a responsibility for support services at TSA. The educators appeared to show more concern over purely subject specific information.

In addition to this, many respondents felt it should be a shared responsibility between educator, management and support services (administrative). This basically outlined a need for this aspect to become part of the culture of the institution. The need for management and policy makers to align policy in terms of creating a conducive learning environment also emerged as a common response.

Some respondents felt that more focus ought to be placed on incorporating relevant and pertinent material in our course design, instead of focusing on the environment. It was felt that the learners should accept full responsibility for this.

A large number felt strongly that management needs to create opportunities for educators to address this need, as this is not presently happening.

Although a large proportion of the respondents felt it was imperative for educators to assume responsibility for creating a conducive learning environment, most of the educators however displayed reluctance in accepting sole responsibility. This finding coupled with the above findings could be interpreted in two of the following ways:

- The educator feels it is important for him/her to consider the implications of the learning environment but, it is, however, not only his /her responsibility for creating such an environment.
- The educator is prepared to accept total responsibility for creating an environment conducive to learning provided that they have the full support of management and administrative staff.

4.4.4 QUESTION 4 The current situation at Police Practice

It is significant to note that a substantial number of the respondents felt that the present environment at TSA – Police Practice is not at all conducive to adult learning.

There were a number of the respondents on the other hand who felt that the environment was conducive to a certain degree especially if one had to look and compare it with the situation about five years back. One respondent felt that the environment was fully conducive to adult learning.

The following were recorded as some of the reasons that most respondents shared:

- lack of attention paid to the concept of co-operative education;
- educators spend too much time and effort upon issues unrelated to the learning process;
- South African Police Services as an organization was consulted via representatives of the top structure. There was no attempt being made to consult the learners on grass roots (operational) level on their needs;
- large percentage of the “lecturers” have little understanding of adult learning and conducive environments as such;
- not enough contact and support for learners;
- as quoted from one of the respondents – “we have small pockets of excellence, where a few people are concerned about the issue of creating a conducive learning environment”;
- educators are too content driven, even at the expense of the process;
- “it appears as if adult educators / facilitators at Police Practice have not made the paradigm shift, thus the learning environment is not really regarded as an important concern”;
- “...people at Police Practice are not really competent (this includes myself) This is both the fault of the organization as well as the individual”;
- no collaboration between lecturer and learner thus resulting in the learner and the lecturer working in isolation;
- the so-called “learning process” in the programme group is a one way process. Lecturer – learner;
- we are replacing our standards with internationally accepted levels;
- we are unrealistic at times and often out of touch with what is happening on the ground;
- we need to contextualise our course content and delivery mode to our own situation; and
- principles and ideas are on track but we are not “living this out.”

There exists a strong concern with regards to considering the needs of the distance learners. The reasons given by the respondents are a clear indication of the critical areas that need to be addressed. Once again this is a possible area to possibly explore and research.

4.4.5 QUESTION FIVE Views pertaining to :

a) technology

b) personalised approach

(a) Many of the respondents were in favour of the use of technology and felt it was not being used effectively at TSA.

In the same breath, they had deep concerns of the fact that not all the learners have access to modern technology. It was felt that being a third world country and looking at the background of the SAPS members, modern technology could not be automatically implemented.

As quoted "...we come from a historically divided country where wealth and facilities were unequally distributed." We thus need to move forward but do so with caution, so as not to discriminate against any particular group. A large majority felt a need to strike a balance and follow a dual mode, where different learning styles / needs would be considered.

Some of the responses received were as follows:

- Technology is the ideal way – however access to facilities is a problem to ensure that the target audience is reached.
- Technology is crucial and should not be hampered by the argument of insufficient access – since those learners who have computers should be accommodated while other options should be available.
- This is the only way forward and Police Practice need to come to grips with this,
- We need to adapt to change and get rid of paper as a means of communication and delivery and move towards more technological developments eg. websites, email, video conferencing.

- Technology is the reality in terms of globalization and the competitive market. We need to however, carefully consider the background of our learners before engaging into any new ventures.
- Technology will be the best way of reaching a large number of learners from different parts of the country and we will need to make much more use of this as a means of communication and programme delivery.

A few participants felt that the use of technology is the reality if one considers globalisation and the current competitive market.

A couple of these respondents viewed technology such as computers as the only way forward and the only mechanism of taking the “distance out of distance education”. One of these respondents commented that this was the only way of making the ILCDE (integrated learner centered distance education) model a reality. As quoted “...we cannot use third world learning technologies if we want to accomplish first world progress with learning.”

FIGURE 4.1

**POSSIBLE REASONS FOR TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE
LEARNING BEING VIEWED NEGATIVELY**

The fact that South Africa was not a technologically advanced country – or that the majority of the country’s population was not equipped with the necessary skills.



Using technology often undermines the adult/human factor, where communication and relationship between the educator and the learner becomes de-personalized.



Technology often triggers fear and anxiety amongst learners which inevitably disrupts the conductivity of the learning environment

A few respondents were strongly of the view that TSA is walking on thin ice concerning the de-personalized nature of modern technology. These respondents viewed the use of technology very negatively for three of the reasons highlighted in figure 4.1. Considering the fact that all three of these factors are closely interrelated the researcher has chosen to highlight them by means of a sketch as can be seen in figure 4.1

All three factors tend to have a bearing on each other. With regards to the first factor the respondents were of the view that South Africa being a developing country with a large portion of its population being illiterate was a stumbling block as far as technological advancement in education was concerned. The second factor emphasized the depersonalized climate that technology would bring into the educational arena. Thirdly, it was felt that anxiety and fear of technology could possibly have a negative impact on the learning environment.

Very interesting and contentious discussions / explanations revolved around question number 5 of the interview. Having analyzed these findings (p59-60) it appears as if many educators often become pre-occupied with the technology as a means to an end. In essence what surfaces from the findings is that most of the respondents felt that TSA needs to strike a sound balance between “high tech” and “high touch”. This has been expressed as a need to have a balance between the use of technology and efforts of promoting the personalized approach.

- (b) It was most interesting to find that all respondents were unanimously in favour of a personalized approach. What follows are some quotes from the respondents to support this statement.

TABLE 4.3**SAMPLE QUOTATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS SUPPORTING A MORE PERSONALISED APPROACH**

- **“the ‘I’ is very important as the adult as an individual needs to know that he/she is being acknowledged and recognized”;**
- **“using a personalised approach with learners is the only way in many instances of stimulating dialogue which is imperative for the learning process”;**
- **“the informal mode of communication is more learning centred”;**
- **“this is the foundation of creating a conducive learning environment”; and**
- **use of language needs to be carefully considered and selected as a way of personalising study material.**

A few of the respondents felt that with the large student numbers that educators deal with, it is practically impossible for a personalised approach to be considered. It was felt that there is no truth to justify that all learners prefer this approach. One of the respondents was totally against the personalized approach as it was felt that this approach undermines the lecturer’s ability and as such portrays an unprofessional approach.

Evident from the interviews is that TSA generally places greater efforts into preparing or packaging content (i.e. structure) and much less effort is given to the crucial element of the educational transaction or process (i.e. the interactive dialogue) for the purpose of negotiating objectives and pursuing meaning. Without the opportunity for sustained two-way communication the emphasis will be on preparing and transmitting content, and negotiation for restructuring content to suit the learner is restricted.

What was most disturbing for the researcher was that, although most respondents were in favour of a more personalized approach, many continued to adopt a rather formal and rigid approach in communication with learners via tutorial letters, comments in assignments and telephone conversations.

4.4.6 QUESTION 6 Attempts made by subject groups

What follows is a list of initiatives that the respondents outlined as attempts of creating an environment that is more conducive to learning.

A few of the participants however felt that very minimal, if not none is being done in addressing the learning environment. They were strongly of the opinion that more focus was placed on content rather than the process of learning. All of the initiatives were summarized as follows:

- learning material design as being much more interactive;
- using audio and visual cassettes to facilitate learning;
- more flexibility in dealing with issues concerning the learner;
- introduction of subject committees as a way of designing the curriculum;
- inviting learners to make input, for example to put forward case studies and scenarios from the workplace;
- tutorial letters used more explicitly as a way of bridging the gap between school education and tertiary education;
- using more people from industry instead of confining everything to the academic world, for example moderators, markers, tutors selected from the industry – South African Police Services;
- designing of short /informal courses to address immediate needs;
- opportunities are created for learners to share their problems, frustrations, and experiences;
- proper training and support of tutors (generic and subject related aspects) in facilitating adult learning;
- short courses using a combination of distance and contact as a mode of delivery;
- from assignments to a workbook / learning guide approach and using a flexible way of administering this;
- activities/assignments allow for learners to engage in creative thinking and sharing of their own viewpoints;
- alternate means of assessment e.g. submission of projects, portfolios, presentations;

- allowing learners a second opportunity to re-submit assignments;
- introducing a learning benefit table as a means of plotting the learning process;
- using an open/flexible memorandum instead of set/fixed answers;
- asking critical questions as a way of assessing assignments;
- inviting learners to give their own opinions;
- pre-set exam questions e.g. questions are given to the learners in advance to prepare for examination;
- the whole process of re-curriculation;
- learning activities designed in the way that considers the adult learning principles in terms of choices and flexibility;
- organizing workshops as a way of stimulating dialogue;
- lecturers involvement in research projects to establish learner/community needs; and
- organizing of a world conference so as to address the issue of globalization.

From the responses above, it appears as if each and every subject group has engaged in some or other initiative so as to make the environment more conducive to learning. Some subject groups have, however, made a much more concerted effort in addressing the environment compared to others. Perhaps a crucial question that needs to be asked is *whether those initiatives were in fact formulated in consultation with the learner or not and if it has led to an enhanced learning process?*

Although individual subject groups have made various attempts, Police Practice of TSA as a distance education institution is in essence concerned with meeting the educational needs of adults in specific domains. However, while educators in both fields are generally aware of this commonality, there does not appear to be much mutual/joint efforts in exploring this relationship. It became clear from the interviews that the various subject groups of Police Practice have isolated their efforts and as a result no substantial efforts with regard to learning environment have been achieved for the learner.

4.4.7 QUESTION 7 In-service training and staff development programme

There appeared to be a unanimous response to this question where all respondents saw the introduction to such a programme as highly beneficial and applicable to the TSA setting. All respondents felt that these programmes would be a dynamic process, it should however be continuous in nature.

Interestingly, a large number of the participants felt that the present programme was ineffective and not meeting the needs of the educators. It was further felt that educators were often thrown into “the deep end” with minimal support, thus resulting in extensive duplication of efforts and the absence of a shared vision and common understanding.

Some of the most common responses were as follows:

- Training in certain fields eg. computers have been covered sufficiently, however training in education and related topics have not been done.
- Training in this field is instrumental for adult educators. It should not be taken for granted that all educators at TSA are familiar with the area of learning environments.
- We need to all be orientated and continuously trained in this field. Training in areas such as establishing interactiveness, accommodating different learning styles, alternate assessment methods and setting assignments and exam papers need to be done thoroughly at TSA.
- This is essential especially for a distance learning institution like TSA. This often creates a problem where educators are thrown into the “deep end”. Many focus primarily on the subject matters and neglect the process.
- There is often a confusion at TSA regarding orientation and staff development. The importance of both cannot be over estimated. Training in the field of learning environments needs to be progressive and continuous.
- Training of educators in the field of Adult Learning (inclusive of the learning environment) is not done sufficiently at TSA, yet it is such a vital component. This should become a compulsory component of both orientation and staff development.

- Recently appointed educators need to be placed through a mentorship process and perhaps be given a probation period to prove their competence.

All respondents complained of not being supported on their initial arrival at TSA and of great confusion between orientation and staff development.

It was felt that there was an urgent need for programmes to be more specific in supporting educators in their daily responsibilities.

A great number of the respondents vouched for the mentor system to support staff and the idea of appointing educators with a compulsory “learning period” which basically follows along similar lines as the ‘probation’ period.

The researchers view on this aspect is that the staff are passionate, motivated and “hungry” for knowledge on how to create a more conducive learning environment. It is perhaps in this instance that insufficient support / training is being currently provided to support the educators on aspects related to adult learning environments.

The researcher views this as an opportunity for staff development to address all the constituents of a conducive learning environment in their training programs.

(See paragraph 5.3.7)

4.4.8 QUESTION 8 Possible guidelines / recommendations

The following additional guidelines/recommendations were proposed. These do not follow any specific order/sequence. In addition the researcher omitted all other responses that were similar in nature.

The researcher has chosen to highlight these responses in a tabular format in an effort of quoting the actual words of the respondents. These responses are reflected in the table below.

TABLE 4.4

**GUIDELINES / RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSED BY
EDUCATORS FOR ADDRESSING THE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT**

▪ More attempts should be made to get to know our learners and our staff needs, as well as the market demands.
▪ Gather more information on the profile of learners and ways of accommodating them e.g. The RPL programme.
• More contact sessions/discussion classes.
▪ Learners should be divided into reading or study clubs via the tutor system.
▪ Designing programmes to be more flexible and accommodating a variety of learners.
• More energy should be channeled into training of educators.
• Study material should become internationally accredited.
▪ Research should be conducted into why learners are failing or terminating their studies
▪ The need to make a paradigm shift of attaching proper value to the process of learning rather than only the content.
• Displaying greater empathy towards learners.
• Establishing a service culture in the form of continuous support.
• Exposing examination papers to more scrutiny in the moderation process.
• Re-aligning the staff in terms of the new vision of the organization.
▪ Proper communications so as to promote a shared vision – within the subject group; programme group and TSA at large.
▪ Quality control – every individual needs to be made accountable for quality control in his / her specific field.
• The move towards empowering tutors should be considered.
▪ Decentralize lecturers (full time basis) to different regions to enable a strong and continuous support for learners.
▪ Management and policy makers should play a crucial role in ensuring that the environment is conducive to learning.
▪ TSA needs to become much more pro-active in getting learners ready for new developments and new approaches rather than being reactive as presently done.
▪ A major focus should be placed on boosting the morale of staff (academic and support).
▪ There is an urgent need for subject groups to engage in both self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

▪ A need to create a conducive learning environment for facilitation before we even think about considering the learning environment.
• Educators need to become learners themselves.
▪ We need to capitalize on the competence / expertise / knowledge of people in the organization itself.
▪ Establishing a learning centre/s in coping with distance mode of learning in terms of writing assignments, handling feedback, time management, exam preparation, compiling portfolios
• Working on the idea of establishing a computer centre.
▪ We complain about literacy levels of our learners being too low – but what are we doing about it?
▪ Any staff development programme should ensure that academics and support services have the same understanding so as to achieve quicker results.
▪ We need to collaborate and form partnerships with other institutions as well as community initiatives.
▪ In an effort to accommodate more than one learning style – we need to use a variety of approaches.
▪ More sharing and collaboration needs to take place between the various programme groups of the institution.
▪ All staff should be enlightened and educated in terms of creating a conducive learning environment – preferably someone within the organization that understands the context.
▪ More research should be conducted both locally and internationally in order to get a holistic picture of the way forward in the distance mode of facilitation and learning.

The various ideas generated from this question is an indication to the researcher of the commitment, innovation and potential of this programme group to become the fore-runners in this field, not only for TSA but distance learning at large.

4.5 SUPPLEMENTARY FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

Like in any research, supplementary data do emerge. Gauging from the interviews a number of the other findings have been identified with regards to Police Practice. As indicated below the researcher has categorized these findings under specific sub-headings and it is hoped that these aspects could stimulate further inquiries and probable dialogue.

4.5.1 Language as a limitation at TSA

A large number of the respondents see language as being an important consideration for creating a conducive learning environment. It is highly recommended that there be appropriate matching of the programmes “language” and the reading, writing and comprehending level of the learners. This is especially valid in the context of the SAPS where a majority of the learners are studying in their second and third language. In view of this the researcher sustains that if the language is at the correct level, most people, if they have the necessary motivation, can learn successfully at TSA.

4.5.2 Inadequate Study guide

Mediocre instruction with an increase in number of “inferior” courses are yet another major concern. According to the respondents, study guides are often prepared too cheaply and too quickly, and as a result are unattractive, uninteresting and often give only the minimum guidance.

4.5.3 Delivery mode

It was also felt that too many of the courses are delivered by print only, with little or no integration with tele-conference, broadcasting, or taped media.

As noted in the analysis of question 5 of the interview questions there were mixed feelings around the excessive use of modern technology. Most respondents maintained the view, that provided the delivery mode is implemented and managed/monitored around the principles of adult learning within the context of TSA and the changing environment, the learning process will be enhanced.

4.5.4 Making a Personal commitment to change

Almost all respondents were of the view that in order for Police Practice to establish a conducive learning environment adult educators need to make personal commitments to changing their views on learning environments and how to work within them. This may be the most difficult to satisfy because our “practice” approaches, beliefs, and materials typically are well engrained. However, whether the task is giving up some control to learners, incorporating new technology, confronting personal racist or sexist views, or redoing old curricular materials that are offensive to certain learners, the commitment to such change should improve our effectiveness as professional adult educators.

4.6 GENERAL COMMENTS FROM THE RESEARCHER

From the researcher’s experience in engaging in long conversations with the educators at Police Practice during the interviews – there are many educators who do not wish to concentrate on issues surrounding learning environments.

Part of the problem could possibly be that many individuals appear to fall in to the comfort zone of what they already know, and some of the issues raised in this study are very complex and cause painful self reflection repercussions.

What emerges from the findings of this study is that adult educators need to make several new commitments for Police Practice if the learning at TSA environment is to be improved. For some lecturers at Police Practice this process of improvement will entail examination of their daily behaviour to see if they inadvertently practice techniques or administrative policies that in effect inhibit certain learners.

Others may need to confront the bureaucracy or inherent cultures at TSA that somehow possibly diminish learning environment effectiveness by impeding the learner and educator relationship.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data reveals the learning environment of Police Practice at TSA as a complex interrelationship of several dimensions. Some of this complexity has not yet been explored, nor is it even addressed in this study.

The researcher however intends for the findings outlined in this study to be instrumental in promoting better understanding and increased effectiveness of learning environments within the context of distance and flexible learning.

4.8 SUMMARY

Chapter 4 covered aspects regarding details of the interviews and a synopsis of the interview format /structure.

Information regarding the interviews have been analysed and various deductions have been made.

In addition to the above the researcher has recorded a number of supplementary findings that has emerged from the data collection process.

In chapter 5, special emphasis is placed on recommendations and proposals for Police Practice at TSA.

The recommendations emerging from the findings and conclusions of this study would be possible ways of creating an environment more conducive to Adult Learning for Police Practice.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Rather than just responding to changes adult educators in distance learning need to take an active role in moulding the future learning environment of adults in their specific institutions. Because our society is characterized by rapid and pervasive change, it is difficult to predict or forecast the future with any definite confidence, particularly for a field as both dynamic and diverse as adult learning environments.

This chapter covers a brief summary of the literature review as well as a summary of the findings regarding the interviews. This would in turn be followed by the conclusions, which give rise to the various recommendations (see paragraph 5.2 to 5.12) that have been proposed. A proposed checklist regarding the creation of an environment conducive to adult learning would follow this. In addition to all of the above the researcher has identified future research needs for TSA.

5.1.1 Summary of literature review

The nature of the learning environment depends on what happens in a given period of time, who is present, when it happens, and the physical, psychological and social setting in which it occurs.

In order to support the learners in a distance education milieu, it is imperative that the distance educator possess not only skills in facilitating, but also skills and experience in

facilitating the learning process through the creation of an environment conducive to adult learning.

An important point that emerges from the literature review is that, if you want learners to succeed, you need to be certain that they are placed in an educational environment that capitalizes on the way they learn best. The methods of distance education are becoming increasingly more essential to both adult education and an understanding of the adult learner is essential for the successful design and implementation of many distance educational programmes. There are numerous problems with distance learning (See paragraph 2.7 and 2.8) which needs to be interpreted as challenges in order for the learning environment to be addressed.

Communication (as seen in paragraph 2.10) is an essential determinant in the distance learning mode. The use of flexible learning contracts in distance education could promote a stimulating relationship between learner and educator and consequently enhance the attempts at creating an environment more conducive to adult learning.

Another important aspect that emerges from the literature review (see paragraph 2.11) is the importance of the learner and educator being engaged in an active, challenging and supportive encounter.

Finally, the need for a mentorship programme in distance education is seen as an imperative component for an environment to be conducive to adult learning. The next paragraph covers a summary of the findings generated from the interview process of this research.

5.1.2 Summary of findings regarding interviews

Transcription 2 of the 20 interviews conducted have been randomly selected and placed in the appendix.

As seen in paragraph 4.4.1 a number of the respondents view knowledge of adult learning principles as being fundamentally essential to their daily function as adult educators. All education processes need to be carefully guided by these principles. Educators felt they are not being assisted sufficiently by TSA in this regard. Educators tend to envisage a strong relationship between different forms of support in distance education and the "conduciveness" of the learning environment (see paragraph 4.4.2). A safe, flexible and accommodating environment emerged as important aspects. Most educators see it as their responsibility to create an environment conducive to learning but are however reluctant to accept sole responsibility due to the complexity and large number of stakeholders involved in a distance education institution like TSA.

From the findings it became evident that the central response regarding the learning environment at Police Practice was that it was not really conducive to adult learning. Various reasons were given by educators to support the statement (see paragraph 4.4.4.). With regards to the use of technology, there were mixed views. On the one hand it was strongly supported in terms of globalization and moving into a technological future, while on the other hand there was a fear of depersonalizing the mode of delivery and instilling fear and anxiety amongst learners.

Educators at Police Practice tend to favour a personalized approach in dealing with learning (see paragraph 4.4.5 b), but are perhaps reluctant to engage in such a mode due to the traditional schooling background they come from. As seen in paragraph 4.4.6, various attempts have been made in creating an environment more conducive to learning at Police Practice. These initiatives have however been implemented as isolated attempts and have consequently not made significant impact regarding the learning environment.

The overall response regarding in-service training / staff development programmes were very positive. Respondents criticized the present development programmes as being either insufficient or ineffective in addressing crucial elements of the distance learning environment. As can be seen in paragraph 4.4.8, various innovative ideas were sighted by educators as proposed guidelines / recommendations in addressing the learning

environment. Many of these have been used in establishing a checklist regarding an environment conducive to adult distance learning (see paragraph 5.13)

The researcher envisages these recommendations to serve as criteria for distance learning institutions to possibly follow. The researcher is of the view that each of these recommendations has some direct or indirect bearing upon each other and cannot be dealt with in isolation. However for the purposes of clarification and criteria the researcher has chosen to discuss each one individually. It is hoped that these proposals would stimulate further discussion and potential dialogue with the ultimate aim of demystifying the crucial issue of learning environments.

This entire research focussed on the interpretation of the educators regarding the learning environment. It is for this reason and many others that the researcher proposes specific considerations below for adult distance educators in an attempt of progressing towards an environment more conducive to adult learning.

What follows is the conclusions and proposed recommendations of this research.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the purpose of this study and the subsequent findings, it can be concluded that Police Practice have not adequately created an environment conducive to adult learning. Although numerous efforts have been made in the direction the overall practice of the programme group needs to adopt a wide range of initiatives.

Educators very often become catalysts and as such are crucial in enabling learners to liberate their understanding. Educators are very special in their role in creating an environment where learners are equipped with confidence to explore new ideas.

With regards to the findings in chapter 4 (see section 4.4) of this study various conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of the educators in creating an environment conducive to adult learning.

Adult educators will need to employ a wide variety of methods in programme design in order to accommodate as many learning styles as possible.

In order to address the broad spectrum of learning needs of an increasingly diverse adult clientele, it will be imperative for different formats of delivery modes to be used.

Furthermore, methods that emphasize co-operative learning as well as those that individualize instruction will be equally important (see paragraph 4.4.5).

- More focus needs to be placed on methods that stress co-operative learning, problem solving, and critical and reflective thinking (see paragraph 4.4.6 & 4.4.8).
- There is a tendency emerging in higher (particularly distance learning) education towards institutional self-evaluation. If staff members in their respective departments or units could engage in peer evaluation or in any form of self-evaluation, it could possibly help to determine whether their services do indeed reach and benefit their clients. Although certain groupings at TSA do engage in similar activities, it needs to become both a compulsory and a consistent component of all subject groups (see paragraph 4.4.8).
- Group work will need to become an important vehicle for co-operative learning due to changes in the workplace. Adult educators will be able to help individuals become better group members by assisting them to develop group process skills (e.g. teamwork, leadership, participation, and group member skills e.g. active listening, staying on task, giving and receiving feedback. (See paragraph 4.4.6 and 5.2).
- Adult educators will need to develop methods designed to help adults evaluate available information sources. The use of exercises or discussions in which individuals critique a resource they have actually used reflect on its accuracy,

reliability and contemporaneousness and evaluate its overall usefulness will be one way to achieve this goal. (See paragraph 4.4.6 and Table 4.4).

Having analysed the recommendations proposed by educators in chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.4.8) it can be concluded that adopting an open learning approach could be a fundamental beginning in addressing the learning environment.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the findings is that institutional policy and the role of management is crucial if not a necessity in the establishment of an environment conducive to adult learning (see paragraph 4.4.3 and 4.4.8).

A conclusion regarding adult learning principles can be drawn from chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.4.1) is that the educators tend to view the knowledge of adult principles as being crucial to their daily responsibilities.

From the analyses of chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.4.5 b) it is evident that educators at Police Practice tend to favour a more personalized approach. The reluctance to continuously engage in such practice is probably due to not really knowing how to implement and pave such an approach, or fear of undermining ones perceived sense of professionalism.

It is clear from chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.4.7) there is an urgent training and development need for educators at Police Practice regarding learning environments and the role that educators can and should fulfill.

As evident from the findings of this study (see paragraph 4.4.8) many of the respondents agree that a strong concern in distance learning is the aspect of the “loneliness” or “isolation” experienced by the learner. It is for this reason the environment needs to be as supportive and non judgmental as possible.

As previously mentioned (see paragraph 5.1.2), Police Practice lacks the implementation of sufficient learner support programmes that enhance a learner centered climate. In view of all of the above the researcher proposes the following recommendations which could promote the establishment of a more learning centered approach.

Based on the above conclusions the researcher proposes various recommendations for Police Practice in Section 5.3

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 POSSIBLE SUGGESTIONS OF HELPING ADULTS LEARN MORE EFFECTIVELY AT POLICE PRACTICE

Based on the findings (paragraph 5.1.2) and conclusions (see paragraph 5.2) of this study possible ways of helping students learn better at Police Practice would be by:

- (a) Diagnosing their learning style and provide feedback about it.
- (b) Keeping logs and journals as they learn.
- (c) Assigning retrospective reports following learning episodes.
- (d) Conducting critiques to analyze the process dimensions of such activities as group discussion.
- (e) Providing relevant theoretical information through tutorials and assigned readings.

The journey to more effective learning begins with adult education practitioners at Police Practice making personal improvements in their understanding and practice. This may require changes that will be difficult to achieve. More than often perspective transformation, paradigm shifts and reassessment of personal philosophy is needed.

5.3.2 USING AN OPEN LEARNING APPROACH AS A HOLISTIC APPROACH IN ADDRESSING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

It is recommended that open learning as a holistic approach should be used when creating an environment which is conducive to learning.

The consensus amongst educators at Police Practice (see paragraphs 4.4.2, 4.4.4 and 4.4.8) is that there is a need for much more flexibility and an approach enhancing a visible shift from rote learning to deep levels of learning.

Open learning allows the learner to choose how to learn when to learn where to learn and what to learn as far as possible within the resource constraints of any education and training provision. It is evident from the findings in chapter 4 that no single method is likely to dominate in the future. Distance education will be delivered in many different formats and in many different locations. Print, media and human resources will all have important roles to play in this system if learning is to become a reality.

The proof of implementation should become evident in the very functioning and operation of the programme group. In general, if Police Practice claims to be an open / flexible learning programme group - then the researcher strongly recommends that guidelines regarding the characteristics of open learning needs to be satisfied.

A point of departure could perhaps be by designing or amending TSA policies which could in essence enable all of these characteristics to interweave into the daily practice of the institution.

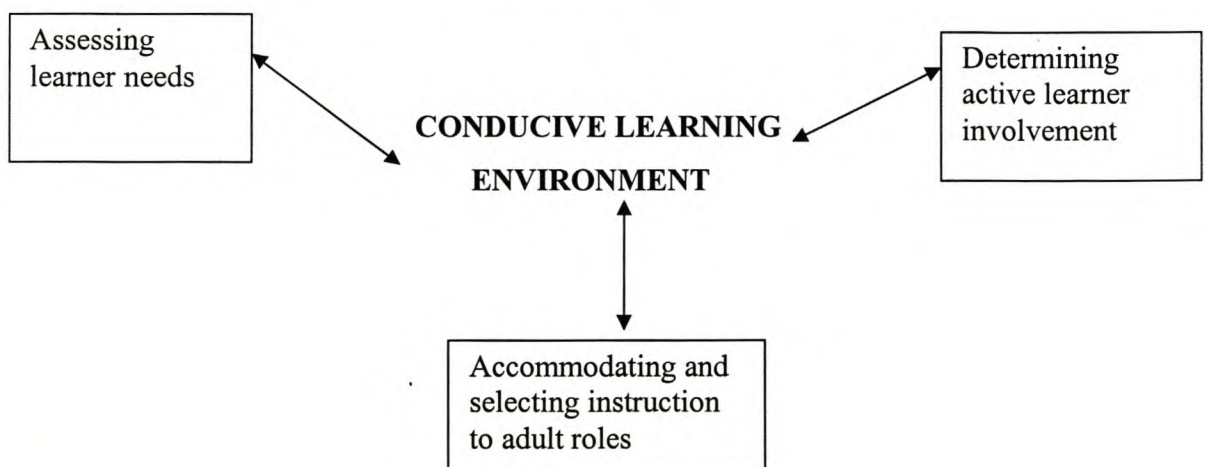
5.3.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

It is recommended that distance learning at TSA could be highly stimulating if policy makers recognize the true potential of distance education, initiate policies that would empower their education specialist to develop that potential, and invest in the personnel and delivery modes that would realize that potential (see paragraph 4.4.3 and Table 4.4).

5.3.4 CONSIDERING THE IMPLICATIONS OF ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES AS A WAY OF CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING

It is recommended that principles of adult learning and implications thereof should be carefully considered. Possible ways in which the educators can nurture adult learning principles and as such promote the establishment of an environment conducive to distance adult learning is depicted in Figure 5.1.

FIGURE 5.1
PRINCIPLES GOVERNING AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING



Two possible ways of giving meaning to adult learning principles are as follows:

(a) *Presentations*

Based on the fact that adults generally dislike tests and assignments, reading material can be provided, from which they can make an oral presentation. Maximum use could be made of the regional offices, tutors as well as video conferencing facilities (which TSA currently possesses) for this to become a reality. Such presentations can be coordinated with the reading clubs or study groups referred to in paragraph 5.9.3 and 5.9.4.

(b) *Project Work/ Portfolios / Models*

It is a fact that projects, portfolios and models, though suitable, might require the expenditure of a lot of time yet, however as a strategy for studying and as means of enhancing the learning environment they could prove beneficial when dealing with adult learners who so often come to the learning adventure with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

5.3.5 PERSONALIZING DISTANCE LEARNING THROUGH THE USE OF TEXT

It is recommended that adult educators should attempt to personalise distance learning through the use of text.

What follows is a possible outline for educators to follow in an attempt to personalize distance learning. The ultimate aim would be stripping all formalities and restricting barriers that impede the learning process.

5.3.5.1 The Readability of text and open learning

It is recommended that the simplification of writing style contributes to the clarification of text (see paragraph 4.4.5 (b)). A simple strategy that could be followed is by taking the following into consideration when tutorial material is prepared as indicated in table 5.1

TABLE 5.1
THE SIMPLIFICATION OF WRITING STYLE

▪ Writing conversationally and plainly
▪ Using personal pronouns such as “I” and “you”
▪ Making writing friendly and informal
▪ Using contractions (don’t, we’re, can’t, let’s, she’s, etc.)
▪ Using words instead of phrases
▪ Using precise words in discussions
▪ Using strong active verbs and avoiding passive statements
▪ Simplifying sentences by keeping them short and simple

The aim is not only to present a text, which is simple and clear, but also to establish a personal and social bond between lecturer and student. This can be done by informalising (stripping it of all formalities and restricting barriers) the communication between lecturer and student. Informality stimulates interpersonal interactions which in turn is a prerequisite for effective personalized distance teaching. The aim is to find ways of breaking down feelings of isolation and anxiety in external students. Educators should attempt this by reinforcing formal teaching modes with informal approaches of communication. As a further recommendation Police Practice could adopt an informal approach to learning at a distance by considering some of the following factors (see paragraph 4.4.5(b)).

5.3.5.2 Factors Relating to an Informal Approach to Distance Learning

The following recommendations below could assist in adopting an informal yet supportive role in distance learning (see conclusions, paragraph 5.2).

- ◆ can be achieved by inviting students to contact lecturers, should the need arise;
- ◆ by using personal pronouns and photographs;
- ◆ by responding immediately to letters and calls;
- ◆ by returning the marked assignments as soon as possible;
- ◆ by supplying extensive comments on the assignments;
- ◆ by corresponding with students in handwritten letters; and
- ◆ by using the first name as identification.

5.3.6 TECHNOLOGY AS PART OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The lack of skill and knowledge in using technology, the continuing rapid change taking place in communication technology and the sheer variety of options poses a challenge for TSA yet to explore. An important point that needs to be kept in mind is that TSA is based in a historically divided country where wealth, facilities and opportunities were predominantly unequally distributed. There is thus the need for Police Practice to move forward cautiously as far as technology is concerned so as not to discriminate against any particular group. In addition to this it is important for Police Practice to engage in a mixture of technological delivery modes to accommodate the profile of the current learners.

With regards to the above implications of communication technology and the opportunities it offers adult education the researcher is of the view that it is of utmost importance for Police Practice to research and generate innovative and realistic options of addressing these limitations (see paragraph 4.4.5 a).

With respect to learning environment considerations, the researcher is of the view that educators must not be preoccupied with technology (as is perhaps the case at TSA) but instead should see it as a vehicle of delivery that can structure messages in differing and unique ways.

If implemented and managed along the principles of adult education the technological environment will undoubtedly promote an environment conducive to learning in the distance mode of learning.

The lack of sufficient staff development opportunities with regards to the adult learning environments emanated as a major concern for Police Practice staff in chapter 4. This aspect would be discussed in greater length in paragraph 5.3.7.

5.3.7 IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF POLICE PRACTICE EDUCATORS

Having analyzed the findings of the study it is apparent that the learning environment at Police Practice of TSA has not been treated adequately in a serious light, it is felt that a sound recommendation in this regard would be to “re-educate” or sensitize the distance educators at Police Practice on the importance of giving serious consideration to the adult learning environment.

The in-service training of lecturers entering distance learning, as well as lecturers who engaged within residential institutions who wish to develop and design open learning instructional material should be made compulsory for all academic staff. This need perhaps arises from the fact that many educators (lecturers) have been subjected to contact training and are not acquainted with recent trends in distance learning. It is essential that educational practitioners at Police Practice continuously re-assess the learning environment to establish whether it is conducive to the current learners of the institution. A starting point with regards to staff training could perhaps begin by placing much more emphasis on the orientation of staff members (see paragraph 4.4.7)

5.3.7.1 Orientation of Staff : The question of staff is of vital importance. It is recommended that the younger staff as well as the less experienced staff at Police Practice need to undergo frequent inservice training concerning how to work with adults and motivate them.

The more experienced staff, too, urgently need some form of orientation along similar lines as well as how to adapt to changes and developments regarding the learning environment. The next important step for Police Practice as evident from the findings of the research would be gearing towards a learner centered approach.

5.3.8 LEARNING CENTERED APPROACH

Adult educators at TSA need to make personal commitments to changing their views on the learning environments and how to function within them. However different it may be educators need to adopt a learning centered approach rather than being caught up between the two poles of learner centered and educator centered.

The above-mentioned paragraph re-iterates the importance of Police Practice in ensuring that the instructional practice is effective and learning centered. As a possible recommendation stress needs to be placed on the importance of culturally and socially friendly learning content, the development of integrated tutorial packages, the adoption of a multi-media approach to instruction, the recommendation and prescription of text books which will qualify as 'open sources of information' (distance learners are more heavily reliant on text books than contact students.), the writing of study guides which will expose or disclose the meaning of facts and concepts, the setting of assignments requiring skills beyond the 'recall and application of knowledge' and the institutionalization of support services. Furthermore, a 'new model' should stress the importance of better understanding and interpersonal communication between lecturer and learner. (see paragraphs 4.4.1, 4.4.4 and 4.4.6). The following are possible ways of moving towards a learner centred approach emanating from this study:

5.3.8.1 Orientation of learners: It is recommended that a separate programme

suitable for Police Practice learners should be designed, and carried out to sensitize the cadre of adult learners to what they can expect, reduce their anxiety, and motivate them even before they begin their studies (see Table 4.4 and conclusions 5.2). This should be the responsibility of the regional/satellite office of TSA.

5.3.8.2 Reading Club : It is recommended that learners at Police Practice could be divided into reading and study clubs or groups by regional offices via the tutor system (see Table 4.4). This is perhaps a way of assisting the learners to form their own co-operative learning groups (see conclusion 5.2). Learners should not be compelled, but rather encouraged to do so.

5.3.8.3 Study Skills : From the overall review of the findings in chapter 4, what is perhaps lacking and needs to be addressed are study skills of learners. Since adult learners have different needs from other learners, as a recommendation it would be sensible to devise less stressful, more efficient ways in which they can carry out their studies.

This is where academic support units could be of great assistance regarding the provision of study skills sessions to adult learners in higher education institutions like TSA. It is recommended that the sessions of study skills should preferably include time management, reading skills, compiling assignments/projects/portfolios, scanning, use of video and ordinary cassettes, note taking, interpreting and managing written feedback, group work and networking.

Gauging from findings in chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.4.4) Police Practice follows a predominantly one way approach. Despite the minimum face-to-face contact, it is recommended that an educator learner dialogue needs to be encouraged and promoted at Police Practice.

5.3.9 CREATING A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

Evident from the findings of this research is that Police Practice at TSA lacks the vigor (see paragraphs 4.4.4 and 4.4.8) to continuously stimulate and encourage critical and innovative thinking in its teaching. Learners need an environment that forces them to reevaluate their current thoughts and action (see paragraph 2.11). Learners adopt new ideas and behaviours only when they are fully convinced that their old ways are no longer appropriate. Powerful experiences and adequate opportunities to reflect on those experiences enable people to think and act in new ways.

It is recommended that educators adopt an approach where learners need to be rewarded for examining their thinking and their work. They must be encouraged to take risks, assume unfamiliar roles, and to take positions on issues.

This is perhaps personally a challenge for educators at Police Practice to focus on.

A number of possible guidelines regarding an environment conducive to learning (see paragraph 4.4.8) have been proposed by educators of Police Practice as well as covered in this chapter, respectively. In an attempt to consolidate all of these guidelines and suggestions the researcher has generated a possible checklist for Police Practice in attempting to create an environment more conducive to Adult Learning.

TABLE 5.4: POSSIBLE CHECKLIST FOR THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENT MORE CONDUCTIVE TO ADULT LEARNING FOR POLICE PRACTICE

ITEM	YES	NO
APPROACH USED		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Do educators employ a wide variety of approaches and innovations in promoting “deep learning”? (see paragraphs 2.22 and 4.4.2) ◆ Are learner /industry needs considered in the design of courses and outcomes? (see paragraph 4.4.6) ◆ Do methods of instruction follow different formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do the methods of instruction emphasize collaborative learning? (see paragraph 5.3 and 2.11) ▪ Do the methods of instruction emphasize individualized instruction? (see paragraph 4.4.8) ▪ Is technology used and permitted as a vehicle in promoting the learning process? (see paragraph 4.4.5 a) 		
◆ Do the methods promote the idea of learners taking ownership of their own learning process? (see paragraph 2.7)		
◆ Do methods encourage critical and reflective thinking? (see paragraph 2.11 and 5.3.9)		
◆ Does the approach focus on problem solving /inquiry? (see paragraph 2.11)		

Table 5.4 continued

ITEM	YES	NO
♦ Is there provision for experiential learning / simulations / role-plays (see paragraph 4.4.8)		
♦ Does the approach /learning material encourage and allow for active dialogue between lecturer /tutor and learner? (see paragraph 2.10)		
♦ Are there opportunities for the learner to evaluate themselves at various points in their learning process? (see paragraph 4.4.8)		
♦ Are methods of overcoming the language barriers being implemented? (see paragraph 4.5.1)		
SOCIAL/ CULTURAL CONCERNS		
♦ Overt or subtle gender discrimination existing? (see paragraph 2.3)		
♦ Overt or subtle age discrimination existing? (see paragraph 2.3)		
♦ Overt or subtle racial discrimination existing? (see paragraph 2.3)		
♦ Women learners disempowered or devalued in any way? (see paragraph 2.3)		
PSYCHOLOGICAL / EMOTIONAL CONCERNS		
♦ Learners helped and encouraged to become acquainted with each other? (see paragraph 2.7)		
♦ Learners helped to feel at ease and relaxed with the distance mode of learning? (see paragraph 2.7)		
♦ Special attention given to the first means of communication with learners? (see paragraph 4.4.5 b and 5.3.5)		
♦ Barriers learners may face addressed by administrators? (see paragraph 4.4.8)		
♦ Barriers that learners may face identified and addressed by educators /practitioners? (see paragraph 4.4.8)		

Table 5.4 continued

ITEM	YES	NO
◆ Learners helped to take more control of their own learning? (see paragraph 2.5.2)		
◆ Have all educators achieved some form of practical experience in the particular field in which they specialize? (see paragraph 2.8)		
◆ Educators / facilitators trained in adult teaching techniques and theory? (see paragraph 2.8)		
◆ Facilitators/ educators trained in ways of addressing the adult learning environment in distance education? (see paragraph 4.4.7)		
◆ All staff members trained in diversity /diversity management? (see paragraph 4.4.7)		
SUPPORT SERVICES		
◆ Is there an RPL system in the implementation phase? (see paragraph 4.4.8)		
◆ Is there an orientation program for all first year learners concerning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distance learning as a mode of learning? (see paragraph 2.7) ▪ Subject specific support? (see paragraph 2.7) 		
◆ Is there sufficient tutoring services/ options available for the learner? (see paragraph 4.4.8)		
◆ Is there adequate counseling services available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prior and upon registration. (see paragraph 4.4.8) ▪ During studies (see paragraph 4.4.8) ▪ Upon completion (see paragraph 4.4.8) 		
◆ Is adequate provision being made for study loans / bursaries? (see paragraph 4.4.8)		

The process of conducting this research has been a tremendous learning journey for the researcher. Through exploration of the field of learning environments the researcher has

identified, as discussed in the following paragraph, possible future research needs for TSA.

5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS FOR TSA

Having analyzed the various recommendations that Police Practice could possibly engage in, it is imperative that this research highlights some of the identified requirements for additional research in the field of learning environments.

Through the chapters covered in this research the researcher has identified the following requirements for further research in the field of learning environments:

- More research is needed on various issues of socio-psychological setting with regards to adult learners in a distance learning environment.
- Educators need to better understand the dynamics of changes in the learning environment, as any one change may create new problems for or stresses on learners.
- Educators need to know much more about how to help adults feel comfortable with videos, telephone conferencing devices and other technological developments, especially if the adults have had little or no prior experience with this technology.
- Research on aspects of adult learning environments should include subjects of both sexes, as well as from various racial and socio-economic groupings.
- The ways that language, logic and feedback are used in distance learning communication should be studied with adult learners to determine if there are qualitative differences in learning styles across various groups.
- Educators need to know much more about the learning environment beyond what is addressed in this study, such as the impact of a learner's social class, financial status, and literacy level on learning potential and on a particular teaching approach.
- Finally, all the relevant stakeholders need a better understanding of how the learning environment can be changed, including the role of learners, related training implications for educators, and bureaucratic hurdles that must be overcome.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Continued research on adult learning in distance education is clearly essential in order to address many unanswered questions concerning the learning environment.

While many avenues might be fruitfully explored in this study, several areas offer particular promise for research regarding the learning environment in distance education.

As a part of the concluding remarks the researcher wishes to share the following “futuristic” thought for Police Practice.

Within the framework of *open learning* and the *ILCDE* model, Police Practice should aim at being the best functioning distance learning provider in SA, Africa and subsequently the world. According to Swift (1994:2) such a provider’s main task is to “design and manage successful learning, while understanding that its product “is to service the learner”

We must consciously and actively develop and maintain approaches, which enable learners to have their voices heard, and for educators of Police Practice and Police Practice itself to be able to listen and understand the practical implications of what is being said.

In designing the learning environment, the researcher wishes to encourage the education providers to choose appropriate combinations of methods for particular learning contexts. It is important to note that the recommendations / suggestions that the researcher proposes for Police Practice are certainly not the last answers to learning environment concerns in distance adult learning scenario. Nor do they necessarily provide optimal advice pertaining to components within the learning environment. They are however made in an earnest effort to firstly sensitize educators of the importance of their role in learning environments in distance learning and more importantly to stimulate thought, dialogue, and future research.

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Annexure A

A LIST OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Question 1

What is your view on the importance of the Adult Learning principles in your daily responsibilities as an Adult Educator?

Question 2

What aspects in your own opinion constitute an environment conducive to adult learning?

Question 3

Do you think there is that responsibility for adult educators of a distance learning institution like Technikon SA to concern themselves over the issue of creating conducive learning environments? Explain.

Question 4

From your experience at Police Practice (TSA) do you feel that the environment is conducive to adult learning? Substantiate.

Question 5

In terms of delivery, what are your views pertaining to

- a) the use of technology in distance learning?
- b) “personalising” of learning material?

Question 6

Could you briefly explain any attempts that your subject group recently made with regards to creating an environment conducive to adult learning?

Question 7

Could you briefly explain your view on the introduction of in-service training/ staff development programmes (for you as the adult educator) with regards to conducive learning environments?

Question 8

What possible guidelines or recommendations could you propose in working towards a more conducive learning environment?

Annexure B

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW 1

Question 1

The adult learning principles form the foundation of our core responsibilities to adult education. In fact the principles are of such importance that it influences the way we handle students and the mode of delivery. There are numerous reasons why they are important for me as an educator at TSA and in the same token why we cannot pay mere lip service to these.

Question 2

In my view there are numerous aspects that constitute an environment conducive to learning. In essence effective and efficient administrative and academic support would be the corner stone to achieving this. Access and availability of lecturers, tutors, library facilities and study groups are also important considerations for an environment conducive to learning.

Question 3

This should be a priority for all educators and cannot be seen as the responsibility of others of the institution. It is time that we all at TSA start assuming this responsibility and attempt at expanding our circle of influence.

Question 4

I personally feel that the environment at Police Practice is “partially” conducive to learning. Being a distance learning institution is perhaps a challenge for us to come up with ways of addressing the learning environment. Many of the educators themselves do not possess the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to attempt this challenge.

Question 5

- a) Technology is the ideal way to go. We need to, however, approach this with caution, since access to facilities in South Africa is a major concern.
- b) The focus should be to communicate effectively and express rather than impress our learners. Learners would learn best if handled in a relaxed but formal yet professional manner. Seeing that the majority of our learners rely heavily on written communications from educators I strongly propose that we use an informal and more personalised approach.

Question 6

The subject group to which I belong have made a number of attempts in this regard. There is obviously much more than can and needs to be done. Some initiatives that come to mind are as follows:

- a) Using audio and visual tape recordings to facilitate learning.
- b) Designing of short courses to address immediate needs of learners
- c) Alternate means of assessment (eg. submission of projects, portfolios, presentations, etc.)
- d) Designing more reader friendly and interactive study material.

Question 7

There is a definite need for the introduction of a comprehensive staff development programme as well as follow up courses. We all need to be orientated and continuously training in this field. Training in areas such as establishing interactiveness, ways of accommodating different learning styles, alternate assessment methods and setting assignment and examination papers are a few of the important issues that need to be covered.

Question 8

- a) Proper quality control with regards to tutorial letters, workbooks, assignments, examinations, etc.
- b) More effort should be put into the training of lecturers and tutors.
- c) We need to get to know our learner profile and market/industry demands and address them accordingly.
- d) Programme groups at TSA need to share ideas and learn from each other.
- e) We need to set up computer centres that are easily accessible to our learners.

Annexure C

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW 2

Question 1

These principles are of paramount importance to my daily responsibilities as an adult educator. TSA needs to ensure that all educators are fully orientated on these principles and the implications thereof.

Question 2

If we at Police Practice can move towards becoming a truly learner centred programme group then we would ensure that the environment is conducive to learning (for our learners). Police Practice should attempt at creating an empowering and enabling environment with sufficient flexibility. This would inevitably constitute an environment conducive to learning.

Question 3

My view is that we are a distance learning institution where there is very little contact with our learners which it makes it all the more reason for us as adult educators to assume this responsibility. The entire technikon should move towards initiatives – although the educators should play the leading role.

Question 4

I think in Police Practice we are really far from being in an environment that is conducive to learning. Currently the learning process in our programme group is a mere one-way process between lecturer and learning. Educators at Police Practice spend too much time and effort on issues unrelated to the learning process.

Question 5

- a) Technology is the in thing – if we do not adapt to the changes we will not survive. Technology is crucial and should not be hampered by the argument of insufficient access – since those learners who have access should be accommodated while other options should be available to others who do not have access to technology.
- b) I personally feel that Police Practice is currently very rigid in its approach – and should thus move towards adopting a more personalised approach with our learners. In the same breathe we need to also be practical and realistic and consider the number of learners we are currently servicing.