Transitioning to Online Education in the Caribbean: The UWI Open Campus

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto

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Abstract

As a result of the increasing demand for tertiary education in many developing countries, institutions are seeking ways to increase educational access in difficult economic times. This paper describes the development of the University of the West Indies Open Campus as the mechanism for online distance education delivery to students across sixteen islands in the Caribbean region. The shift from the use of print based distance education to online education was examined from the perspectives of the administration, the instructors and the students in order to determine which factors were important for a successful transition. Factors examined included institutional context, vision, curriculum, organizational structure, finances, leadership, stakeholder attitudes towards online courses, staff training, student support and programme quality. The study also examined whether online education could promote a regional cultural identity. The research design used was a qualitative single case study with multiple data sources including archival records, semi-structured interviews and online surveys. Research findings indicate that implementing online education requires a deep understanding of the institutional context, clear vision, effective leadership, understanding attitudes towards online education and the provision of effective student support mechanisms. Context and aspects of culture (specifically communication) emerged as important factors that strongly influenced the transition, both pedagogically and in terms of the organizational culture and structure required to support online education. A lack of communication resulted in staff resistance both internally
and externally. Communication was also the major stumbling block in the pedagogical changes required for online teaching and learning. Both students and instructors found teaching and learning online more difficult than in traditional classes as a result of the differences in communication modes between online classes and the wider culture. Students in online classes specifically desired the immediate feedback available in face-to-face classes and indicated a strong preference for blended learning. The study presents some suggestions for successful transitions and provides support for institutions preparing to use online education as a mode of distance education delivery, especially in the Caribbean context.
Acknowledgments

Thank you first and foremost to my Heavenly Father who started me on this journey and promised me that He would go before me and level the mountains (Isaiah 45:2 NIV). As always He has been faithful to deliver on His promises. Thank You, Lord.

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<td>APAD</td>
<td>Academic Programme and Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APC</td>
<td>Academic Programme Committee of UWIDEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>BNCCDE</td>
<td>Board for Non-Campus Countries and Distance Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARICOM</td>
<td>Caribbean Community Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CKLN</td>
<td>Caribbean Learning and Knowledge Network</td>
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<td>CSME</td>
<td>Caribbean Single Market Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Distance Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Non-Campus Country</td>
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<td>OC</td>
<td>Open Campus</td>
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<td>OCC</td>
<td>Open Campus Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>School for Continuing Studies</td>
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<td>TAM</td>
<td>Technology Acceptance Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLIU</td>
<td>Tertiary Learning Institutions Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWI</td>
<td>University of the West Indies</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWIDEC</td>
<td>University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre</td>
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<td>UWIDITE</td>
<td>University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment</td>
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Chapter 1
Introduction

The modern global economy has been described as a knowledge economy (Arnowe, 2003; Powell & Snellman, 2004; Robertson, 2005) where the ability to generate income is based primarily on the use, creation and exchange of knowledge (Powell & Snellman, 2004). In her discussion of the knowledge economy, Robertson (2005) suggested that economic development will increasingly be dependent on knowledge, and that education will play a significant part in economic growth.

In order for developing countries to participate successfully in this knowledge economy and attract foreign investment, their citizens must be well educated (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002). Although many countries continue to struggle to provide primary and secondary levels of education, there is an increasing demand for tertiary level education in several regions of the world (Kanwar & Daniel, 2008). Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) suggested that “the payoff to higher levels of education is rising worldwide as a result of the shifts of economic production to knowledge-intensive products and processes” (p.5), and that shift is causing a corresponding increase in the demand for tertiary education. In developing countries this increase in demand is occurring in a context where economic resources for the construction of new universities are often limited (Perraton, 2007). However, distance education offers developing countries the opportunity to address the problems of educational funding, access and quality (Perraton, 2007).

Distance education can be defined as an educational process where the learner is separated from the instructor and technology is used to link learners, resources and instructors (Simonsen, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2005). The important aspects of this definition are the separation of the teacher and learner in space (and often in time) as well as the use of technology to facilitate two-way communications. The technology used in distance education has changed over time, beginning with print, and moving to radio, television and most recently the Internet. Print is still the most common modality in distance education in many developing regions, although radio and television have been used to excellent advantage in areas such as Latin America and China (Perraton, 2007). However, the use of the Internet for distance education (often called online education) is becoming increasingly popular in many regions of the world, including the developing nations of the Caribbean.
In his examination of Anglophone Caribbean countries, Koul (2007) stated that one of the issues in distance education for developing regions was that these countries did not have access to research performed in local contexts. This is due, in part, to their status as small developing states. Small states can be described as those having a population of less than 1.5 million (Atchoarena, 1993; Bray, 1992), and almost all the countries in the Anglophone Caribbean qualify for this designation (Atchoarena, 1993). Koul (2007) suggested that there is a need for research on distance education operations, student learning strategies, educational needs of the society, and the technical and financial requirements for a robust distance education program. In addition to this lack of culturally relevant research data, developing nations also face other constraints such as the lack of modern physical infrastructure, limited access to appropriate technologies and inadequate economic resources. This raised the question of how institutions in developing countries were dealing with these issues in providing distance education generally and specifically through the use of online education. This study examined how the University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC) was coping with the issues involved with transitioning from traditional means of distance education to the use of online courses. The thesis will outline the purpose and significance of the study, present a review of the relevant literature, describe the research methods and limitations, outline the research findings and finally present the conclusions derived from the study.

1.1 Purpose of the study

Tertiary institutions across the globe are seeking to increase access to tertiary education. Many of them have decided to use distance education, specifically online education. The use of an online mode of delivery was undertaken to enable the University of the West Indies (UWI) to provide more access to education, especially to its non-campus countries (Thurab-Nkosi & Marshall, 2006) by leveraging the opportunities offered by the Internet. The transition to the use of online education is fraught with difficulties and sometimes results in online programmes that do not align with the strategic plans of the institution and are not financially viable (Bates, 2005). Although there is much research on specific areas of online courses, such as online community, (Rovai, 2001; Maor, 2003), collaboration (Bernard, Rojo de Rubalcava & St. Pierre, 2000; Hough, Smithey & Evertson, 2004; Yang and Liu, 2004) and the role of the instructor (Duncan, 2005) there were only a few studies that outlined the progress of a transition from the viewpoint of the participants.
The purpose of this study was to understand the transition from the perspective of three stakeholder groups as well as to fully describe the context within which these changes occurred in order to identify critical success factors. The participants’ perspective was chosen because of the centrality of their beliefs to the success of any organizational change (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). This study sought to understand the transition through the examination of areas that were prominent in the literature (Bates, 2007; Levy, 2003), in an attempt to identify factors that had a significant impact on this particular transition. An understanding of those critical factors within this context will also be used to derive some suggestions for the successful implementation of online education at other tertiary institutions in developing countries. The study also began to fill the need for more contextually relevant research in the Caribbean, as identified by Koul (2007) so that there is a reference point for decision makers regarding online education.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The research sought to explore how the transition to online distance education occurred at the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWIOC) from the perspective of the administration, the faculty and the students. The research study asked the following questions:

1. How can the context for the transition be described?
2. How do stakeholders describe the role of leadership in the transition?
3. How is UWIOC addressing the following areas in its transition to online distance education: vision, curriculum, student support, staff training, programme quality, and organisational structure?
4. What challenges have been encountered in the transition and how have they been addressed?
5. What attitudes do selected stakeholders (i.e. administrators, faculty and students) exhibit towards online learning?
6. Do stakeholders believe that online education is increasing access to tertiary education?
7. Do stakeholders believe that online education is promoting a regional cultural identity?
8. What strategies can be suggested for the successful implementation of online education at other tertiary institutions serving developing countries?
1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because (a) it examined a unique institution at a critical time in its development, (b) it highlighted the struggle to provide tertiary education in developing nations, and (c) it addressed a research gap in the comparative, international and development education literature and in the distance education literature.

The study was undertaken at the University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC). UWI itself is one of only two regional universities in the world, the other being the University of the South Pacific. UWI was originally designed to serve the educational needs of the Anglophone Caribbean and is jointly funded by sixteen Caribbean countries. The provision of funding by several small states results in a responsibility to meet the tertiary education needs of all of the islands and requires skilful political manoeuvring to satisfy all the governments involved. There are physical campuses only in Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados. Prior to the creation of the Open Campus, which services the other countries, there was also the added tension of trying to provide equally for both the campus and non-campus countries, given the geographical separation and size differences between the islands.

The uniqueness of UWIOC lies in the fact that it is a new, virtual campus providing online distance education in a developing region. UWIOC was officially launched on July 2, 2008 and consists of a head office located in Barbados and some fifty-two educational centres in sixteen countries (UWIOC, 2010). The distributed nature of the organisation requires that many organisational functions be performed via the Internet. Most distance education programs in the developing world are print or broadcasting based for reasons such as the lack of infrastructure, the unavailability and high cost of technology, as well as the geographical spread of students. Although UWI caters to countries that also face these problems, it has chosen to move to an online modality.

This decision to shift modalities provided a unique opportunity to study this new campus as it seeks to fulfil its mandate to provide tertiary education to several small island states as part of a university that has historically struggled to accomplish this goal. Very few research studies were found that examined the transition to online education in the Anglophone Caribbean, partially because online education is relatively new in this region. The research study also offered an opportunity to give voice to the stakeholders through this process and to contribute to the research base in comparative development and international education.
1.4 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The UWIOC offers face-to-face, print based and online courses, but this study examines only completely online or blended courses because of the researcher’s interest in those areas. The study is not intended to provide a blueprint for a transition and therefore does not explicitly examine strategies for transition, although readers may glean some information on important areas for consideration. The small sample size and study design does not permit strict generalisation to other tertiary education institutions in the Caribbean region, although the reader may be able to see similarities in other institutions.

1.5 Background of the Researcher

The problems that comparative education researchers investigate often arise from their experiences and background, as Holmes (1958) so accurately stated. My interest in online education is a result of several years spent as a science educator in the islands of the Caribbean. Immediately after completion of my undergraduate degree, I was offered the science headship position at a private secondary school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, despite my inexperience and ignorance of even the most basic pedagogy. There were far more experienced teachers in the school, but none of them had a university degree. That was my first taste of the power of education. In that small school I began to understand that education is a precious commodity, and that poverty or insufficient institutional capacity could restrict access to secondary education. It was a rude awakening, and one that transformed my understanding of the role of education in the lives of students.

Further teaching experiences in the Bahamas illustrated that there were significant barriers to obtaining tertiary education, primarily insufficient capacity in the system or lack of access because of geographical distance or funding. As an instructor in a distance education (DE) programme for the College of the Bahamas, I saw clearly how DE offered opportunities to learners (especially women) who were unable to leave their jobs and family responsibilities to pursue fulltime studies on another island. In that small community, DE enabled these individuals to obtain degrees and advance professionally in ways that had previously been denied to them. The impact on their lives and on the community was profound. Those experiences caused me to reflect deeply on the impact that distance education could have on a nation or a region, specifically the Caribbean region. The University of the West Indies is the largest and most
influential tertiary institution in the Anglophone Caribbean, so it seemed only natural to study its efforts to increase access to tertiary education for the citizens of the Caribbean.

I chose to examine online courses as a mechanism for distance education because I had discovered through research and my own experiences that online education could provide a rich educational experience that was comparable to face-to-face classes but with increased flexibility and increased access to multimedia components. I found it fascinating that a university in the developing world would make the bold step to decide to increase access through online education and I wondered how they were meeting the challenges that they would inevitably face. I also wondered if online education would be as effective in a developing region, given the differences in infrastructure and culture.

My experiences and background also influenced the data collection in this study. On initial contact by email or telephone, interview participants generally assumed that I was Canadian, with no connection to the Caribbean except the research study. However, during the interviews (whether face-to-face or via Skype) several participants noticed my accent and asked me about my nationality. On ascertaining that I had lived in the Caribbean and had Barbadian connections they were much more open and willing to answer my questions. They also tended to use dialect more often to emphasise or illustrate a point, believing that I would understand the vernacular and by extension their struggles. Interestingly enough there were other times when the reverse happened - interviewees who were from outside of the region assumed because of my accent that I would understand their perspective as an outsider. They freely discussed their challenges with respect to working in the region and expected me to understand, which I did.

My cultural and educational experiences have shaped my approach and enriched this research, enabling me to straddle the cultural divide and thereby contribute to the research literature by describing the context and presenting the views of the participants on the transition to online education at the UWIOC.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis has been organised into eight chapters. Chapter 2 will describe the research literature and provide a background to the study. Important areas for the research literature included defining distance education, linking online and distance education, outlining the need for distance education and describing critical areas in the transition to online education. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology, including the rationale for the research design.
Chapter 4 delineates the Caribbean region, the University of the West Indies and the early development of the Open Campus in order to provide a detailed backdrop for the remainder of the thesis. The remaining chapters will outline the research findings, grouped by research questions. Chapter 5 will outline the role of leadership in the transition, the important areas addressed in the research questions and the challenges encountered in these areas. Chapter 6 will report on the organizational structure and implementation issues, while Chapter 7 will describe participant attitudes and the regional cultural identity. Finally Chapter 8 will draw some conclusions and make suggestions for future work.
2 Literature Review

The need for research on the transition from print to online distance education at the University of the West Indies has been outlined. To inform the research, the following review will examine the trends in the research literature as they relate to distance education, online education, and issues encountered in the transition to online education.

2.1 Distance Education

Distance education has been defined in various ways over the years, including: “an educational process in which a significant portion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and time from the learner” (Perraton, 1982, p. 4). A more recent definition describes distance education as a formal education programme where the learner is separated from the instructor and interactive technology is used to link learners, resources and instructors (Simonsen, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2005). Important aspects of this definition include the concepts that distance education

a) is institutionally based;

b) requires the separation of teacher and student (in space and often in time); and

c) requires interactivity between learner, instructor and resources.

While distance education as a field has a very broad scope, it does not yet have a single unifying theory, although the need for more theoretical work has been expressed by several authors (Simonson, Schlosser & Hanson, 1999). However, important concepts in distance education include interaction and communication, learner autonomy and industrialisation.

Theories of interaction and communication explain how the learner relates to the instructor, other learners and the course material. Moore and Kearsley (2004) use the concept of transactional distance to describe the interactional distance between teacher and learner that can cause misunderstandings in communication. This distance causes certain behaviours in an attempt to bridge the gap. These behaviours may be significantly different in the online class than in face-to-face classes given that the transactional distance is much larger in the former than in the latter. Moore and Kearsley (2004) suggest that changing course structure and course dialogue can be used to control transactional distance and optimise learning. Increasing course structure or dialogue reduces transactional distance and thereby provides increased support for
learners. Courses with a high transactional distance require the learner to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Learner autonomy refers to the independence of the learner in terms of being able to make choices about the delivery method, the learning objectives, the pace of learning and even the evaluation of the learning (Moore & Kearsley, 2004). They suggest that the learner should be given maximum autonomy in each of these areas.

The concept of industrialisation in distance education originated with Otto Peters in the 1960s. Dr. Peters suggested that the process of distance education required a series of distinct but related steps to be performed in sequence (Peters, 2010). This led him to compare distance education to an assembly line process for the production of goods. He found over twenty similarities (including rationalisation, division of labour, planning, centralization, standardisation and quality control) and decided that the mechanisms used in industrial processes could be applied to distance education (Peters, 2010). For example, in terms of the division of labour in DE, “Teaching is divided into several functions that are assigned to different persons: authors, instructional designers, media specialists, correctors, tutors, counsellors, moderators, evaluators etc. This means that the teaching is detached from the original teacher or lecturer, disembodied and depersonalized” (Peters, 2010, p.15). Peters’ theory became known as the industrial model and was widely used to realize economies of scale as well as produce courses of high quality (Garrison, 2000; Moore & Kearsley, 2004; Schlosser & Simonson, 2006).

Non-formal distance education can be said to have begun with the Apostle Paul of the Bible as he wrote letters to the early Christian churches and instructed them on Christian life (Baker, 1999). This would have been an early form of correspondence education, long before the advent of a formal postal system. Formal distance education began in England in 1840, when Isaac Pitman launched the first shorthand correspondence courses using the penny post. It soon spread to other countries, including Sweden, where in 1886 H.S. Hermord began teaching English by correspondence (Simonsen, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2005). Operating from her home between 1873 and 1896, Anna Ticknor was one of the early pioneers in America who provided education for some 7000 women through correspondence courses (Moore & Kearsley, 2004).

Although print is still the most common modality in distance education in many developing regions, delivery methods for distance education have progressed through several models, as Taylor and Todd (1995) have outlined in the following table (Table 1). It should not
to be assumed however that the use of a fourth generation model assumes that earlier models are
defunct, as different generations can and do coexist depending on the level of technology
available to the learners. The model used may depend on the location of the institution- for
example the Indira Gandhi Open University of India uses primarily the first generation model
because the low level of technology allows a large number of students to access tertiary
education. Taylor and Todd’s (1995) classification scheme suggested that materials developed
for the flexible learning model are not highly refined, which seems at odds with the current
trends towards the use of instructional design methodologies and Peters’ (2010) theory of
industrialisation. Taylor and Todd (1995) also emphasized that the model of delivery is
secondary to the quality of the instructional message.

Table 1

Models of Distance Education: A Conceptual Framework (adapted from Taylor & Todd, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of Distance Education and Associated Delivery Technologies</th>
<th>Characteristics of Delivery Technologies</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Videotape</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-based learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive video (disk and tape)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Generation - The Telelearning Model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio teleconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video conferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiographic Comms (e.g. Smart 2000)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast TV/Radio + Audio teleconferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Generation - The Flexible Learning Model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive multimedia (IMM)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer mediated communication</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distance education enrolments represented between 5-15% of the total enrolments at institutions in industrialised countries and between 10-20% in developing nations in 2007 (Perraton, 2007). The rapid expansion in distance education has been influenced by several factors including

(a) increased involvement and legitimisation of the private sector in education,
(b) increased demand for retraining in industrialised countries,
(c) increased numbers of graduates from secondary schools in developing countries desiring tertiary education, and
(d) new developments in technology (Harry & Perraton, 1999).

There are two main models for institutions involved in distance education: dedicated distance teaching universities and dual mode institutions. Dual mode institutions have added distance teaching to their traditional university programmes. In contrast, dedicated distance teaching institutions offer only distance education programmes. In both models, courses are presented through a variety of media, which may include print based correspondence courses, radio or television broadcasts or online courses (Perraton, 2007). Open universities are a subset of dedicated distance teaching institutions, with the main difference being that there are no formal entry requirements for programmes (Open University UK, 2011). Generally, open universities were predicated on the ability to increase economic development, respond to the need for tertiary education and meet public demand (Perraton, 2007). The opening of the Open University, United Kingdom in 1969 gave distance education legitimacy and spurred on the opening of open universities in several other countries, including China and India (Perraton, 2007). Currently, the Open University provides education to some 250,000 students (Open University UK, 2011). Dedicated distance institutions are common in Europe and Asia, but rarer in the North American context. Globally, the aims of distance education in the countries of the North are to reach wider audiences and to emphasize continuing education (Harry & Perraton, 1999). Higher education institutions use distance education to enable them to respond to a shift to mass higher education and to satisfy the population’s desire for lifelong learning (Harry & Perraton, 1999). However, in the South, distance education is primarily used as a tool to increase access to tertiary education.

Tertiary education institutions in the Caribbean region have been under pressure to provide education for a larger number of students, both to cater to the needs of the ever-increasing
numbers of secondary school graduates and to meet the goals of the United Nations’ Education For All (EFA) policy. Many students are turned away from the University of the West Indies and other tertiary education institutions simply because there is insufficient space to accommodate the number of students seeking entry (QS Interview, October 17, 2008).

According to Hickling-Hudson (2004), Louisy (2004) and the World Bank (2002), an increase in the availability of tertiary education will enable the Caribbean region to participate more fully in the global knowledge economy and promote development. Human capital theory suggests that increasing educational levels of the population results in increased economic benefits both for the society and the individual (Livingston, 1999).

In recognition of the relationship between education and development, the United Nations developed the Education For All (EFA) policy, which it hopes to accomplish by the year 2015. One of the primary aims of EFA is free, compulsory primary education for all children worldwide (UNESCO, 1990). This push for primary education has impacted tertiary education by increasing the demand for teachers and thus for teacher training. UNESCO is predicting a global shortage of some “15 million teachers in the next decade” (UNESCO, 2005 p. 2). There are a variety of reasons for this global shortage of trained teachers, many of which are evident in the Caribbean region. Reasons for the shortage include:

(a) high birth rates in some developing countries,
(b) efforts to reduce pupil teacher ratios,
(c) poor remuneration and low professional status of teachers in many nations, and
(d) inadequate teacher training facilities (Coldevin & Naidu, 1989; Leavitt, 1991; UNESCO, 2005).

Distance education is viewed as an effective way to increase the number of trained teachers in developing countries (Brandon, 1999; Coldevin & Naidu, 1989; Miller, 1999; Perraton, 2007; Richardson 2005; Rumble, 2000) and this has been linked to increased levels of national development (Richardson, 2005). In the past, many of the distance education courses at UWI were in teacher training programs as part of a concerted effort to increase the number of trained teachers in the Caribbean (Hall & Marrett, 1996; Richardson, 2005).

Distance education has been profoundly influenced by international political and economic forces and has been “shaped by technological opportunity” (Harry & Perraton, 1999 p. 2). Vrasidas and Zembylas (2003) suggest that education has always been strongly influenced by globalisation pressures and technological advances. As new technologies developed, educators
prophesised that the use of these technologies would dramatically increase student learning, but too often these promises were not realised (Kerr, 2005; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Spector, 2001). Technology can be used to promote learning (Kerr, 2005) but it can also impede learning (Spector, 2001). The relationship between the use of technology and improved learning is neither simple nor direct (Kerr, 2005).

2.2 Online Education

The phrase “online education” is often used interchangeably with a variety of other phrases, such as computer mediated communication, computer mediated conferencing, online learning, and e-learning. For the purposes of this thesis, the term online education will be defined as a means of instruction where contact between students, the instructor and the course material is mediated by the computer, whether through an internal network or the Internet (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Courses can be blended (with both online and face-to-face components) or completely online. Online education is a type of distance education since the interaction between student, teacher and resources is mediated by technology and the teacher and student are separated by space and time.

Some of the earliest software to support online courses was developed in Canada (e.g. CoSy at the University of the Guelph) and some of the first online courses were developed in 1981 (Harasim, 2000; Mason, 2000). In 1989, the Open University in the United Kingdom was the first institution to offer online courses to some 1500 students in the UK and beyond (Harasim, 2000).

The use of online courses is becoming increasingly common in tertiary level institutions across the globe for a variety of reasons, including globalisation and economic pressures (Ezenne & Cook 2002; Vrasidas & Zembylas, 2003). Tertiary level institutions are adopting the online medium for course delivery, although online courses are considered expensive and labour intensive to develop initially (Forester, Motteram & Bangxiang, 2006; Ezenne & Cook, 2002). It is conceivable that over the long-term, the use of online courses will be a cost effective way for higher education institutions to provide education (Hough, Smithey & Evertson, 2004) to a wide range of students who otherwise might not be able to obtain an education. Online and blended courses are widely used at universities across North America and this has contributed significantly to the plethora of course management systems, both proprietary and Open Source. Proprietary systems include Blackboard, eCollege and Desire2Learn among others and open
source systems include Moodle and Sakai. Growing numbers of American tertiary education institutions are turning to open source learning management systems such as Moodle. The percentage of institutions using Moodle rose from 4.2% to 7.8% between 2006 and 2007 (Green, 2008). This trend was even more pronounced in private colleges, where the percentage increased from 10 to 17 percent. This may be a result of the comparatively low cost of open source CMSs in comparison with proprietary systems, even with the added cost of infrastructure and maintenance. The Open University U.K. (OU) also legitimised the use of open source course management systems for higher education by choosing to use Moodle in 2005 (Dougiamas, 2005; Sclater, 2008). The Open University spent some ten million dollars in the development of Moodle over the next three years and shared the results with the open source community (Sclater, 2008). The OU is currently the largest user of the Moodle course management system (Moodle.org, 2010), but in order for the university to use Moodle as the institutional CMS, the following issues had to be overcome:

(a) integration of Moodle with existing systems, including the use of a single sign on system;
(b) fixing existing bugs in Moodle;
(c) the provision of two servers, one for production and one for testing materials;
(d) enhancing or creating new features and modules to meet the needs of the Open University, U.K.; and
(e) the development of a process to address policy issues, such as the organization of the online courses and student access to past papers across both print and online courses (Sclater, 2008a, 2008b).

Some staff members at the OU had been using other technical tools in their classes which had more functionality than the institutionally supported Moodle. This caused some reluctance to shift to Moodle. The OU also had to learn to work with the open source community, which was essentially driven by consensus, unlike the university. This difference in governance mechanisms sometimes delayed the timely rollout of new features because it often took longer to reach consensus in the community (Sclater, 2008b). The constant redevelopment of Moodle also required that the administration consider how to implement new versions without disrupting student learning, given that the OU’s courses were continually being accessed. Despite the challenges experienced at the OU and elsewhere, the use of online courses to deliver distance education has been proliferating.
The rapid development of online teaching and learning has resulted in a proliferation of research studies into best practices in online courses. Best practices include (but are not limited to) the development of online community (Rovai, 2001; Waltenen-Moore, Stuart, Newton, Oswald, & Varonis, 2006; Maor, 2003), collaboration between learners (Bernard, Rojo de Rubalcava & St. Pierre, 2000; Yang and Liu, 2004, Hough, Smithey & Evertson, 2004; Kuboni & Martin, 2004) and the facilitating role of the instructor (Duncan, 2005).

Online courses are particularly important for educational provision in small states and regional universities who cater to a diverse and distributed student body (Ezenne & Cook, 2002; Crossley & Holmes, 1999; World Bank, 2002; Marshall, 2005) such as those in the Caribbean. Online courses can provide tertiary education that is scalable, responsive to Caribbean needs, designed in collaboration with others and economical (Marshall, 2005). Several tertiary institutions in the Caribbean are currently using online education, including UWI, the College of the Bahamas and the University of Technology in Jamaica. Other institutions are moving in that direction, aided by organisations such as the Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network (CKLN) whose aim is to provide students in the region with cost effective access to tertiary e-learning programmes (CKLN, 2008).

UWI has undertaken a few studies that examined online courses as a strategy for the provision of distance education including ones by Ezenne and Cook (2002) and Kuboni and Martin (2004). Currently UWI is using online courses as one of several teaching strategies that include face-to-face classes, audio-conferencing and print materials. However, only the use of online education seems to have the potential for supporting the increasing number of courses being delivered via distance education (Kuboni & Martin, 2004; World Bank, 2002). UWI believes that the use of online courses will enable the institution to supply tertiary education that is flexible in terms of time and place, allowing students to study without travelling to the main campus countries (UWIDEC, 2003). The use of online courses in the context of small island states is a potential solution to the problems of education delivery to a widely dispersed population that has differential access to tertiary education. As promising as online education may be, it continues to face significant issues that must be addressed, including:

(a) the legitimacy of degrees granted online in an era where online degree mills are proliferating;
(b) culture laden materials (course materials are typically developed in the North and provided to countries in the South, often with little thought given to the transferability of materials);
(c) high costs per student (where exact costs per student vary but online education is typically only cost effective for high enrolments and completion rates);
(d) policy development (policies for online courses are often absent);
(e) parity between modes within dual mode institutions; and
(f) high attrition rates (Harry & Perraton, 1999; Potashnik & Capper, 1998).

2.3 Organisational Change and Online Education

As the demand for tertiary education grows worldwide, more institutions are using blended modes of delivery for face-to-face classes or offering courses online. One of the questions often asked by those considering a move to online education is whether online courses support learning as well as traditional face-to-face classes. Meta analyses of over 232 research studies in this area have determined that online learning can be as effective as face-to-face learning (Bernard et al., 2004; Runnels et al., 2006), because it is the effective use of instructional strategies that facilitate learning, not the medium (Clark & Mayer, 2008). However, different mediums have different capabilities and instructional strategies should be chosen to capitalize on the particular affordances of the medium being used. Shifting to online delivery necessitates considerable changes not only in the use of technology, but also in the use of teaching and learning strategies, the organisational culture and the organisational structure of the institution (Bates, 2007).

2.3.1 Models of Organizational Change

Organisational change can be defined as “an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organisational entity” (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 512). Change can be examined from several different epistemological positions, which has resulted in a variety of different models and theories on change. Kezar (2001) suggested that one way to examine change would be to explore the following areas:

(a) the forces impacting on and the sources of change, whether internal or external;
(b) the degree of change (i.e. primary or secondary level change);
(c) the timing of the change (gradual or revolutionary);
(d) the scale of the change (i.e. at the level of the individual, group or organization)
(e) the focus of the change (e.g. organisational structure, processes or attitudes); and
(f) the process of the change (i.e. how change take place).

There are several models of organisational change including the life cycle, evolutionary, dialectic, and teleological models. Weick and Quinn (1999) state that the four models listed are classified by the unit of change and the mode of change. The unit of change can be a single entity (e.g. life cycle, teleological) or interactions between entities (e.g. evolution, dialectic). The mode of change refers to how change occurs (whether deterministic or constructed) and whether the result is a primary or secondary level change. The main tenants of the four models are outlined in Figure 1 but only the teleological model will be described in detail.

The teleological model is sometimes referred to as the planned change, scientific or rational model (Kezar & Eckel, 2002) because this model describes change as occurring in a linear, rational fashion, driven by the leaders of the organization (Kezar, 2001; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The organization is seen as a discrete entity within which change is caused by the organization’s internal goals. Although in this model change is constructed and emerges over time, the general process for change includes the following steps:

(a) goal formulation,
(b) implementation,
(c) evaluation of progress, and finally
(d) goal modification, based on lessons learned during the evaluation stage (Kezar, 2001; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Development is defined as the progress towards the achievement of the goal state. Context and resources can limit development and influence goal creation (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Approaches which were developed from the teleological model include organisational development, total quality management and strategic planning (Kezar, 2001).
Table 2

*Models of Organizational Change (adapted from Kezar, 2001)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teleological</th>
<th>Life Cycle</th>
<th>Evolutionary</th>
<th>Political (Dialectic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit Of Change</strong></td>
<td>Single Entity</td>
<td>Single Entity</td>
<td>Multiple Entities</td>
<td>Multiple Entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why Change Occurs</strong></td>
<td>Leaders; Internal environment</td>
<td>Leaders guiding natural growth</td>
<td>External environment</td>
<td>Dialectical tensions of values, norms or patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process of Change</strong></td>
<td>Rational; linear, purposeful</td>
<td>Natural progression; result of training and motivation; altering habits and identity</td>
<td>Adaption; slow gradual; non intentional</td>
<td>First order followed by occasional second order; negotiation and power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>New structures and organising principles</td>
<td>New organisational identity</td>
<td>New structures and processes; first order change</td>
<td>New organisational ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Metaphor</strong></td>
<td>Changemaster</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Self-producing organism</td>
<td>Social movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.2 Strategic Planning

Several researchers stated that vision, strategic planning, staff support, student support, copyright and intellectual property are issues that must be addressed when transitioning to online modes of delivery (Bates, 2007; Haughey, 2007; Kuboni & Martin, 2004; Levy, 2003; Thurab-Nkosi & Marshall, 2006; Vogel & Muirhead, 2007). While these areas are specific to the transition to online education, there are also general principles of managing educational change that can be applied to this transition, including effective leadership (Anderson, 2006; Campbell & Fullan, 2006; Fullan, 1985; Vogel & Muirhead, 2007), a focus on teaching and learning (Stoll
& Fink, 1996; Murphy & Hallinger, 1993; Louise & Miles, 1993), and an understanding of organizational culture (Stoll, 2003).

A successful transition will require strategic planning in order to enable the institution to respond to the changing expectations of the distance education marketplace (Hache, 2000) in a manner that capitalises both on institutional strengths and the available technology. Hache observed that in 1999, some 61% of American tertiary institutions included information technology in their planning strategies, but had not created strategic plans for the development of their online distance education programmes. Other researchers also suggested that strategic planning is essential for successful technology integration (Vogel & Muirhead, 2007; Sife, Lwoga & Sanga, 2007; Bates, 2007). Moore and Kearsley (2004) posited that a systems view of distance education would ensure that all areas were adequately planned. For these authors a system must include “all the component processes that make up distance education including teaching, learning, communication, design and management” as well as an institutional philosophy (Moore & Kearsley, 2004, p. 5). Their view of distance education indicates that the system would include the following components:

(a) sources of knowledge (i.e. faculty);
(b) course design mechanisms;
(c) course delivery mechanisms;
(d) interactions between students, instructors and content;
(e) system management; and
(f) the learning environment.

Bates (2007) reported that the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology’s (SAIT) strategic plan addressed the following areas: vision, faculty development, training and support, student support and learning and intellectual property rights. Plan implementation resulted in a mix of delivery modes for SAIT’s courses: face-to-face, blended and completely online. Decisions as to which mode should be utilised per course rested with the department and were based on the nature of the course content, the target student, available resources as well as instructor skills. Bates (2007) noted that the transition process at SAIT changed both teaching and learning at the institution as well as the organizational structure. The nature of the student population also changed, as the percentage of mature, part-time students increased substantially. Instruction became more student centred and content development became more team driven as
instructors worked with instructional designers and others to create courses. Bates’ (2007) observations aligned with the predictions made by Moore and Kearsley (2004), who suggested that the transition to online education would result in the following changes in:

(a) the nature of the student (distance education generally widens access to tertiary education and increases the number of non traditional students);
(b) the organizational structure (a new organizational structure will be necessary to design, deliver and manage distance education); and
(c) the roles of the teacher, learner and the administrator.

These changes can be managed successfully though a comprehensive planning exercise, clear communication with stakeholders and effective leadership.

2.3.3 Leadership

Leaders provide direction, exercise influence and can significantly impact student learning (Wahlstrom, Seashore, Leithwood & Anderson, 2010). Leadership is often the driver for educational change (Phillips, 2005) and leaders must communicate the vision clearly to the stakeholders to enable effective change to take place (Beaudoin, 2002; Browne, 2005). Stoll and Fink (1996) stated that effective schools possess visionary leaders who utilize participatory leadership strategies, while Murphy and Hallinger (1993) asserted that leadership must be trusted by the staff and that practices should be implemented to foster that trust. In his discussion of the change process in schools, Fullan (1985) included leadership as one of the most important process variables. He posited that effective leaders possess a deep understanding of the change process and manage it intuitively. Fullan (1985) and de Freitas and Oliver (2005) both proposed that leaders enact change through a series of interactions with stakeholders, by managing individual communication as well as ensuring that every interaction contributes to the overall change process. These interactions require deep understandings and subtle action by the leadership, but will result in changes that permeate the institution (Fullan 1985). Tierney (1988) suggested that participative leadership and communication which reinforces institutional beliefs are critical to effective organisational change.

Sclater (2008a) indicated that communication was an important part of the OU’s plans for the use of online courses, because faculty and staff were used to working in print and may not have been aware of how the technology could be used to support teaching and learning. Staff also may not have had the expertise necessary to develop online course materials. The OU used
print and online materials as well as meetings and events to communicate information in the following important areas:

(a) institutional policies regarding e-learning;
(b) successes (and failures) in e-learning both at the OU and in other institutions;
(c) access to and the use of new technologies at the OU; and
(d) the availability of external funding for e-learning projects (Sclater, 2008a).

Poole (1998) stated that leaders enact organizational change through their statements and actions. Consistency between the words and actions of leadership contributed positively to organisational change in the three case studies that he described. Shaw (2002) uses complexity theory in her narrative on how culture change can be enacted through conversations between members of the organisational community. Communication is an important tool in enabling leadership to champion the change and engage staff in actively supporting the vision. One method of engaging staff is by providing explicit mechanisms for faculty support.

Faculty support is one of the areas that several researchers have identified as being critical to a successful transition to dual mode status. Distance education technology should support faculty and improve the teaching and learning occurring at the institution (Bates, 2007; Hache, 2000). Haughey (2007) examined organizational models for faculty support in six Canadian universities and noted that there was no common organizing model. Some institutions provided centralized support units, while others provided several parallel support units. Services also varied across universities. Some support units focussed on technological applications, while others focussed on pedagogical issues and faculty training. Haughey (2007) indicated that the models chosen reflect the vision of the institution and the place of technology therein, as well as faculty interests. In addition, Haughey (2007) noted that organizational change preceded changes to teaching practice at the six universities. The following suggestions were made for faculty support with respect to technology integration:

(a) leadership support is vital for the incorporation of technology into teaching and learning,
(b) the place of technology in teaching and learning must be identified and accepted,
(c) provision must be made for the development of in-house technical expertise in both faculty and non-instructional staff,
(d) faculty should be given release time to acquire knowledge and skills in ICT, and
(e) both formal and informal support mechanisms need to be used (Vogel & Muirhead, 2007; Haughey, 2007; Hope, 2006).

Institutional context will determine which of the above suggestions for faculty support need the most emphasis. Regardless of which methods of faculty support are used, faculty should be central to the design and delivery of online courses and their support for the institutional vision is essential for the success of the transition.

Online course design and delivery are also areas that must be considered in the transition. One model for online course design is the team model, which has been partially influenced by Otto Peters’ application of industrial processes to distance education (Moore & Kearsley, 2004). However, the role of the instructor is considerably different in this model of course development and it may be difficult for faculty to relinquish control of material and learn to work in a team environment. Once the course has been designed, care must be taken during course delivery to utilise learning strategies that promote learning. It was suggested that facilitators of effective online courses should:

(a) promote group goals, control and ownership of the community;
(b) promote learner collaboration through the use of small groups and the facilitative role of the instructor;
(c) use constructivist approaches and contextualise problems;
(d) promote constructive dialogue;
(e) create and support a social climate (e.g. use an instructor restricted space, video-conferencing, and introductory notes); and
(f) create a safe environment where participants can express their opinions without fear (Bernard, Rojo de Rubalcava & St. Pierre, 2000; Vrasidas & Zembylas, 2004).

These suggestions enable learners to construct meaning and also provide a measure of learner support.

Learner support can be defined as activities that enable learners to study successfully and to construct their own understandings of the content (Thorpe 2002). Learner support should be:

(a) cognitive (supporting and developing learning);
(b) affective (i.e. related to the emotions that support learning and success); and
(c) systemic - helping students to manage rules and systems of the institution in ways that support persistence (Tait, 2000, p. 289).
Typically learner support has been viewed as activities that take place after course development has been completed, or activities that are external to the course itself. However, Thorpe (2002) considered learner support to be an integral part of the design of courses that are characterized by collaborative learning. She suggested that there is no single model for learner support but that a variety of mechanisms need to be utilised.

Through interviews of centre coordinators and student surveys, Kuboni (2009) addressed the issue of student support in the transition to online distance education at the UWI Distance Education Centre. In the past, one important mechanism for student support had been face-to-face interaction at the local centres in each island. More recently however, with the use of online courses, course information and tutorial support were being provided online, which reduced the importance of the learning centres. Learning centres had also served as a social connecting point for students, but this function had also been downplayed and students were complaining about the lack of social cohesion. In addition, some site coordinators were still providing information via text messaging or phone calls because students missed online information due to infrequent logins or unfamiliarity with the site. Kuboni’s (2009) student surveys suggested that there was a wide disparity between students in terms of familiarity with the technology, in the amount of time they spent online and in their learning behaviours. Kuboni (2009) suggested that the local centres be maintained as a means of student support and that the institution explore the use of social networking sites to increase student familiarity with the online medium. She proposed that traditional student support mechanisms were unable to adequately meet the needs of online students and that new methods of student support needed to be devised. Her findings were corroborated by Stewart, Hutchins, Ezell, De Martino and Bobba (2010), who also stated that there was a wide range of technical skills possessed by the learners in online courses and that learner support should be easily accessible.

Mitra’s (2009) study examined student support issues at the largest open school system in India. She found that students assigned different levels of importance to different types of support activities. The provision of information about course availability prior to registration, tutor accessibility during the course and the posting of examination information at the end of the course were all rated as highly important support activities in this context. Student perception of the effectiveness of learner support mechanisms is determined in part by the educational culture of the students.
2.4 Culture and Online Education

Culture can be defined as the “shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that knit a community together” (Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1985, p.5) Culture can be displayed through group behaviour (Schein, 1985). A variety of groups can exhibit cultures, including nations, communities and organisations (Rogers and Steinfatt, 1999). Within an organisation, different subcultures can exist among groups of people who work together consistently over time (Louis, 1985). “Culture is a solution to the problem of how to survive, given the problems in the environment, the physical and social needs that must be addressed, and the tools available” (Masumoto, 2007, p.1291). These solutions are taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive these problems (Horst, 1989; Schein, 1985).

Two overlapping areas of culture will be examined in this review; organisational culture and educational culture.

2.4.1 Organizational Culture

Stoll (2003) affirms that organisational culture “acts as a lens or screen through which the world is viewed” (p. 96) and is shaped by the history of the institution, its context as well as the people within the organisation. Horst (1989) further delineates the context by suggesting that the culture of a higher education institution is also determined by the national higher education culture, the type of institution, the culture of professionalism within the institution, the academic disciplinary cultures and the administrative culture. Culture impacts the performance of an organisation (Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1985) and is particularly important in periods of change (Horst, 1989) because culture must be altered if the changes are to become institutionalized (French & Bell, 1999). Understanding and manipulating organisational culture has long been seen as a way to improve institutions (French & Bell, 1999; Horst, 1989; Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1985; Tierney, 1988). Using the framework of organisational culture for change enables administrators to consider, evaluate and implement decisions in the context of the organisation, and to understand that various groups within the organisation may perceive institutional performance differently (Tierney, 1988).

Stoll (2003) maintained that in order to achieve educational improvement, change must originate from within the institution. She believes that educational improvement is primarily about changing the culture of an institution rather than changing structures or responsibilities. Organizational culture is enacted through institutional policies, the distribution of resources and
in beliefs about teaching and learning at the institution. Czerniewicz and Brown (2009) classified tertiary institutions into four types depending on their organizational culture, based on policy definitions of ICT and control of the implementation. Their research suggested that institutions with clearly defined policies and more flexibility around the implementation of ICT were more successful in ensuring higher rates of adoption than those with tighter control of the implementation but poorly defined policies. Organizational culture can have a significant impact on the rate of ICT adoption (de Freitas & Oliver, 2005; Czerniewicz & Brown, 2009) and is therefore a critical area to consider in any transition to online education.

2.4.2 Educational Culture and Attitudes

Educational culture is a subset of culture and can be described a group’s shared attitudes, values and beliefs with respect to teaching and learning (Bentley, Timney & Chia, 2005). Educational culture includes learners’ educational values and the conditions under which they are comfortable learning (Bentley, Tinney & Chia, 2005). Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla (2003) identify several areas of culture which will impact educational practices, including perception, cognition, language and communication. Bates (2005) suggested that differences in the beliefs about the importance of student versus instructor opinions can result in differential use of discussion tools across cultures. Gunawardena and McIssac (2004) suggest that one of the important areas for future research in distance education is the socio-cultural context in which distance education takes place and its effects on motivation and on teaching and learning.

Horst (1989) states that “culture is a powerful guiding force for determining actions and attitudes” (p. 68). Faculty and students hold certain beliefs about teaching and learning and these beliefs directly influence the willingness to teach and learn online (Kosak et al., 2004). It is therefore imperative to understand the attitudes held by stakeholders in order to develop strategic plans for online education. Students, faculty and administration must accept and use new technologies in order for the transition to online courses to be successful. Davis (1989) created scales to measure constructs believed to be determinants of technology acceptance and these scales evolved into the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The TAM relates technology use (behaviour) to psychometric constructs called perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Davis (1989) hypothesised that people will use technologies if they believe that it will help them perform a task more effectively (perceived usefulness) and if they believe that the technology will be easy to use (perceived ease of use). Over time other researchers continued to develop and
expand the TAM. Taylor and Todd (1995) suggested that technology use is a function of behavioural intention, which is a function of attitude (positive or negative feelings) towards technology usage. Attitude is determined by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Several researchers have explored student and instructor attitudes towards online education using survey research methods in a variety of learning situations (Drennan, Kennedy & Pisarski, 2005; Liaw, Huang & Chen, 2007; Panda & Mishra, 2007; Yuen, Allan & Ma, 2008), and their research findings support the idea that a more positive attitude towards online education will result in increased use of online education by stakeholders.

Negative attitudes towards online education can result in faculty resistance, which has been identified by Haughey (2007) and Hope (2006) as one of the major issues in the development of online education. At the University of the West Indies, the low organizational status of online courses and the exclusion of online course work from career advancement policies were issues that predisposed faculty to resist participation in the creation of online courses (Hope, 2006). Gibson, Harris and Colaric (2008) suggested that faculty resistance may be due to technical problems with course delivery and the perceived quality of learning outcomes in online courses when compared to face-to-face courses.

Online education is a form of distance education that has the potential to increase access to tertiary education in developing countries. Shifting to online education requires strategic planning, a clear vision and attention to a number of areas, including leadership, organizational culture, student support and attitudes towards online education. This research project seeks to understand how those changes are transpiring at the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology for this study.
3 Research Design and Methodology

The need for research into the transition at UWIOC has been outlined and important areas in the research literature have been described in the preceding chapters. This chapter will delineate the research questions, and provide a rationale for the research methodology and study design. In addition, the methods of data collection and analysis will be described in order to provide a solid epistemological grounding for the research.

3.1 Research Rationale

Qualitative inquiry is a form of research that explores social problems in their natural settings and where most of the analysis is performed through interpretive rather than statistical techniques (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It seeks to reveal meaning by illuminating beliefs about the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 1998) and highlighting the voice of the researched (Galtung, 1975). Qualitative inquiry often includes the researcher as part of the study, recognizing that her thoughts and decisions will influence the research in profound ways. In this particular study it has been recognised that the researcher’s lived experience of both Canadian and Barbadian culture would impact the research in myriad ways, including, but not limited to the choice of research subjects, the research approach, and interactions during interviews, as described in the autobiographical note. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because the phenomenon under review involves the attitudes and behaviour of groups of people in specific educational settings (Creswell, 1998). It will attempt to answer the question of how (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2009) an institution in a developing region is transitioning its distance education program from print to online delivery.

3.2 Research Questions

The research sought to explore how the transition to online distance education was taking place at the University of the West Indies Open Campus from the perspective of the research participants, specifically the administration, the instructors and the students. Levy (2003) outlines six areas (vision, curriculum, student support, staff training, programme quality, and organisational structure) that need to be considered when transitioning to online delivery of distance education courses. Data was gathered in each area to describe the case fully. In addition to Levy’s (2003) areas, stakeholder beliefs about online education were also examined.
Stakeholder beliefs are important in the adoption of new technology (Drennan, Kennedy & Pisarski, 2005; Liaw, Huang & Chen, 2007; Panda & Mishra, 2007; Sife, Lwoga & Sanga, 2007; Yuen, Allan & Ma, 2008) and technology adoption is critical for the success of the transition to online education. The research study also examined context, because comparative education research strongly supports the idea that the context is important in the consideration of educational change (Holmes, 1981; Arnove, 2003). The final research question dealt with regional cultural identity because the concept of a regional cultural identity has been part of UWI and the Caribbean region for some time (Louisy, 2004) and the researcher wondered if UWIOC could contribute to the development of a regional cultural identity.

The research study asked the following questions:

1. How can the context for the transition be described?
2. How do stakeholders describe the role of leadership in the transition?
3. How is UWIOC addressing the following areas in its transition to online distance education: vision, curriculum, student support, staff training, programme quality, and organisational structure?
4. What challenges have been encountered in the transition and how have they been addressed?
5. What attitudes do selected stakeholders (i.e. administrators, faculty and students) exhibit towards online learning?
6. Do stakeholders believe that online education is increasing access to tertiary education?
7. Do stakeholders believe that online education is promoting a regional cultural identity?
8. What strategies can be suggested for the successful implementation of online education at other tertiary institutions serving developing countries?

3.3 Case Study Rationale

In order to answer the questions posed above, it was necessary to choose a research methodology that would allow for the importance of the context to be highlighted as well as allow for both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected. There are several different research traditions within qualitative inquiry, including biography, phenomenology, grounded
theory study, case study and ethnography. Yin (2009) suggested that case study methodology be used when no behavioural control is possible, the focus is on contemporary events and the questions are of the how and why variety. All of the above conditions are fulfilled in this study, and thus case study methodology was chosen. A case study is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context’ (Yin 2009, p. 18). The inherent flexibility in qualitative research design allowed for the continual refining of the research plan while in the field (Patton, 1990) and permitted the research to adapt to new themes arising from the case.

3.4 Case Study Design

Case study design varies greatly from study to study, depending on the types of questions asked and the data required to answer those questions. Yin (2009) suggested that, in designing a case study, one should focus on the research questions, the study’s propositions, the unit of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions and finally the criteria for interpreting the findings.

This case study is a descriptive study using a single case design (Yin, 2009). Single case design was chosen because UWIOC represents a unique case in the transition literature. The unit of analysis was the University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC). To narrow the focus even more, this study deals only with the UWIOC in relation to its use of online and blended courses, and excluded information that described strictly face-to-face courses. The case provides data from interviews, documents and online surveys to describe the shift to online education at UWIOC. The goal is to examine the phenomenon from a variety of perspectives that will hopefully permit conclusions to be drawn regarding strategies to facilitate that transition at other tertiary institutions in developing countries.

The propositions for the case study were determined through a review of the research literature, in combination with the researcher’s understanding of the context of the UWIOC. The case propositions (Table 2) were used to identify areas that were examined in the case, as well as to state the researcher’s initial beliefs about the research questions. Appendix 1 outlines the logic linking the research questions, the propositions and the data collection methods, as well as the types of questions that were asked so that a rich description of the case could be developed.
Table 3

Case Study Propositions: Important Areas in Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rationale for importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Required to unify the staff and move them towards the achievement of the vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leaders are change agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Attitudes toward the technology and online education helps to determine how people will use the technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Courses need to be relevant to the needs of the students in order for the programme to be successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme quality</td>
<td>The quality of the online offering needs to viewed as at least equal to face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student support</td>
<td>This is required for students to buy in and must emphasise areas that they value and will therefore use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff training and support</td>
<td>Can reduce staff resistance and increase buy in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational structure</td>
<td>A new organizational structure will be required to accomplish the new tasks the organisation has to perform re the online courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researchers using qualitative inquiry have long had to struggle with establishing the trustworthiness of their data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address these issues, the general standards outlined by Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) were used. Their list is appealing because it can be used to evaluate both qualitative and quantitative research, while allowing each to be true to their own epistemology and research traditions. Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) suggest that research should:

(a) demonstrate cohesiveness between the questions and the methodology,
(b) demonstrate competence in the methods of data collection and analysis,
(c) explicitly outline the assumptions of the researcher,
(d) demonstrate an analysis of the applications of various theories to the data, and
(e) provide information that could be used to inform and improve practice.
Yin (2009) has a similar list, in that he identified construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability as criteria for judging research quality. In addition to those criteria, Creswell (1998) suggested that at least two of the following be used to establish trustworthiness in any study:

(a) prolonged engagement,
(b) triangulation,
(c) peer review,
(d) negative case analysis,
(e) clarification of researcher bias,
(f) member checking,
(g) rich thick description, or
(h) external audits.

In this research study, several techniques were used to ensure that the study accurately represents the data collected and that the data is trustworthy, including (a) triangulation of data, (b) prolonged engagement, (c) thick rich description, (d) member checking, and (e) clarification of researcher bias.

The triangulation of data was accomplished by the use of several data sources, including surveys, interviews and archival information. Using a variety of data sources allows for corroboration of themes between data sets and decreases the likelihood of the reporting of an idea that is only present in one data set. Similarly, the use of a variety of data sources can create thick rich descriptions of the cases that should enable others to make decisions on transferability (Creswell 1998) and also enable the researcher to easily identify pieces of data that are not representative of the complete data set. The data was collected over a period of 16 months, which should satisfy the prolonged engagement criteria. The data was also discussed with key participants who provided some feedback as to the relevance of the emerging themes.

3.5 Data Collection

Three types of data were collected in this study: interviews, online surveys and document review. The following section describes the collection methods for each data type.
3.5.1 Interview Design and Sampling

A semi-structured interview (Willis, 2005) was designed for specific administrators and staff members who would be knowledgeable about the transition. Students were deliberately excluded from the interview process because of their lack of relevant information about the transition process. The interview questions were tested using cognitive interviewing techniques as espoused by Willis (2005). The initial questions were based on the research questions (Appendix 3) but in each interview additional questions were asked based on the responses given. This method of interviewing was chosen to take advantage of the benefits of having a consistent set of questions but also the flexibility to pursue other concepts that arose during the interview. As the interviewing process progressed, the interview questions were revised in order to probe for areas that were suggested by earlier interviewees. Questions were also tailored to positions within the organisation to ensure that participants were not asked questions outside of their knowledge area.

Purposeful sampling was used to choose administrators and support staff for interviews in order to target those who would have been decision makers or heavily involved in the transition. The researcher decided to interview all the senior administration at the UWIOC headquarters as well as a selection of Site Heads and support staff, based on the organisational chart and their knowledge of the transition. A list of Site Heads was obtained and email invitations to participate in the study were sent to each Site Head. Attached to the email was a consent form asking for participation and informing them of their rights to be removed from the study. Administrators from islands with a large number of students in the online programmes were selected first, and then those with smaller numbers of students. The overall aim was also to interview as many of the administrators as possible. Those who did not respond within one week were sent a follow up email or telephoned. Invitees were given the option to do the interview face-to-face, by telephone or via Skype, because of the distributed nature of the organisation.

A list of course tutors was obtained by examining the list of courses offered each semester. Every fifth instructor was selected and sent an invitation for the interview along with the consent letter, but the response rate was extremely low. The researcher then asked those who agreed to suggest other possible participants and contacted those individuals preferentially, which resulted in a higher response rate for the interviews.
Since most of the interviews were done using Skype and the individuals were often unable to indicate permission using their signature, written permission was given by email and oral permission to record the interview was captured in the interview recording.

There were 15 administrators, 6 course coordinators/tutors and 3 support staff interviewed, for a total of 26 interviews. Individuals whose interviews proved particularly rich were interviewed more than once.

3.5.2 Survey Design and Sampling

Surveys and interviews were used to identify the attitudes of stakeholders towards online education. The survey on attitudes towards online education was a self-administered, single wave assessment of status online survey (Fowler, 2002; Spector, 1992). An online survey was chosen for the following reasons:

(a) the study population is e-literate and has access to computers,
(b) no sensitive data is being collected,
(c) it is a simple form of data collection that eliminates the need for data input,
(d) it is inexpensive and relatively fast (no need for copying and distribution),
(e) the consent form can be embedded at the start of the survey, and
(f) the research design does not require tracking of respondents.

The initial surveys were created using the online survey tool Survey Monkey™. The surveys were developed using techniques described in Fowler (2002) and Spector (1992), including the testing of survey items through cognitive interviewing (Willis, 2005). Each item was a statement to which the respondent indicated their level of agreement on a uni-polar five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Some survey questions were adapted from Wang (2003), Saade and Xin He (2007), and Gibson, Harris and Colaric (2008). There were also several original open ended questions in the survey. Demographic questions were included to enable the author to more clearly describe the students involved in online courses. All the survey questions are listed in Appendix 4.

The attitude towards online learning was the main construct for the survey. In this paper, attitude is defined as positive or negative feelings towards online learning. Attitude towards online learning was determined by the following sub-con structs:

(a) Perceived ease of use: Degree of effort required from the user (Davis, 1989)
(b) Perceived usefulness: Likelihood of improved performance (Davis, 1989)
In this survey it was proposed that if students could perform the same functions as they could in the face-to-face class, then they would have a positive attitude towards online education. Similarly, if it were easy to perform those functions, users would also have a positive attitude towards online education and be more willing to use the system. The functions that were chosen for the survey included communication with e-tutors and peers, finding resources, working in groups and understanding course material. Appendix 2 shows the relationship between the survey questions and the sub-constructs for the study.

In order to provide a clearer picture of the case, surveys were revised slightly after each application depending on the responses and the data gleaned from interviews. This meant that for each application the surveys were slightly different, although the core questions were the same. All survey questions are listed in Appendix 4. In an attempt to maximise survey response, survey items were simply stated and easy to read. Instructions for the completion of the survey were given at the start of the survey and respondents were required to indicate their permission to collect the data before beginning the survey. A thank you was also included at the end of the survey.

The target population (i.e. the population to which this research study will be applicable) included all students in online courses in the Anglophone Caribbean, but the accessible population (i.e. the population that could be surveyed) was all students in online courses at the UWIOC. It was not feasible to obtain a truly random sample of this population because the researcher was not allowed to contact the students directly. A brief description and a link to the survey was posted at three different times on the UWIOC’s online student notice board (Summer 2009, Fall 2009 and January 2010) and students were invited to participate. All students have access to this notice board once they login to the UWIOC portal as it is the location where all general UWIOC announcements are posted.

3.5.3 Document Collection

Documents were obtained from four main sources; the UWIOC website, the Board for Non Campus Countries and Distance Education archive website, the UWI Chancellery website and interview participants. The documents were selected according to the case study design to provide answers to the research questions. Some documents were requested; others were suggested to the researcher by the interview participants in response to a line of questioning. In total fifty-seven documents were selected as useful and added to the Nvivo8 database.
Archival documents used to create a history of the UWIOC were obtained from the website of the Board for Non Campus Countries and Distance Education, including meeting minutes and documents prepared for meetings. Documents were selected to present a timeline of events and to highlight the decision making process of the leadership. Some of the documents were unconfirmed minutes and as such may not represent the consensus of the committee. In addition, it was understood by the researcher that meeting documents present a particular viewpoint of events, so whenever possible information from other sources was also used to corroborate the tale of events.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Interview and Document Data

The interviews, documents and open ended questions from the surveys were all analysed using qualitative techniques. Creswell (1998) and Yin (2009) suggest categorical aggregation, pattern analysis and then the development of naturalistic generalisations as data analysis techniques. Analysis of the data was supported by Nvivo 8.

All interviews were recorded, then naturalistically transcribed (Davidson, 2009) by the researcher and stored digitally. Care was taken to indicate mannerisms in speech that might indicate areas of sensitivity or deep emotion.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the first level coding was done using the inductive method. In this step, the text was segmented and short pieces of text were assigned a name (code) that attributes meaning relevant to the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Then the codes were rechecked and clarified. Some codes were given descriptions for clarification and the number of codes was reduced to a more manageable number. Next the codes were grouped into patterns. General themes were derived from the code list and noted. Then pattern coding was done by exporting a list of codes to Excel, assigning a number to each code and sorting them by number. Codes were rechecked here and reduced again to ensure that the segments of text linked to the codes fit closely with the definition of the code and the larger pattern. The pattern coding technique was repeated and then the patterns were grouped into larger themes as related to the research questions. A mind map was developed to help the researcher think about the relationships between patterns and emerging themes. Then the themes were matched to the research questions to create a picture of the UWIOC in this transitional period. During the entire process, the author kept an offline blog of her ideas, akin to the idea of memoing (Miles &
Huberman, 1994). Member checking was done by asking several interviewees to confirm that the transcripts accurately represented their views. In addition one influential interviewee was asked to confirm that the themes arising were representative of the views of the people in the organisation.

In deciding what represented a satisfactory answer to the research questions, the researcher was guided by a determination only to use data that was either represented in more than one data set or by a significant number of sources within a single data set. The concept of significance was not determined statistically, but was dependant on how many sources expressed a particular idea relative to the number of sources within that data set. There were a very small number of exceptions to these principles, perhaps two. These exceptions were deliberately allowed. In one example the participant providing the information would have been at a level of the organization where (s)he could cause the change described. In the other case, the comments made by the participants represented a theme that was mentioned in the research literature and was therefore deemed important enough to be mentioned in this paper.

3.6.2 Survey Data

The three iterations of the student survey were combined to produce a single document that included all of the questions asked and the total responses for each question. The number of responses varied per question but the maximum number of responses for any one question was 379 and the minimum was 98. The mode for all questions was 102. There were approximately 4000 students in each semester, so this represents a response rate of between 2.5-9.5%. Survey questions can be seen in Appendix 4 for both students and tutors. A survey was also done for tutors, but only 36 surveys were completed. This represents a response rate of about 22.5%, given that the number of tutors varied by semester but at maximum was about 250. For both tutor and student surveys, bar graphs were created to represent the responses to each question. These responses are discussed at various places within this document but most are in Chapter 7.

3.6.3 Ethical Considerations

The methodology for this research project was assessed through the ethical review process at the University of Toronto. Permission to perform the research was granted in March 2009 and reissued in April 2010. Permission to perform the research was also granted by the University of the West Indies in March 2009, but no renewal was necessary.
Surveys collected demographic information (such as name, gender and island of residence) but there was no identifying information collected. Interviews of necessity collected identifying information (e.g. name and role) but this data was stripped from the transcripts and will not be included in this document. Since there was only one researcher with access to the data and the research procedure did not require a double blind strategy, it was not necessary to remove identifying data from the transcripts during analysis. The transcripts were given codes for identification before inclusion of interview quotes in this document. This protection is especially important for administrators and faculty in a small community where there may only be a few persons in each role.

The researcher’s experiences as a professional educator in the Caribbean region have strongly influenced the researcher’s approach to studying tertiary education in the region, and should also enable her to be a more critical observer, one who understands the nuances of life and education in the region. As a result of the researcher’s interest and involvement in this area, she views online education as a positive change in the Caribbean and she may have the tendency to downplay the obstacles or negative impacts of its use. Nevertheless, if the techniques suggested by Creswell (1998) are performed and these biases are taken into account the resulting research should meet the criteria established by Howe and Eisenhardt (1990). In addition, the resulting research should also provide information that can be used to inform and improve the use of online courses at these institutions and others with similar issues.
4 The Context of the Open Campus

Comparative education research has demonstrated that a deep understanding of the context is important in implementing any educational change (Holmes 1981; Arnove, 2003; Phillips & Ochs, 2004), especially if the failures of educational borrowing are to be avoided. This chapter will describe the institutional context and development of the UWIOC so that the transition to online education can be examined in its own setting and the effects of the context on the transition can be clearly seen. In order to fully understand the UWI Open Campus (UWIOC), one must understand the influences that have shaped it, including geography and institutional culture. UWIOC is the newest campus of UWI, which as a regional institution is buffeted by the winds of change blowing across the Caribbean Sea.

4.1 The West Indies

Figure 1: Map of the West Indies (adapted from The Beach, 2010)

Figure 1 shows the location of the islands of the Caribbean, so called because the islands are bounded on the west side by the Caribbean Sea. The chain of islands extends from the Bahamas off the coast of Florida, USA in the north to Trinidad and Tobago in the south, a twin island republic that is only a few miles away from South America. Originally settled by the Arawaks and the Caribs, those populations are now virtually extinct as a result of forced slavery
and disease in the early years of colonisation (Greenwood & Hamber, 1979). The islands of the Caribbean are also called the West Indies. They acquired this name from Christopher Columbus in his unsuccessful journey from Europe to find a sea route to India in 1492. Landing in what is now known as San Salvador, the Bahamas, he thought he had reached India by sailing west, but later realised his mistake and renamed the islands the West Indies (Greenwood & Hamber, 1979).

Table 4

*The Anglophone Caribbean (adapted from the Central Intelligence Agency, 2010)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Area in km²</th>
<th>Pop. 2010 in 1000s</th>
<th>GDP per capita (PPP) 1000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>285.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>11,424</td>
<td>2847</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>5128</td>
<td>1228</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OECS Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anguilla</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVI</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>107.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montserrat</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Kitts</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Lucia</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>160.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Vincent</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North West Territories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>13942</td>
<td>310.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>22960</td>
<td>314.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayman Islands</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks and Caicos</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all of the islands have a population of far fewer than 1.5 million, and thus are considered small states (Bray, 1992; Atchoarena, 1993) with the exception of Trinidad and Jamaica (Table 3). The current population of the entire region is less than 5 million, made up mostly of people of African descent, with much smaller numbers of people of Indian, European and Chinese descent (Brandon, 1996). The islands of the West Indies were colonies of European countries, and although most now are independent states, they retain links to their colonisers.
through a combination of language, culture and political affiliations. English, French, Spanish, Dutch and dialects of the above are all spoken in the region. The people of the Anglophone Caribbean share a few things in common; music, the West Indies Cricket team and a regional university - the University of the West Indies.

4.2 The University of the West Indies

UWI began in 1948 as the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), created to provide tertiary education to the British colonies of the Caribbean by combining the resources of several islands (Williams, 1946; Baskett, 1950). UCWI was initially assisted in becoming an independent regional university by entering into what was called a scheme of ‘special relations’ with the University of London (Jones & Letters, 2008). This relationship allowed the University of London to share “academic responsibility with them over a period of years until they felt they were ready to award their own degrees” (Jones & Letters, 2008, p.115). In this way the University of London determined admissions criteria, examined students from UCWI in concert with local examiners and granted degrees (Baskett, 1950; Jones & Letters, 2008). The final examinations held under this joint arrangement took place in 1968 (Jones & Letters, 2008). There were several other institutions in developing regions that had their early beginnings through this type of relationship with the University of London, including the current University of Ghana and the University of Nigeria (Jones & Letters, 2008). At that time there were only two colleges in the West Indies: Codrington College in Barbados and the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad.

The first campus of UCWI was established in Mona, Jamaica, with some thirty three students enrolled, including ten women (Jones & Letters, 2008). Springer (1962) described the new university as being based explicitly upon the principles of British redbrick universities, with emphasis on academic excellence, a wide range of programmes and the idea that living in residence was critical for the achievement of the goals of the university. It was not until 1958 that the first West Indian was made principal of the new institution. In response to increasing demand for tertiary education by the wealthier nations, two other campuses were created. The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago was absorbed by UWI and became the St. Augustine campus in 1960, while the Cave Hill campus in Barbados was created in 1963. In 1962 UWI became an independent university (Alleyne et al., 2006).
UWI’s motto is “Oriens ex occidente lux – A Light Rising from the West” (UWI, 2005) and the “enduring mission of The University of the West Indies (UWI) is to propel the economic, social, political and cultural development of West Indian society through teaching, research, innovation, advisory and community services and intellectual leadership” (UWI, 2008, p.10). This aim highlights UWI’s focus on addressing the needs of the region. At the time of this manuscript’s writing, UWI served sixteen countries, including: Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Christopher & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Turks and Caicos and the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago (UWI, 2008).

The early years of the newly independent UWI were exciting times in the Caribbean. Many of the former British colonies were gaining independence; Jamaica and Trinidad in 1962, Barbados in 1966, and the Bahamas in 1973. Education was seen as a method by which to achieve social mobility (Layne, 2002; Bethel, 1999) and was used by political parties as a mechanism for building a sense of national pride. The political parties of the day often used education as a platform to wrest power away from the richer ruling classes and provide power to the often poor black majority. As the Caribbean nations developed as individual nation states, UWI continued to exert its influence on the region. Graduates of UWI became the leaders (both political and otherwise) in many islands. There have been eight graduates of UWI who became prime ministers of Caribbean countries, including the prime ministers of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad in 2010. In addition, UWI’s graduates include 3 Nobel Laureates and seventy-five Rhodes Scholars.

As the individual states developed, the region began to form its own identity and create internal alliances, such as the West Indies Federation in 1958. Unfortunately, several of the alliances foundered, including The West Indies Federation, which lasted only four years (CARICOM Secretariat, 2009). However, the idea that the region needs to unite lingers on to the current day and has resulted in other alliances such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) the Caribbean Court of Justice, a shared central bank among some countries and a desire for a single economic market, the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME). The latter would allow for the free movement of people, goods and services between the signatory countries, but has yet to be completely enacted. Roberts (2009) suggested that the West Indies has had a long history of separateness and that although there have been many attempts at regional integration in politics, economics, trade and education, nationalism has often obstructed progress. The
University of the West Indies has been the longest existing regional entity although “the overwhelming dominance of the three existing campuses by students from the host country”, has contributed to the “erosion of the regional character of the university” (UWI, 2008, p. 9). As a result, these campuses are increasingly responsible for a larger proportion of the funding and the campuses respond to national rather than regional agendas (UWI, 2008).

As the oldest and largest of the universities in the region, UWI enjoys considerable status among regional and international institutions and sees itself as being the “recognised leader in the field of higher education in the region” (UWI, 2008, p. 9). UWI currently has a student enrolment of over 40,000 students and offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Engineering, Humanities & Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Pure & Applied Sciences, Science and Agriculture, and Social Sciences (UWIOC 2010). Some internal and external stakeholders believe that there is a tendency to take students for granted because UWI “has been for a long time a monopoly and has suddenly found itself having to compete and therefore it has to make that transition of looking at its clientele in a different way” (GT Interview, March 16, 2010).

4.2.1 Early Distance Education at UWI

From the earliest beginnings, UWI had to serve students who were far flung across the region. Initially students came to the Mona Campus and studied there, but this was expensive and could only be undertaken by the elite of the society or those who obtained scholarships. Williams (1946) describes the educational system in the 1950s as being elitist and suggested that the new university should be responsive to the needs of the West Indian people. The Extra-Mural Department was created to be the distance education arm of the university, so that from the very earliest days there was a response to the need for higher education in the non-campus countries. However, in the fifties and sixties, it was felt that distance education was for those who “didn’t have the money or the opportunity” and it was considered “second grade education—it’s not the same as going to school” (XS Interview, June 21, 2010).

The Extra-Mural Department of the UWI was intended to bring the university to the people by providing them with a university education, mainly through centres established in the non-campus countries (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007). These centres were administered by Resident Tutors who represented the university in that country. Resident Tutors were highly respected individuals in their communities and their roles in the development of tertiary
education cannot be underestimated, given that they directed the pathway of tertiary education in these developing nations. In the early years, the Extra-Mural department focused on adult education through pre-university courses and developmental programmes. The Extra-Mural department also strongly supported the development of the cultural arts in their communities as a means of human resource development (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007). While the Extra-Mural department did some excellent work in its field of expertise, it was not intended to replicate the function of the main university and thus did not generally offer degree programmes. Therefore, from the very beginning there was inequity in the delivery of tertiary education between the campus and non campus countries, partly as a result of the idea that university education required a period of residence and partly due to the lack of a mechanism to provide tertiary education.

This disparity between the campus countries and the non campus countries has been the driver for distance education programmes in various forms over the years. “There is tremendous pressure on... the university to deliver education in those countries without campuses. We have done some of that ... But they have repeatedly said that is not enough- we want more of our people educated at home” (FC Interview, May 21, 2009). UWI needed to provide the citizens of the countries without a physical campus with equal access to tertiary education in exchange for the funds provided by the governments of these countries. For many years the governments of the non campus countries were very dissatisfied with UWI’s delivery of programmes in their respective countries and they continually agitated for increased access.

The earliest distance education programmes at UWI began with the Radio Education Unit (REU). This unit presented radio shows on various topical issues in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean, designed by Resident Tutors. These shows did not provide for certification and thus would be classified as non formal education, but these were delivered through the campus sites. The next major development in formal distance education at UWI was the introduction of the Challenge Examination Scheme in 1977 (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007; Brandon, 1996). This scheme allowed students in the non campus countries to study on their own, given a syllabus and a course outline as well as limited assistance through local tutorials. At the end of the course of study they would ‘challenge’ the examinations of a first year course of study being offered in the campus countries. If they were successful they were awarded the credits earned. One of the ideas behind this scheme was to foster the development of educational resources in the non campus countries (Brandon, 1996). Fergus, Bernard and Soares (2007) suggested that the university was
initially sceptical of this system of distance education and only began to provide funding and resources in 1981 when (a) it was showing signs of success, and (b) when it could be used as a response to governments who were critical of UWI’s efforts to provide education in their countries. The scheme was institutionalised and lasted until 1986, although there were high levels of attrition (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007), which was reasonable, given the paucity of resources available to the students.

A formal distance education program called Project Satellite commenced in 1978 (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007) which used satellite technology to broadcast teleconferences to centres across the Caribbean. This project was funded primarily by USAID and developed into the UWI Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE) in 1981 (Marrett, 1989; Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007). The project successfully provided education for nurses, technicians, doctors and teachers in Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, as well as communities in Jamaica and Trinidad (Marrett, 1989) that were outside of the campuses. This development removed the requirement for the lecturer and the student to be physically in the same location, and began the shift to the use of ICT for teaching and learning at the UWI. Although the programme was deemed to be a success and UWI took it over in 1986, the shift was not without resistance, as lecturers clung to the traditional teaching methods and were reluctant to move to this new modality (Brandon, 1996). Both of these projects were also delivered through the Extra-Mural Centres, which resulted in increased responsibilities for the Resident Tutors, but not increased remuneration.

Meanwhile, the supporting governments in the non campus countries were increasing their demands for tertiary education for their citizens and continuing to exert pressure on UWI to deliver. There was also a significant desire on the part of the three campuses to be more autonomous and this resulted in a restructuring effort in 1984 (Alleyne et al., 2006). The new structure gave each campus control over its academic and financial needs and enabled it to be more responsive to national needs. This resulted in a change in the student composition at each of the campuses so that the student population became almost exclusively the nationality of the island where the campus was located- a stark contrast to the composition in earlier days. A central university council remained as the highest governing body and there was also an administrative centre that was responsible for the strategic planning and decision making on issues that affected the entire university. The central authority was also supposed to meet the
needs of the non campus countries, with some assistance from the campus countries (Alleyne et al., 2006).

UWI declared itself a dual mode institution in 1994, but that did not result in any significant change in distance education operations, outside of the acknowledgement that there were on-campus and off-campus students, and the idea that distance education activities should be fully integrated into regular work practices for the faculties (Brandon, 1996). Brandon (1996) also suggested that the restructuring was intended to solve several problems with distance education delivery:

(a) Distance Education was peripheral to staff work:

The university’s work in the non campus countries is still considered by some members of the university as peripheral to the mainstream of the institution’s work. Difficulties of communication and timeliness of responses to Resident Tutors and students in the NCCs remain a problem and a sense of isolation continues to be experienced. (UWIDEC, 2005, p. 5)

Distance education activities were not included as part of the faculty workloads and thus were not considered in the planning or funding of department activities. As a result sometimes distance education courses did not fit well into university programmes, to the detriment of students. Faculty who taught DE programmes did so voluntarily and received no credit towards academic advancement or remuneration. This had negative consequences for the number of programmes delivered and the timeliness of final grades.

(b) Poor quality support materials

As a result of the rapid start up for the teleconferencing programmes, the emphasis was on the extensive use of teleconferencing facilities as it replicated the lecture format with which lecturers were familiar. Little attention was paid to the development or the quality of the supporting print materials. Even though several attempts had been made to provide training for instructors in distance education course delivery and material preparation, faculty were reluctant to change their practices (Marrett, 1989).

(c) Lack of organisational change

Although UWI was attempting to increase the delivery of distance education, there were few organisational changes to support this initiative. The provision of satellite
linkages across the region provided staff with an opportunity to incorporate the use of technology into normal work practices, but this did not happen. In addition, the reporting structure for those involved in the development and delivery of distance education courses remained convoluted and unclear, especially for Resident Tutors.

(d) Poor budgeting and financing for distance education

The teleconferencing system was initially supported by a grant from USAID, but after the end of the grant period, UWI took over the expenditure. However, the university did not have a plan in place for continued financing of the effort. “The Chair noted that the real costs of the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre needed to be captured, and reflected in central planning and budgeting” (UWIDEC, 2005, p.5). Non campus governments could not reasonably be charged extra for a service that they were entitled to under the current payment agreements and therefore the costs for distance students were basically borne by the campus countries.

4.2.2 The Board for Non-Campus Countries and Distance Education

In order to solve some of these issues, the Board for Non Campus Countries and Distance Education (BNCCDE) was created in 1996. The aim of this board was to promote and manage the work of the University across the region. To indicate its status in the university, the new board was given a Pro-Vice Chancellor to direct that work as well as create policies for distance education. Each of the campuses had a Principal and Pro-Vice Chancellor. The BNCCDE included three units; the School of Continuing studies (SCS), the UWI Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) and the Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU). The structure of the BNCCDE is illustrated in Figure 2. Fergus, Bernard and Soares (2007) suggested that the creation of this board brought distance education to the forefront of the university and gave it recognition that was long overdue. Brandon (1996) however suggests that there was a considerable gap between policy and implementation, in that “decisions are overlooked, ignored, or obstructed” (Brandon, 1996, p.11) by university agents.
The three units of the BNCCDE all provided outreach to the non campus countries, although in different ways and with different aims. Created in 1996, the TLIU’s mandate was to assist with the development of tertiary institutions in the region and to forge linkages between these institutions and the UWI. The aim of the TLIU was to manage franchise and articulation arrangements with other tertiary institutions in the region and to help those institutions deliver UWI programmes (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007), as well as manage projects aimed at developing tertiary education in the region. Typically the TLIU would make arrangements for other institutions to deliver first or second year programmes and then admit the student into the third year at UWI. This provided the smaller institutions with recognised programmes in the public eye and aided in their development. This unit was much smaller than either of the others although its impact was considerable.

The SCS was the largest and oldest of the three units, emerging as it had from the Extra-Mural Department in 1989 (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007). It continued the focus on lifelong learning and on cultural education, including drama, dance, literary and visual art. The SCS offered a wide range of locally developed and delivered certificate courses in response to community needs as determined by the Resident Tutor. These courses varied from country to country and even from site to site within a country. The SCS retained ownership of the centres that were scattered through the islands. Resident tutors had considerable autonomy over their sites and which SCS courses were developed. In contrast, they had little control over the UWIDEC programmes that were being delivered through some SCS sites, although they were
responsible for organizing the tutorials for these courses. There were three kinds of sites: those that only delivered SCS or UWIDEC programmes and those sites that delivered both SCS and UWIDEC programmes. UWIDEC and SCS programmes had very different visions and clientele. Despite the good work that the Extra-Mural Department and then SCS had accomplished in their many years of operation, there always existed a schism between the SCS and the other areas of the UWI. SCS felt that they were treated as “an appendage of the university rather than the legitimate tool of outreach that it was” (Fergus, Bernard & Soares, 2007, p.171). Perhaps because the SCS offered programmes that typically did not lead to degrees, “the SCS always had a thing of not feeling itself as a part of the University and being put down because of what they did” (PL Interview, June 11, 2009) and often found it difficult to gain acceptance. There appeared to be little recognition in the wider university that “innovative programmes are not necessarily all going to be at undergraduate degree level” (UWIDEC, 2005, p. 3).

The SCS had to struggle all along the way to get at a level of integrity that allowed even our courses to be accepted for matriculation purposes- that didn’t happen until 1991- the first course that went into the sieve or the pool was a course on women administrators professional secretaries. (MC Interview, June 11, 2009)

UWIDEC was created from UWIDITE in 1996 and it continued the delivery of distance education programmes. However, the main delivery method was print materials with teleconferencing and tutorials as supplementary, which was a shift away from UWIDITE’s earlier use of satellite teleconferencing. UWIDEC’s focus was on degree programmes and some certificate programmes, which were designed to allow matriculation into degree programmes. UWIDEC used a team approach for the development of courses, whereby faculty from one of the three campuses wrote the course materials and marked the coursework done by the students. UWIDEC provided curriculum and technical support, disseminated the materials and performed administrative tasks through staff at SCS sites and in some cases at UWIDEC sites. Despite not being the largest or oldest of the three units, UWIDEC was the one that most closely aligned with the traditional academic work of the university and thus became the driving force for the next developmental stage in the provision of tertiary education to those countries without a campus.
4.3 The Open Campus

The development of the Open Campus is a story of personalities, of political intrigue, of intense labour pains and ultimately of the successful birth of a new campus. The story of the Open Campus began in 1970 when Edmond Ramesar (the Resident Tutor for Trinidad and Tobago) developed a proposal for the development of a fourth entity for distance education that would encompass the work of the Extra-Mural Department (Roberts, 2009). His vision for the new college was that it would specialise in adult education and serve the non campus countries, have its own faculties and issue its own degrees in the same manner as other faculties (Roberts, 2009). However that did not happen at that time. Brandon (1996) suggests that the university rejected the idea of an extra campus because of the academic programming and responsibilities that would be required. An alternate explanation could be that the Extra-Mural Department did not have the status in the University to be considered for promotion to the level of a campus.

While the creation of the BNCCDE did offer increased access to tertiary education for the non campus countries, it still was not enough:

A lot of the changes that have happened over the last 15 or so years have been a result of the UWI 12 governments pushing and saying you’re not giving us anything- we’re not getting anything out of being part of the university. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

The governments were “begging for a share in the intellectual development of the society” and some islands “showed their displeasure with UWI” (MC Interview, June 10, 2009) by setting up community colleges to increase access to tertiary education. There were several issues surrounding the delivery of distance education through the BNCCDE. There was still significant demand for tertiary education in the non-campus countries that was not being met, despite the low numbers of students enrolled in distance education programmes. The non campus countries were also not benefiting from the research capability and consultancy services that were being offered to the nations with a local campus (BNCCDE, 2007). The delivery of the distance education courses was inefficient, due in no small part to two of the three fatal flaws identified by Charles Wedemeyer in his review of the Articulated Instructional Media Project reported by Moore and Kearsley (2004). UWIDEC did not control the faculty delivering the programmes (and thus the curriculum) and it did not control the funds used in the programmes.

So it was allegedly a faculty driven model but faculty generally regarded it as an imposition and generally didn’t take (it) too seriously... was not a priority...So we who were trying to run this show were really totally pissed off with the lack of support and said the only way we could do it properly would be to have control over it and make it
make it our thing that we can run, so we could sanction people for not doing things. (TN Interview, 2009)

In short, UWIDEC needed to be autonomous in order to be more effective.

One outcome of the lack of faculty control was that examination results for distance education students were often reported extremely late:

The problem of late results is still very much one of our major challenges. Results for the Faculty of Social Sciences for Semester I of 2004/5 (i.e. for examinations written in December 2004) were declared in March 2005. This led to a number of problems for DE students, particularly finalizing students who would have obviously received their results way after Semester II had started and therefore could not register for courses they failed nor were they in a position to take up any substitute courses. (UWIDEC APC, 2005, p. 1)

It was “observed that many late results were due to delays in the distribution of examination papers to examiners or to extraordinary marking loads” (BNCCDE, 2004, p. 5) and a suggestion was made that “different systems need to be adopted, including possibly the purchase of services from outside” but the response to this was to emphasize “the importance of meeting acceptable standards in this regard” (BNCCDE, 2004, p.5). There was a committee created to oversee this matter and by the next academic year there had been significant improvement. However:

Of great concern is the issue of reviews and remarks of examination scripts for students who are dissatisfied with their examination results. There are cases where over a year has passed and these matters are still outstanding. Reviews/remarks are not carried out in good enough time to allow students to make informed decisions – often they have to go ahead and repeat the course then to find out that the review/remark was indeed favourable. (BNCCDE, 2005, p. 6)

Students in the non-campus countries (NCC) were considered second class citizens- the same faculty members who taught the course in the campus countries were also marking the coursework for the non campus students. As noted several years earlier by Brandon (1996) the instructors did not receive extra compensation for the work that NCC students generated, nor was this work considered in any promotion activities. The number of programmes that were offered through UWIDEC was limited as well, because UWIDEC depended on the good graces of the faculty to write and offer programmes for distance delivery.

To address some of these issues, there was a restructuring of UWIDEC in 2003 which covered three critical areas; technology, administration and pedagogy. The technology used for the teleconferencing system was very expensive, criminally so according to Prof. Badri Koul, the UWIDEC director at that time. Monthly rental costs were US$50,000 excluding the costs of personnel to maintain the system. At this point these costs were being borne by UWI. In addition, although the system was available during a 12 hour period (9am-9pm), most of the
users were working adults and therefore the system was primarily used between 5pm-9pm (UWIDECE, 2003). This limited use also increased the relative costs. UWI serves students in various time zones and this small window of opportunity meant that equitable service could not be provided easily to users who were in different time zones (e.g. there is a 2 hour time difference between Belize and Barbados). The small time slot also limited the number of classes that could be held given that each class required a certain number of teleconferencing hours per week.

In order to overcome these limitations, an asynchronous mode of delivery was sought. In 2003, an initial proposal was made to use the Internet for course delivery. The use of the Internet would drastically reduce costs since there would be no satellite fees and the students would have to provide their own Internet access. The Internet would provide asynchronous delivery and remove the limitations of time for scheduling as well as the need to locate a tutor in each country for a small number of students- sometimes as low as 1-2 students. There could now be a single tutor for a larger group of students from all across the region. It was also suggested that the use of the Internet would help students improve their writing and language skills (Koul, 2003).

These ideas were summarized later in a position paper that stated that “UWIDECE will need to provide education that is scalable (i.e., courses can be taught to 40 or to 4000+ students) and also flexible in:

a) Time – students can enrol and study at anytime;

b) Place - students can enrol and study anywhere (and in this way, equalise higher education opportunities, e.g., for those who are unable to leave the home base for a variety of reasons, and between the campus countries and the non-campus countries);

c) Mode – study can be any mixture of modes on the continuum from face-to-face to totally online” (Marshall, 2004, p. 1)

In order to achieve these goals, it was necessary to move to asynchronous technologies- namely the Internet as a delivery mechanism.

The aim is to allow students to complete their programme without the need for any attendance (using asynchronous delivery), but to provide optional facilities for face-to-face or other synchronous support for those who need it early in their program. The removal of the need for attendance also addresses the problems of limited physical and timetable space for tutorials and teleconferences, both of which created restrictions on the scalability of UWIDECE courses. (Marshall, 2004, p. 1)
It was realised that the shift to the use of the Internet for education would result in "a whole set of new issues, concerns and the corresponding solutions and requirements" (Koul, 2003, p. 4), the foundations for which were laid in the administrative and pedagogic changes in the restructured UWIDEC. The UWIDEC administration realised that UWIDEC could not go online at that time, that "the transition is not an event but a process" (Koul, 2003, p.4) and that there would be obstacles to overcome.

The restructuring included the novel idea that new programmes could be sourced from outside of UWI faculty, which gave UWIDEC more flexibility in programme development, although the majority of new courses still came from UWI faculty. Other significant changes included:

(a) the increased use of technology in the normal administrative operations of the centre;
(b) changes in course delivery including the course length and examination timetable, making them independent of the on-campus courses; and
(c) the rationalisation of policies and procedures to develop and deliver courses to transition them to online delivery and to make them both economically viable and learner centred.

These changes, along with others, shifted UWIDEC towards more autonomous operation and set the stage for what was to become the Open Campus. In March 2003, the minutes of the first meeting of the Academic Programme Committee (APC) of the BNCCDE recorded the possibility of a virtual entity and the decision to move away from the synchronous teleconference mode of delivery. These changes were outlined under the leadership of UWIDEC Director Prof. Badri Koul. By the next BNCCDE meeting in mid October 2003, Professor Koul had been replaced by a new director, who also strongly supported the move to asynchronous delivery.

Meanwhile, there had been some use of online learning at the other campuses. UWIDEC had been hampered by its commitment to the satellite and teleconference mode of delivery but the other campuses had explored other options. On August 26, 2004 the university director for information technology presented a paper to the Academic Programme Committee of the UWIDEC suggesting the use of online learning. He sought to:

Enlist the support of the Academic Board, stepwise, towards the acceptance of online learning objects as an alternate way to deliver teaching in the University, that it may be used in conjunction with or exclusive of the traditional face-to-face modality and is worthy of equal standing in the academic community. (Samuels, 2004, p. 2)
The director’s paper presented a detailed description of a systems model for distance education and suggested that UWI move in this direction in order to fulfil its vision. Interview data suggests that individuals from the Mona campus had made similar suggestions to UWIDEC previously and had been rebuffed. By the time this paper had been delivered, Mona campus had already begun building and offering blended courses. The other campuses followed their lead and began offering web supported, blended and online courses to students.

In September 2004, a blended learning project was initiated at UWIDEC. This project would result in the first thirteen blended courses being delivered in 2005 with supporting print materials and informational CDs. The project plan included training for technicians, course writing and delivery teams including tutors as well as course testing (UWIDEC, 2004).

By the end of June 2005, several significant changes had taken place, including a decision to seek open source solutions to software needs. After a selection process with help from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), UWIDEC decided on Moodle as the course management system (CMS). Previously, WebCT had been used at UWI. Independent of UWIDEC, Mona had already moved to Moodle and shortly thereafter, the Open University of the United Kingdom also chose Moodle as their course management system. The Open University had considerable technical expertise that they used to improve Moodle and those improvements were offered freely to the entire Moodle community. This adoption by such a large international distance education provider set the seal of approval on UWIDEC’s choice and ensured that Moodle would be viable for some time to come.

In addition to a CMS, UWIDEC also needed a student information system and several other systems to deliver courses online. At that time, UWI was using Banner, a proprietary student information system. The adoption of Banner had already caused problems for UWI, given that there was a different installation of Banner on each campus and the different installations could not communicate with each other. UWIDEC could not “access data at the other campuses or the University’s Bursary, “and thus the intentions behind the latest restructuring are undermined” (BNCCDE, 2004, p. 5). In addition, Banner was expensive. The director of UWIDEC was adamant that since “pre-packaged systems tend to harbour intractable problems”, it was “better to develop a system using open-source and home-grown modules” (BNCCDE, 2004, p. 6). The ProVice-Chancellor of the BNCCDE agreed and the process to develop a student information system for UWIDEC began, using internal human resources. This represented a significant departure from usual UWI procedure since a single department was
being given permission to do things very differently from the rest of the university and also being
told that perhaps it would “serve as a demonstration to the rest of the University” (BNCCDE,
2004, p. 6)

In a continuance of open source policies, open access to journals and research at the
university was being pursued. The BNCCDE began an online archive of meeting minutes and
documentation in an effort to demonstrate their commitment to open source principles and to
make their operations more transparent. Another response to the suggestion of open access to
research was the publication of the first issue of an online open access journal called the
International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication
Technology (IJEDICT) on March 26, 2005 (UWIDEAC Academic Programme Committee, 2005).
IJEDICT is a peer reviewed online journal whose chief editors come from UWI and the
Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa.

During the remainder of 2005, progress continued apace to move the UWIDEAC into
cyberspace, including the development of an online open source UWIDEAC helpdesk and a
review of the implementation of blended learning. An important development was UWIDEAC’s
successful bid to host the 4th Pan Commonwealth Forum 2006 - a four day conference entitled
‘Achieving Development Goals: Innovation, Learning, Collaboration and Foundations’
(UWIDEAC Academic Programme Committee, 2004). This bi-annual conference focuses on the
use of ICT for development in the countries of the Commonwealth and provided a forum for
members of the wider UWI community to develop a greater understanding of the use of open and
distance learning. The ability to host this conference gave UWIDEAC exposure to the international
community and gave status to UWIDEAC within UWI itself.

A critical development occurred on March 11, 2005 with the presentation of a paper to
the UWI Strategy Committee. This paper describes four salient developments for UWIDEAC: (a)
centralisation of outreach, (b) funding, (c) staff assessment and remuneration, and most
importantly, (d) the restructuring of the BNCCDE into a full campus.

The paper to the Strategy Committee suggested that it was necessary “to shift
responsibility for the move to on-line resources from the campuses to one central University
authority: the UWIDEAC” (BNCCDE, 2005, p. 2). This argued for centralised control of all online
courses that would be delivered to distance education students and the removal of that power
from the campuses. Prior to this, the campuses could create online/blended courses and offer
them to both on campus and off campus students. This sometimes resulted in duplication of
course offerings; for example “in the faculties of Social Sciences, two different online versions of the same course had been prepared” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 11) which was an “absurd reduplication of effort which the University could not afford” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 9). In addition “serious online teaching involved a development team; it was not simply a matter of posting lecture notes” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 9) which is what some of the faculty had been doing, resulting in low quality offerings.

Funding for distance education had long been an issue. The Director of UWIDEC had remarked that “20% of the region’s population live outside the campus countries, yet only about 4% of our resources are directed to serve them” (BNCCDE, 2005, p. 2). He suggested that this situation should be remedied. Lest this be seen as a removal of funding from the campus countries, it was also pointed out that students in the larger islands who could not access campus resources would benefit from this as well. Up to this point, there had not been any remuneration related to the faculty work for distance education, nor was this work considered for assessment or promotion purposes. It was strongly suggested that assessment and remuneration of staff must include some consideration of their work related to distance education.

4.3.1 Conceptualizing the Open Campus

A suggestion was also made that there needed to be a restructuring so that the divisions between the three units currently under the BNCCDE umbrella would be removed and the units could operate in a unified manner. In addition, UWIDEC sought to be reconfigured:

As a body able to take the initiative, rather than waiting upon faculties to propose innovative programmes. It, or rather the group of units under the Board to which it is related, needs to become a Centre quasi-campus, with the same powers as the three existing ones, acting throughout the region; working largely in a virtual environment, but embodied in the various University Centres, and in locations sponsored by partner institutions. What the preceding centralisation would permit is a much faster implementation of new programmes, given that the UWIDEC would be able to call upon roughly 20% of the resources of the faculties. (BNCCDE, 2005, p. 3)

This idea was repeated in a presentation to the BNCCDE on May 20, 2005:

One of the appealing ways in which many of the goals listed on page 1 can be addressed is by the creation of a new campus – a virtual campus devoted to serving those contributors who have been underserved. More properly, we might speak of a quasi-virtual campus or a multi-location campus since its operation and delivery systems would best include centres already present in all of the contributing countries. (BNCCDE, 2005, p. 2)
Once the idea had been introduced, interview data indicate that a small group of people from the BNCCDE created the concept of the UWIOC, but did not communicate the concept widely at the beginning:

We didn’t communicate with the deans and with the rest of UWI deliberately to start with. Because it...if it had it would have been stalled in meetings forever and ever and ever. So normally things are discussed and taken though faculty boards and academic boards and eventually permeate up to Council and then is approved, you know. And then we communicated to the Vice Chancellor directly about it and he was taken by the idea so he then communicated it to the Chancellor of the university. And the Chancellor then introduced it or the Vice Chancellor introduced it to the (University) Council and the Chancellor expressed his support and the Vice Chancellor supported it and the rest of Council which is people from around outside the university and a few university people who kind of went did we discuss this? I don’t know- I must have missed the meeting. And they didn’t say too much- they are outnumbered anyway. So of course all the other outside people said great! Fantastic! Because of course it is a fantastic idea! It’s wonderful- they saw the reasons behind it and how wonderful it was. They all said yes so the council said yes! So it was done. So we then told everybody else. And they all went- what the hell! We’ve never heard about this- I don’t remember discussing this! But it was too late- too late. So it was done like that- it was done like that because it was the only way that it would happen in my lifetime. So we realised that. (TN Interview, 2009)

This is an example of “what things are like in this institution- there’s a lot of politicking that goes on and it takes a long time before you get to the place where you want to go” (TN Interview, 2009). Another participant agreed, “It is my view within the University and within the collegial environment... one can discuss ideas like this for 10, 15 years and that sometimes you really just have to throw people in at the deep end” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009).

On September 23-24th, 2005, the UWI Vice-Chancellor held a meeting at Mona with stakeholders from across the institution to discuss the idea of a fourth campus at UWI dedicated to distance education. Several committees were developed to work on plans for the UWIOC and the Vice Chancellor requested that all documentation be ready for April 2006. At this time there were also country consultations being held in each of the member states of UWI to “establish the optimal input the University should make into tertiary education in those countries” (UWIDEC Academic Programme Committee, 2005, p. 4).

Country consultations took over a year - you take the Vice Chancellor to every single island and his busy schedule and we’re taking a whole group of people- there was probably a dozen of us that would go - expensive exercise- getting us all together at any one time, getting the ministers in the various countries available and we had ministers we had.... local institutions we had ...commercial institutions, chambers of commerce, and NGOs as well- so we had all these different stakeholders represented at a round table
discussion of probably 30-40 people and immediately prior to that like a day or two before the TLI unit would go in and do focus group interviews with all the different stakeholders there- they would bring all that data to that meeting as well so we’d have a 2 day meeting of that sort and then the end of that we’d have a clear idea of where the university should be in relation to what was happening in that island. And we did that for every single island. (TN Interview, 2009)

Simultaneously, data was being gathered in order to develop UWI’s 2007-2012 strategic plan. Both of these exercises provided an impetus to move forward and provided information which was used for the development of a plan for the Open Campus, which was to be created from the merger of the three subunits of the BNCCDE; the SCS, UWIDEC and TLIU. In a presentation to the APC in May 2006, the Chair reported on the Vice Chancellor’s meeting by saying:

Where once the notion of fourth campus had been unwelcome, it was now clear that opinion had changed, so work had begun on designing a fourth, mainly virtual campus as the organisational structure appropriate for the University’s outreach beyond the actual campuses. (UWIDEC Academic Programme Committee, 2006, p. 2)

4.3.2 Encountering Resistance

The description given by the interviewees sheds some light on the reason for the resistance to the concept of the UWIOC and the strained relationships between the UWIOC and the other campuses of UWI. This resistance persists despite the observation that “the quality of the relationships between the Open Campus and the national colleges and the other UWI campuses were fundamental to its success; they would have to be worked on assiduously and not left to chance” (UWIOC Council, 2008, p. 5). The other campuses were resistant to the idea of the Open Campus for a number of reasons, including:

(a) a perceived lack of consultation with the other campuses,
(b) territorial issues- desire for control, and
(c) competition for funds.

It appears that the initial development exercise did not consult Deans and Heads of Departments, as there were several comments during meetings that indicated that increased support from the other campuses was necessary. During one meeting, one individual commented that there was really no need for a fourth campus at all, just a need to make the current ones work correctly. He also stated that the movement towards the Open Campus “does not seem to take into account the importance of Deans and Heads of Departments” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 10). In
response to this comment, the Chair replied that Deans and Heads of Departments would be consulted at the appropriate time and that “reference to the other campuses was not particularly desirable since it would slow down processes of approval” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 11). There were several comments made at meetings which illuminated the feelings on the development of the Open Campus; “It was important for faculties to know what was happening” and “if there was not sufficient consultation then problems could occur” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 11) and that “in a low-trust environment it was particularly important to engage in open and wide consultation” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 3). The territorial and competition issues were illustrated in the development of the policy for online education and their effects continue to be part of the current context of the UWIOC.

One of the issues in the restructuring exercise was the creation of a policy for online distance education. The document sought to establish a “consistent policy on the question of Internet use for distance education”, given that in this era, “the University ought not to be graduating students who cannot operate in an online environment” (BNCCDE, 2007, p. 9). The first concept paper had been presented to the Academic Planning Committee of the UWIDEC in 2006. It was simply intended to regulate online learning for distance education students and not for on campus students. The document was intended to “shift responsibility for the move to online resources from the campuses to one central University authority: the UWIDEC” (BNCCDE, 2005, p. 2). The draft policy for online distance education at the Open Campus was published on April 12, 2007 and engendered considerable resistance.

Now that policy document I thought would just go to the Vice Chancellor and he would say yup, that’s fine that’s it - that’s university policy. Doesn’t happen quite like that. What happens was he sent it around for discussion. Well...oh boy! Did it cause a lot of flack. Suddenly everybody (was) up in arms. So the Vice Chancellor then called a workshop.... and this was like probably six months after the policy document - a workshop came together in which we all presented papers... the policy document got talked about and it was clear there was no consensus So the Vice Chancellor established a committee to produce a consensus document ...anyway it was like me against the rest. (name withheld Interview, 2009)

An attempt was made to realign the committee in the speaker’s favour but that was unsuccessful. One of the opponents was a strong leader:

He wanted the whole of his campus online. He wanted that campus to be the online campus. So he was fiercely pushing- I thought my God he’s going to be a fierce opponent- I don’t stand a chance with him and he’s a brilliant mind”. But before the start of the meeting, this leader said, “OK, (name withheld) what are the main things that you think we need to agree on? So I said- OK- I’m like really suspicious- so I laid them out.
Then it became time for the meeting. And then he came in and he said well it seems to me that this is the situation. And he outlined it very similarly to the thing I said earlier. We need to go this way, this way and this way, otherwise the university doesn’t have a chance, otherwise blah blah blah. The meeting was then almost in awe, at the way he what he said was he said now I’m hearing so and so saying this- I mean so and so is saying that and he drew strands which supported these positions. So in a way he wasn’t opposing anybody he was actually showing how what they said gelled together. He was really good - argument style- really brilliant. I couldn’t have done it because I am too heated in my particular position- you know. I can’t see the other people’s... I can’t see the way to do that because I’m too hot under the collar. So but he did it in such a way- I had to admire him and everybody else I think was feeling the same way-overawed by- so that was it. That was the consensus. So that became it. (Name withheld Interview, 2009)

Although agreed upon in principle, the document still needed to be revamped and one of the leaders of the other campuses took up this task, which turned out to be beneficial for the original creator:

So it no longer was my online policy but it was now this groups’ but in particular his- with his signature to it- his ink marked on it- it was now- he took ownership of it- in a way- well he did and he didn’t. Because when it was introduced at meetings as the policy and there would be somebody would say...we never agreed to this- why should we agree to this? And so he said this is what the group agreed to, I don’t necessarily agree with everything in the document but this is what they agreed to. This is policy from now on. So he would argue for it in that kind of way. So clearly he hadn’t signed on to everything in that document but reluctantly he accepted it. (TN Interview, 2009)

However even after the document had been revamped, “...the Vice Chancellor then said well this clearly needs wide circulation and discussion now. So I thought Oh no! We still haven’t gotten it out of discussion- it went on for 2 years!”(TN Interview, 2009). The new policy also provoked resistance:

In the early conceptualisation of the OC- the other three campuses saw some jurisdictional threats arising. Jurisdictional in the sense that Barbados belongs to Cave Hill, St. Augustine belongs to Trinidad and Mona belongs to Jamaica. The OC- if you say then that the OC will operate in all countries then you are saying that you are coming into my territory. This is mine- I have control over this. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

Previous to the creation of the UWIOC and the acceptance of the online policy that all online courses to distance education students had to be delivered by the UWIOC, campuses all created and delivered their own material. The new policy had not received wide acceptance. Years later the implementation of that policy was still a matter of “working out online and distance education policy for the university so we sort of define who does what, when is it internal, what are the rules that apply if it has to go outside…” (XS Interview, June 21, 2010). To that end the UWIOC is still “negotiating legitimacy - we are negotiating turf”: 
The UWIOC existed in a kind of fashion before as UWIDEC and the campuses existed then … and the UWIDEC helped the campuses to develop things for their internal consumption and it also worked with the campuses to deliver externally... So I’m saying because we are not starting from scratch and there are overlapping roles it has been a case of negotiating- you know this is a way that we can go forward to mutual satisfaction. So that is one of the aspects of legitimacy that I’m talking about. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)

There is still a “pervasive gap between what the university has agreed and what its agents actually do. Decisions are overlooked, ignored, or obstructed” (Brandon, 1996, p. 11). This still seems to be happening in 2010:

We had to go through a lot of insistence to really make people live by what they said. So even if the principals spoke and said they support the OC, the rank and file did not. They would send our people off on wild goose chases. Things that they could have dealt with they would make it frustrating for our students and I mean it was a task trying to say this has to stop. So at the top people are saying yes we want to support the campus, but in the lower ranks, people are still, who are actually doing the work there they will do things that might not always be for the best relationship. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

In addition, in relation to the OC, “unanimity appears to reign, but this often conceals diametrically opposed and unreconciled viewpoints” (Brandon 1996, p. 11) and “nobody is talking in the open …about how they really feel about that situation that you are trying to find out about” (PL Interview, June 11, 2009).

There is a sense in which the campuses are competing with the UWIOC for students, depending on whether students prefer to do the course face-to-face or online. This means competing for scarce student dollars:

There is a sense that if money goes to the OC, it doesn’t go to the residential campus. So therefore there is a competition. I don’t think that there is an organic unit between the two campuses that if one win they both win. And its natural, I mean to – people want to protect their turf and they don’t want somebody else’s success to mean their demise. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Why would anyone want to fight their way onto Mona campus for 2 years when they can sit at home and do it online while they’re working? So the numbers that want to come on campus to do education- they want to do it online but if everything online is us- then Mona’s lost its numbers. (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)

The campuses complain that “OC is taking our students and we are not going to get money from the governments because they all registered in Open Campus” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

The campuses also have other fears:

Our fears are partly one of ownership - all the campuses are quite old relatively speaking and so they have built up things … so they want to make sure 1) that they own it and 2) if there is any benefit to be gotten from it financially…no it is also about academic
ownership but it is also about financial ownership when the funds come in who is it going
to? I want most of it! And so these things...I don’t think that they are properly handled
yet. (PL Interview, June 11, 2009)

The final online policy consensus document was published on July 30, 2007. This
document enshrined into university policy the concept that only the Open Campus could create
courses (especially online courses) for delivery to any student not registered with one of the
physical campuses. This provided the Open Campus with control over the development and
delivery of all programmes to distance education students. It also firmly established that the
Open Campus would be the leader in the use of online and blended programmes for the entire
UWI.

The UWI Open Campus therefore was designed as a virtual campus, albeit with physical
offices in each contributing country in order to deliver education online and face-to-face,
depending on the curriculum. It encompassed the work of the SCS and the TLIU in that the
UWIOC would offer certificate courses as well as support the development of tertiary
institutions in each country. However, these services would now be under centralised control, to
avoid duplication of effort and to maintain quality. The Open Campus, like the other campuses
would be run by a principal and be governed in like manner, except that staff would be
distributed across the region.

The inaugural Open Campus Council meeting was held in March 2008 and the UWI
Open Campus was officially launched on July 2, 2008, at a ceremony in Antigua and Barbuda
(UWIOC, 2010). Currently the OC has over 52 centres in 16 Anglophone countries and almost
400 staff to meet the needs of over 20,000 students scattered across the Caribbean region
(UWIOC, 2010).

The development of the Open Campus has been a winding, unpaved road with potholes
and rocks. The journey began with the understanding of the need for education outside of the
reach of the physical campuses and the subsequent development of the Extra-Mural Department.
Later, the Extra-Mural Department became the SCS. Along with UWIDEIC, these units
continued to provide education to students in the non-campus countries as well as those in the
campus countries who could not access regular classes. With the passage of time, the demand for
tertiary education in the Caribbean outstripped supply. As a result, there was a need for an
asynchronous method of increasing access and for centralized control of the design and delivery
mechanisms. Despite opposition, these needs resulted in the conceptualization and eventual
creation of the Open Campus. The following chapters will describe the vision and structure of
the OC as well as the issues that it faced during this transition time.
5 Vision and Leadership at the Open Campus

The Open Campus was predicated on the concept that it would provide access to tertiary education in Caribbean countries which were not being adequately served by the UWI. However, that concept was only the beginning of the creation of a singular vision, one that would shape every aspect of the new entity. Leaders from the SCS, the TLIU, and most significantly from UWIDEC, shaped the early vision and strove to acquire a commitment from staff scattered across the Caribbean region. This chapter will describe the views of the participants on leadership and vision and explain how the OC met the challenges arising in those areas. The vision for the Open Campus will be addressed first in this chapter, because of its centrality to the transition to online education. Both the official vision statement and participants’ understanding of the vision will be described in this section. Part of the vision relates to access to tertiary education so the relevant research question will also be answered in this chapter. Leadership has a significant impact on the vision, because leaders craft the vision and influence others to commit to it, so vision will be discussed next. In short, this chapter will answer the following research questions:

1. How is UWIOC addressing vision in its transition to online distance education?
2. How do stakeholders describe the role of leadership in the transition?
3. Do stakeholders believe that online education is increasing access to tertiary education?
4. What challenges have been encountered (with respect to vision and leadership) in the transition and how have they been addressed?

5.1 Vision

The Open Campus was developed from the merging of three separate units; SCS, TLIU and UWIDEC. These units each had their own vision, which now had to be incorporated into the new vision of the OC. The new fourth campus was intended to be:

An efficient, adequately funded, and specially configured campus having the capability to offer programmes at all levels of tertiary education. It will be driven by the philosophy of life-long learning and will have a special focus on the upgrading of professionals and cadres of developmental importance. The major method of delivery for programmes leading to certified qualifications will be blended learning incorporating face-to-face and virtual educational experiences using contemporary ICTs. The campus will manage its
own student services, coordinate its own personnel, and be responsible for its examinations. (UWIDEC Academic Programme Committee, 2006, p. 2)

It was intended to be different from the other three campuses in that “we want to be a successful business enterprise which depends less on government subventions and depends increasingly more on income from tuition and other business that we do” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

The Open Campus does not have a vision statement of its own on its website, but these are the Guiding Principles:

The Open Campus of the University of the West Indies is based on the idea that the high-quality university education, research and services available at our institution should be open and available to all people who wish to reach their full potential inside and outside of the Caribbean region. The Open Campus will adopt quality teaching and learning experiences, innovative pedagogic design, relevant research and community partnerships to deliver face-to-face, blended and online learning. (UWIOC, 2010)

The vision for the Open Campus encompassed several components, including access, openness and virtualization. Each of these aspects will be discussed as well as some of the challenges encountered in spreading the vision.

5.1.1 Increasing Access

The vision for the OC has been described in various ways by the participants but they all point to increasing access to and increasing openness in tertiary education. There is some overlap in the use of these two terms, in that some participants see openness and access as having the same meaning.

What it is the OC is trying to achieve? To increase access to quality tertiary education in the region. To provide educational training to the vast array of people in the Caribbean who are in need of such training and to provide it in a convenient way, a cost effective way, a way that will allow for the students to move on if they wish to. And that will ensure that what they get out of this thing has some… quality, some recognition of quality. (CQ Interview, October 30, 2009)

The OC’s aim is:

To increase the percentage of persons with access to tertiary education in the way the governments are seeking. That falls within this desire of the government to be more competitive and have their people trained. The governments are saying we do not want to send out people away from home because it is too costly for us. It is not only costly in terms of sending the persons and having to pay for the person but we have to replace the person too. And so that is costly for us- we don’t want to go that route. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009(JB Interview, August 12, 2009)
The vision of the OC is to provide tertiary education “to the Caribbean region as well as the diaspora—people who would like to access UWI programmes and who are unable to attend the campuses” (JB Interview, August 12, 2009).

The restructuring of the outreach sector of the University of the West Indies is an opportunity to expand access to tertiary education and permit many to fulfil their dreams of pursuing university level studies. The expansion of the university’s presence can open the way for lifelong access to education in the UWI 12 countries. Planning must include access for persons with special educational needs. (BNCCDE, 2006, p. 4)

In a similar vein, one participant said, “My vision for the OC is almost like a mantra to take the learner wherever they’re at, whatever they are doing and bring them to a point to learning that will allow them, if necessary, to access tertiary education” (MC Interview, June 10, 2009).

Access is the primary... kind of plank on which we would rest the OC I think. It’s about access. That’s really what it is about, access. And some people think that access means geographical access, like these people who all live in these different places can all access. It’s not just about geographical access; it’s about access that might mean the person who has to stay at home because they are looking after an elderly infirm relative. Or the person who’s working all the time on different shifts and therefore cannot access daytime education. So there’s a whole range of reasons why people cannot access... (TN Interview, 2009)

As indicated by the previous speaker, there are a variety of reasons why individuals cannot access tertiary education, including finances, living situations, and transportation to the campus.

So it’s about access in that broad sense. And sometimes people on the campuses confuse that- they think we (only) deliver to these other countries where there isn’t a campus. That’s not true at all- the majority of our students currently- the distance education students I’m talking about.....come from the campus countries- come from mainly Trinidad. (TN Interview, 2009)

Table 4 illustrates the comments made by TN in that the largest percentage (38.7%) of the Open Campus students surveyed originated in Trinidad and Tobago, which is a campus country. Jamaica also accounts for 21.8% of the student population and Barbados some 10%. In total the campus countries account for 64.9% of the OC students who participated in the survey.
Table 5

*Student Countries of Origin*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anguilla</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Virgin Islands</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayman Islands</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
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<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montserrat</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks and Caicos Islands</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total number of students* 225

The Open Campus seeks to give access to “more and more of the underserved population” (GT Interview, March 16, 2010), which would include “the OECS countries as well as formerly underserved communities in the main countries” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

Given that:

Things as they are today, women are in the majority and in that sense and that may sound very strange and even heretical- men are therefore a minority group or at least people who are not participating fully, then I suppose you would be speaking of men. (GT Interview, March 16, 2010)

The OC’s clientele is the underserved population, which to some extent includes males since their participation rate in higher education is comparatively lower in the Caribbean. Increasing access to tertiary education was the most recognized and understood aspect of the OC’s vision, and also the most well accepted aspect of that vision.
5.1.2 Beliefs about increasing access

Students, faculty and administration were all asked whether they believed that online courses increased access to tertiary education in the Caribbean. Student data collected through surveys indicated that they overwhelmingly agreed with the statement (Figure 3) as did the tutors (Figure 5) as well as the administration. The answers indicated that the participants viewed increasing access primarily as enabling more people to take tertiary education courses. The majority of students (66.4%) believe that online education increases access to tertiary education in the Caribbean (Figure 3) and this is reflected in their survey comments.

![Online courses increase access to tertiary education in the Caribbean.](image)

*Figure 3. Student views on whether online education increases access to tertiary education*

“The introduction to online learning was one of innovation. It makes tertiary education more accessible to working populas like myself.” (Student Survey Data)

“The online courses are a great way to complete a degree without giving up your job.” (Student Survey Data)

“Being a working person, I find that the completely online delivery mode is the best!” (Student Survey Data)

“I would not have to be in a class room setting, which will not be suitable for me at this point in time. It gives me the opportunity to further my studies.” (Student Survey Data)
“I was happy for the opportunity to do an online course because if it wasn't for the open
campus I probably would not have been able to study at all considering my social
context.” (Student Survey Data)

There were several comments from working mothers who indicated that online education
offered them an opportunity to access education that they would not have had otherwise:

“I am a working mother of 3 children. Online is more flexible for me. I log on at any hour
and put in my quota for the given subject, whereas with face-to-face I'm restricted to a particular
time.” (Student Survey Data)

“I choose the online mode because it is much more convenient for me. I have two young
children and I work during the day, as a result of this it would be extremely difficult for me to
attend face-to-face classes.” (Student Survey Data)

“I have two small children and I do not have anyone to keep them while I attend
university and I also do not drive.” (Student Survey Data)

“If it were not for online learning I may not even be able to attain a degree because I am a
mother of two, married and working, there is no way I would be able to attend a class.” (Student
Survey Data)

“As a senior, employed wife and mother who never achieved tertiary education, the
online course has allowed me to participate on my own time without disrupting the status quo of
my daily operations.” (Student Survey Data)

“The online courses allow for me to study at my own pace, and also allows for me to
continue my studies. It becomes difficult when you have to commit to a face-to-face class.
Especially when you have a career, a husband and an infant.” (Student Survey Data)

One of the reasons why the students chose online learning was that it would support their career
paths, as is shown in Figure 4.
Figure 4. Student reasons for taking online courses

“I prefer face-to-face tutoring however I can't attend class as I need to work to finance this course and in order to work I need to take distance classes to accomplish my goals” (Student Survey Data).

The survey data indicates that 83.4% of the tutor survey population (Figure 5) agreed that online classes increased access to tertiary education in the Caribbean region, and the interview comments from tutors and administrators support this view.

Figure 5. Tutor views on whether online courses increase access to tertiary education

One individual summed up the response to the question by saying:

Yes. Definitely. There is no doubt. The students tell me that this allows them to move their dreams forward- they would not have been facilitated if they had to go to the capital.
city or to restructure their lives in order to achieve a degree. It definitely is increasing access. And I think as Internet penetration... as the Internet becomes more accessible nationally and regionally then the success of OC will even more abound. So I think there is a much brighter future ahead for OC. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

“There are lots of people who definitely ...would not consider doing it if they have to leave their country and go elsewhere. Lots of people wouldn’t” (GT Interview, March 16, 2010).

A number of persons prefer the option of working and studying at the same time- not necessarily going on a campus…especially now- with the other things that people have to get involved in vying for time and so a lot of people want to continue their higher education but they want to do it in their time. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

In addition, “the programmes at the OC are more flexible- they are catering to your non-traditional students” (CQ Interview, October 30, 2009). Other interview participants agreed:

Yes. We have the UWI on the islands- the centres and by doing it online we can do it anywhere and anytime and we have seen that people from remote parts of Trinidad are able to actually do the courses without having to come to a centre for classes and that has increased our enrolment over the past 3 years...we would have increased by about 25-30 percent. (LS Interview, January 14, 2010)

Yes, there is no doubt about it. We can see that the online programmes are flourishing…and to some extent it is at the expense of the traditional face-to-face things. Because people who have might have been forced to come in even on a part time basis or as an evening university and do the courses face-to-face are able to profit by doing it online and the numbers of those students are growing each year. So that right now we have something like, this course about 450 students. When we started, it would have been of the order of less than 100, of 80 students, and this was 6 or 7 years ago. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)

The overall consensus from both the interview and survey data suggests that stakeholders believed that online courses increased access to tertiary education in the Caribbean. However, one of the problems with using online courses is the fact that Internet costs and technology penetration across the region are widely uneven.

A lot of people do not have access- they don’t have a computer at home. If they have a computer at home and they have access in theory the cost is prohibitive- courtesy of our good old friends (referring to a large regional ISP). Actually access problems- whether it be cost, not having access at all because they live in a remote place, not having any electricity in some cases, so there are problems of access. (TN Interview, 2009)

Technology penetration…is uneven across the Caribbean and across the age groups... so that if we’re serving a rural over 50 person for example we might meet the problem ....of not having a computer or having a computer and not having Internet connectivity- or not having the money to pay for Internet connectivity. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)

For Barbados, generally the access is good. The penetration of the Internet in Barbados is way up- in the 60-70% whereas St Vincent and the Grenadines- you’re down below 10%. You’ve very low Internet penetration. So Haiti- well Haiti- I don’t even know if they’ve got to 1% yet. (TN Interview, 2009)
We also have to look at the fact that we are not fully connected. I understand that Jamaica has 40% connectivity. So not every student has an access to the Internet even though they may use it at work- they can’t access it for schoolwork. So they can’t - so they either have to have it at home or have it at a centre. If they go to an Internet cafe- they have to pay and it can become expensive. So this could mean an expense at home - I had Internet connection at home and I just cut it off because it’s expensive. ..Well it was about $29-30 US per month when I started, but …because the Jamaican dollar keeps devaluing that means I have to take out more of my money, so I just cut it off at home and just use the one at work after that- no Internet. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

At the time of this manuscript’s writing, the Jamaican dollar exchange rate meant that the cost of Internet was “about $4000” Jamaican dollars per month (XD Interview, March 8, 2010), or about $47 US. The effective use of online courses depends on reliable Internet service and regular access:

Some students unfortunately they don’t anticipate the access requirements that participation would demand of them. So they only have weekend access or their access is irregular, or their service doesn’t provide a reliable connection. So all of these things mitigate against their full participation in an OC online setting. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

5.1.3 Achieving Access through Openness

Openness was a term that was frequently used by participants when describing the vision of the OC, but it had a plethora of meanings. In one sense, the vagueness of the term “open” was deliberately fostered, in order to ensure acceptance by widest possible audience at the university in the development stage and to allow the OC to progressively elaborate the term in the future. Openness had a variety of meanings:

In our use of the terms ‘open’ and ‘access’ we understand that there are ambiguities and differences of understanding and we play on that. We use that. Because when you are getting things through university committees that are kind of resistant to major change, sometimes it’s best to introduce these terms as more limited. And then down the track you say- well we really meant this, ‘cause that’s the word access- that’s what it means! And then they say- yes, I suppose it does really. And lo and behold you have your policy you see! So sometimes it’s useful to deliberately accept these ambiguities- systematic ambiguities that are useful to your purposes. The word open for instance means so much to us, us as in the envisioning team. A lot of this might not have trickled down, a lot of this might not be expressed in any formal documents anywhere but it’s what we – it’s where we want to go. Open as in everybody. Regardless of qualifications can access us. Open. We mean anyplace, anytime, anywhere. Right now...And we keep pushing the envelope- we get that we say OK- now we work on the next bit of the piece and we push there and we push there. And eventually we have a genuine, a genuine open campus. (TN Interview, 2009)
There has been some clarification of the term, as there was a definition published recently:

What exactly does the term “Open” mean in the naming of the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI)? Quite simply, the name signifies that the Open Campus has embraced the ideals of Open and Flexible Learning, the principles and practices of the Open Source Software movement and the concept of Open Educational Resources. At the core of its virtual mode of operation is the use of ICT. The campus is committed, therefore, to opening up a wide range of educational opportunities to address the regional, national and local economic, social and cultural needs of the 16 countries to which it provides services. (UWIOC Office of the Principal, 2010)

Operationally, openness includes both administrative procedures as well as practices in teaching and learning, specifically the commitment of the UWIOC to:

(a) transparency in administrative procedures,
(b) the open source movement, and
(c) enable students without normal matriculation requirements to take tertiary education courses.

Administratively, openness means that the UWIOC is committed to the idea that:

Whatever the structures it adopts, openness in this context requires that all those affected by them can easily discover what they are; learn what is going on; and have channels of communication through which their comments and concerns can be made known. It is the Open Campus' aim to have as transparent a system as is consistent with the need in certain areas to preserve confidences or conduct certain business privately. With a provision for confidential matters, the papers and records of all its official bodies will be placed on its website generally with open access, though on occasion some material may be password-protected. Similarly, the institutional structures, their terms of reference, and a calendar of events will be publicly available. (UWIOC Office of the Principal, 2008, p. 5)

In terms of the Open Source Movement, “the Open Campus will strive to use open source software as extensively as possible, and will make its own software available in that form. It will, for instance, attempt to wean its staff away from proprietary word-processors and spreadsheets” (UWIOC Office of the Principal, 2008, p. 6). To that end the OC chose Moodle (an open source course management system) and developed their own home grown information management system, which was based on open source programs.

As part of the commitment to the Open Source movement, the OC will also offer its proprietary teaching materials and the results of its research to the public “under licences that permit unhindered access and non-commercial use” (UWIOC Office of the Principal, 2008, p. 6). This is a significant departure from the usual modus operandi of tertiary institutions in the
Caribbean, but most likely will be promoted through the deliberate vague use of the terms openness and access as previously described. Most importantly, for students:

Open means... it’s a statement about access- and it’s a statement not only about providing the opportunity to get in but to facilitate, to actively encourage coming in and also to encourage completion. So it is about opportunity, it is about access and it’s about support. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)

Open means:

Flexible- entry arrangements- I hope they get to open but we're not quite there yet. I think it’s more a flexible entry arrangement where you're not entirely restricting yourself to the basic CXC, CAPE requirements, but the University already has in place something called a mature clause so we're gonna try and encourage more students to use that. (CQ Interview, October 30, 2009)

And we’ve also got a policy of much more open access than the university traditionally has had, although we are governed by the university’s regulations so we can’t easily do it the way we would like to do it. But we would like to be much more open- you know - not making a big fuss about matriculation requirements etc. We have, in fact, got them to approve regulations which allow mature students (over 21) what we’re calling it provisional entry- look you haven’t got this you haven’t got that but do this course- pass these courses and we will make you a regular student. (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)

This idea of open access has engendered “discussions and deliberations on it for the longest while but even some people at the top say we can’t make it work” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010) and has raised some concerns as “it was also pointed out that while easy admission was desirable, some potential students might well aim much too high and end up wasting precious resources” (UWIOC Council, 2008, p. 7). Openness also:

Does not militate against standards and integrity- I am all for that - but if you are doing that we have to have the landmarks… And it must not be in an esoteric thing that we borrowed so many centuries from other people- it must be based on the learning experiences of the learner. (MC Interview, June 10, 2009)

The following story illustrates how openness in matriculation requirements can work:

Look a lady came here today- Dr C I want to do the B.Ed. in literacy online but they are telling I cannot get in. Why? Because I am not a teacher. I said do you know the true meaning of a teacher- she said I feel like a teacher- I’m teaching children on the block, I’ve done the teaching of reading course, I’m a member of ALTA which is our association that would help people into basic education, I’m a member of the writer’s union, I teach adults and children. And I said, do you teach them well? Yes- you are a Walimo- then she got confused- Walimo is a Swahili word for teacher that Nyerere of Tanzania gave us years ago- it is the teacher in its fullest- taking care of all its aspects of being. So I told her- no you’ll have to get it- but they told me but I can’t...Oh I said do you have their basic lower level matriculation? She said what does that mean? I said CXC passes – she said I have 6 but I don’t have maths- I said well... do you know we have a course called gentler understanding of maths- she said my family will assist
me...we will get an honours degree... I will be gone but I will find out that Mrs X did well in this programme. (MC Interview, June 10, 2009)

This story illustrates how OC is fulfilling its vision, which at its core is intended “to help transform our human capital” and to enable the institution “to have a positive response to people to help them to take this business of improving themselves and to go forward” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010). The battle is not over, however, the OC still needs “to increase the number of courses that are there...because we don’t have as yet the slate or the variety that we need” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

Another way in which OC is determined to be open is through the use of a Prior Learning Assessment program, which unlike the old Challenge programme:

This would not necessarily rely on you sitting an exam... what it could do would be to give you the opportunity to prove that you had learned something even before meeting the university. So I am saying for the challenge you would have to interface with the university first- get some course or whatever and then do the exam. The PLA can do that... but if for example you were doing a course in journalism and there are people who have been working as a journalist for many years it would provide an opportunity for the person- or an artist- to prepare a portfolio and demonstrate that quite before any interaction with you they met you they have been doing stuff that would count for- they could show that as an equivalent of a course and ask for advanced placement or something. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010).

In these ways the OC seeks to become more open administratively, to adhere to the tenants of the open source movement and to allow students open admission. In order to achieve these goals, the idea of virtualisation needs to take root.

5.1.4 Virtualisation

A part of the vision that is critical to the achievement of the OC’s vision is the concept of virtualisation.

This is a cultural change to the idea of a virtual entity. It’s virtualisation.... It’s ceasing to think in terms of me and my immediate geographical location to me as part of fulfilling this function which is distributed. It’s to do with cultural change and with implementing the technology more effectively and so on. (TN Interview, 2009)

This is a part of the desire to “use technology as our core enabling thing- it’s a virtual campus- that’s the one thing that pulls us all together and I think we need to implement that more effectively”(TN Interview, 2009). This was only described by one person in the interviews, but this person was influential in the organization. Not enough to force the change but enough to begin the cultural transformation, because within his sphere of influence this
individual had already begun the shift by not responding to paper letters or memos, but only to email, which is illustrated in the next vignette:

When I first started this job I said you’d better all get used to it because it’s the only way I’m going to communicate. And my secretary used to bring me in this big pile of memos and letters and I used to say take them all away and contact every single person and say I only read it if it’s electronic form. I can’t read paper any more. It’s a problem I’ve got with my eyes. (Smiles.) So after a while people got used to the idea. It’s no use sending a paper memo so then people used to send me letters as pdfs attached to emails... Why not go the whole hog and put it in the email? Even the Vice Chancellor sent me a letter from Jamaica and it took 2 weeks to get here and the letter needed a response like a week ago so I apologetically wrote an email and said I only just got your letter I couldn’t respond before. I’m happy to respond to emails instantly. (TN Interview, 2009)

At a higher level within the UWI, there is also some support for the idea of virtualization. There is a project called the single virtual university space, which is a Vice Chancellor project and it’s to create a single university space - a virtual one. And in this space he wants students to be able to enrol and take any course they want. Makes wonderful sense and so that means that there’s got to be a registrarial system which is somehow shared among 4 separate (campuses) which don’t talk- we can talk to any of the other three but they don’t talk to one another. So he wants to be able to go online and check what’s happening anywhere at his university. At the moment all he can do is send a memo to ask and get a response. (TN Interview, 2009 2010)

The speaker is describing a new understanding of operating in the Open Campus, one that indicates that staff members work online and are linked together through cyberspace even though they are not in the same physical location:

Even the heads have to understand that- I no longer have to be able to just walk down the corridor to visit all my staff. Instead I have to get online to visit all my staff. And we are trying to create virtual spaces online for all the departments, which is where their department is, which is where they visit. Which is where they go when they want to go to the filing cabinets to get out a file they go there and not there (pointing to a physical filing cabinet). So it’s those kinds of changes and that’s a big change. It’s a big change to thoroughly embracing ICT from a reliance on personal face-to-face contact and having physical manifestations of documents and things to existing within this virtual space. A tricky one. (TN Interview, 2010)

5.1.5 Fractured Vision

While most of the participants spoke about access and openness in their understanding of the vision of the Open Campus, there was also an undercurrent of disbelief and disagreement with the vision of the OC and a lack of commitment to the vision. This lack of commitment came about in part “because in the meeting of the minds -I like to call it the collision- that is
taking place- we are bringing two groups of people who do not share an ideological or a world view” (MC Interview, June 10, 2009) and attempting to meld three different divisions into a single cohesive unit, even though “they have not sold the concept of OC well” (MC Interview, June 10, 2009). The OC had difficulty gaining acceptance and is “challenged in even the mindset of some of our leaders of the other campuses to buy in to the OC- that the OC is the 4th campus of the UWI” (KC Interview, February 26, 2010). In addition:

I remember, before I was even in it that people were saying oh it’s the concept...it is not the right concept and it’s flawed from the beginning... somebody actually told me... what they would have liked what they thought would have happened that the UWIDECs on each campus would have just been improved, given more fancy stuff and then UWI would continue. Each campus would continue to send their stuff off through the respective UWIDECs. That’s the concept that people had, but the idea that if we did that... you would still be perpetuating the separateness of the OC, you would still be perpetuating a multiple vision of UWI, because each campus would send out what they wanted, out there you would have three courses of the same title but different and people would be totally confused. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

Participants were also unsure that OC could span the gamut of courses from graduate degrees to informal education and remain a respected education provider:

Well what is the OC? It speaks to the thing of what is the OC? And so there are some situations where the former SCS emerges as …what the OC is …I don’t know if in going forward how one would rationalise an organization that at one end gives 6 week courses on floral arrangement and another end is trying to do a masters in counselling psychology. I don’t know...UWI can do that but how can this one entity of the university manage the whole thing? (PL Interview, June 11, 2009)

Another issue that also limited buy-in to the vision was individual concerns about their jobs:

Just because we annunciate this vision of the OC it doesn’t mean to say that everybody will actually in the OC embrace that, so that was one of the purposes of the retreat but even at a retreat there is a limit to what you can do and then later on people drift away because they have other staffing concerns- they are wondering about where their job will be, what they will be doing- all those kinds of concerns start to blur that vision that we started with. (TN Interview, 2009)

Human resource issues and their impact on the organization will be explored further in section 5.3.2.

Another issue that limited buy-in was the way communications were handled by those in leadership:

They should bring issues to us so we have discussion... and keep the vision in mind. Let them know where we’re going, let them contribute to that vision. So that they feel that they're part of it, but if you don’t have meetings with them how do you expect them to
feel? So I have had to insist, yes, that directors and heads have to meet with their people. But some of them were not. Some of them were lackadaisical. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

Others commented that “I don’t think enough communication and buy-in was had before they jumped into the implementation” and “it is important that whatever is happening to those who are interacting with the students buy into it to be able to sell it” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010). Communication affected several other areas and will be discussed in detail as part of leadership.

5.2 Leadership and its Role in the transition

Leadership can be defined as “a set of attitudes and behaviours that create conditions for innovative change, that enable individuals and organizations to share a vision and move in its direction, and that contribute to the management and operationalisation of ideas” (Beaudoin, 2002, p. 132). Leadership can have a significant effect on the implementation of innovations and on educational change as well as student achievement. The development of the OC and the move to online education were directed and driven by persons in leadership positions; this was not a case of early adopters gathering momentum and eventually causing an institutional change. There was pressure from regional governments to increase access to tertiary education and a growing frustration with the mechanisms used to deliver distance education, but the change was driven by persons in leadership positions, who had a vision for improved distance education delivery and who pushed that agenda. This study sought to elicit the understanding of participants on the role of leadership in the transition by answering the question, “How do stakeholders describe the role of leadership in the transition?”

According to participants, two of the most important roles for leadership in the transition were obtaining commitment to the vision and driving the change process, regardless of obstacles. Participants believed that in terms of vision, “leadership is very integral to the formulation of it, to the implementation of it and to the actual delivery of it. It is one of the most important aspects of pushing online education” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010).

Leadership’s responsibility has been to take the OC forward. It’s a fledgling campus and so there are growing pains and so our leadership has to take on all of the operational...as well as the vision, the finances, to take the UWI campuses on board. (KC Interview, February 26, 2010)

Leaders must “head the charge in ways, in finances and in partnership within and without the university” (KC Interview, February 26, 2010) in order to make the OC a successful enterprise. Participants believed that:
Leadership has to bring all of this together. It’s very, very important at this point in the Open Campus, more than the brick and mortar campuses, because a lot happens from how the top leads the way. Given the fact that the OC is new and that the funding that governments promised has not readily been forthcoming, then a lot depends on that leader marshalling the forces, encouraging the people to labour in the vineyard in spite of all the odds. (GT Interview, March 16, 2010)

So if you have a vision and you want it to succeed, you have to get buy-in and take the people along with you. So it’s your vision. It’s not necessarily the other person’s vision or the other people you want to involve. If it is not a revolution in the sense that you are going to chop off people’s head - do you understand what I’m saying? In this case it has to be incremental. It’s not something that you can just start afresh- you just throw out everything and start afresh. So you have to get people to believe in it. You know that it will benefit them, and therefore those who are implementing it or those who have the responsibility for supporting such a system, you have to get buy-in from them first and then those for whom you are putting the system in place and expecting them to use it, then you also have to get buy-in from them. It has to be done incrementally. You can’t just get up one day and say- OK we are going online. It doesn’t matter how you feel about it, we are going online. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

The last comment made about leadership not acquiring buy-in but just saying one day that they were going online may be linked to an earlier incident in the history of the OC when the transition was made from blended to online. This comment describes one type of leadership and the reaction to it.

So what we did was introduce blended learning- so what we said was we’d have some online elements, some parts of the course which you’ll have to do online and then some parts...... So we tried to introduce it gently- gently, gently like that over a period of years. Now we have come to the point where we have said OK- (snaps his fingers) now we’re doing just online... It’s hard to do that without appearing to be dictatorial and sometimes there is something to be said for a benign dictator... you look at the successful countries around in the world, you know, who succeed like in a very short span of time in developing their country and for the benefit of the country as a whole, the people in the country, very often there were benign dictators... We don’t want that leader to be a dictator but at the same time they must be firm ... Somehow helping them to get through it but at the same time remaining strong and firm- this is where we are going and not deviating from that. (TN Interview, 2009)

The leadership may have chosen to enact the change in this manner because “within the University and within the collegial environment... one can discuss ideas like this for 10, 15 years and that sometimes you really just have to throw people in at the deep end” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009) in order to make progress.

However, others disagreed with the concept of benign dictatorship and commented that “by strong leadership I don’t mean dictatorship –no- I mean leadership that is strong in believing what they’re doing- have a concept that what they are doing is right and they bring the people along with them”(XD Interview, March 8, 2010).
There were also some negative feelings, which suggested that:

Leadership is not clear, the direction is not clear- no we’re not sure. Well from my end there are so many uncertainties and I guess that is part of the transformational process but if you have a strong leadership then that helps. I guess that is what most of us are looking for. A strong leadership. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

This concept of strong leadership was recognised early in the development of the OC, in that “every effort must be made to ensure strong leadership, an effective chain of authority while providing sufficient flexibility to accommodate the geographical reality of our dispersal” (BNCCDE, 2006 p.4). In order to get commitment to the vision:

We need strong leadership - a leadership that says this is where we are going but at the same a time a leadership that listens to what people’s concerns are, and what they think of where we lead to be going- it’s a balance- it’s really hard to be a leader and carry everybody with you willingly, so it’s a case- I mean a lot of that is about running workshops, is about running retreats I guess- we had a retreat in the early days I think that was one of the purposes of that retreat was to get everybody behind the vision- to get everybody on board. Just because we announce this vision of the OC it doesn’t mean to say that everybody actually in the OC embraces that so that was one of the purposes of the retreat. But even at a retreat there is a limit to what you can do and then later on people drift away because they have other staffing concerns- they are wondering about where their job will be, what they will be doing- all those kinds of concerns start to blur that vision that we started with. (TN Interview, 2009)

Another obstacle that leadership had to overcome while promoting the vision was:

The mindset of some of our leaders of the other campuses to buy-in to the OC- that the OC is the 4th campus of the UWI and they have the huge challenge on their hands of trying to operationalise and at the same time sensitise and working in partnership with the other leadership of the university, so that we are pointed all in the same direction. (KC Interview, February 26, 2010)

In this context, the birthplace of leaders seemed to have an impact on how well they could obtain buy-in for their vision, even if the vision was unpopular:

There was a reaction against the idea of moving to online. There was a favour for the old audio-conference- that’s what we’ve been using all these years why change it? We overcame that partly by reasoning and partly by me just saying, well, I’m the director and this is what’s happening so get on with it. I mean sometimes you have to be dictatorial and occasionally it is fine- that was my role and partly I’m the outsider. I don’t have to live here forever, so I can come in here and... so whereas a lot of the other people who have to live here forever had to be careful what they say and all that kind of stuff so with the culture of kind of resistance which flows with that...where somebody’s who’s from outside can just not give a hoot just come in and say it. I mean I do give a hoot really but I’m not going to show it. (Name withheld Interview, 2009)

However, sometimes the birthplace of leadership could also be detrimental to the adoption of the vision, for example, “Is that what they think about me that I’m this ...interloper that’s going to go
away eventually? And they wish he’d just go away quicker because he’s causing us all this headache” (Name withheld Interview, 2009).

In another example of how the nationality of leadership can influence their ability to obtain buy-in, one participant commented that:

In this context, you have the campus countries, who control their own tertiary institutions and then the non-campus countries who are paying for tertiary education but not getting very much. Their cries are heard by UWI who creates a BNCCDE and appoints Woodville Marshall to be the ProVice Chancellor for this new entity. At the time, the Vice Chancellor of UWI was a Grenadian, Alister MacIntyre. His nationality is significant because he had a vested interest in doing something for the NCC. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

The implication here was that because he was from Grenada, one of the non-campus countries, he would be interested in obtaining more of the university’s resources for his home country and other NCCs. A similar comment is made about members of the leadership at the OC. Sharing a common heritage with other leaders at higher levels in the university was:

Tactically useful in the sense that the main driving force behind all of this is from the non campus countries and that’s where (name withheld) is from. So (name withheld) has a lot of credibility there and a lot of acceptance there. Makes sense. So you see people in the OECS Central Bank like TF and all those fellows listen. They know (name withheld) ... is from among them and they will listen... (name withheld) has connections with all those folks. You know and so they listen ...and they respect ... and so then it was critical then that someone from one of those countries then lead this process and sell this idea... for it to succeed in gaining acceptance at the council level- the University council level where they have to accept it. And (name withheld) was the one to lead it. I think that was critical. Behind that was.... the current VC who...he sees this as his legacy- that when he leaves demits office that he can say -I led that. So all of that is where leadership played a significant role. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

Participants also mentioned that directing the OC required a shift from the forms of traditional leadership that are often seen in educational and governmental institutions in the Caribbean. This is can be described as “a very hierarchical, traditional approach to leadership where the head knows everything and shares it with whoever he or she feels should know it.” However, for the virtual campus, “...in this environment it can’t work. All of us need to be on the same page” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009). As a result, the senior leadership has opted for a more distributed leadership style, with an open door policy where staff can email questions and chat electronically or face-to-face. This distributed leadership also takes the form of creating the UWIOC Open Letter to the staff, however:

It’s online and they don’t read that either. So... they say they don’t know what OC is about- they don’t know about OC- so at the meetings I take the opportunity to say if you
don’t read and you don’t ask a question I have an open door policy. If you’re here and you come at any time and I’m here, you can see me through the blinds, you can come and speak to me. But I have (an) open door policy in the sense that I’m on email right- if you go on and you send me an email I will respond to you. And I do so. It’s a matter of policy- anybody on my staff can send me an email and I will answer their question. If I don’t know, I’ll say I don’t have the answer but let me put you onto somebody who does. Some of them do- some of them see me and chat and they say hi how are you doing- and I chat back with them while I’m doing my work.... but not too many of them do it. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

However, “it still doesn’t work as well as I’d like and again I think it’s a cultural thing” because “I don’t think they believe it... Because that’s a little bit different from probably what they have been used to I would imagine” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

Leadership at a variety of levels had to sell the vision and communicate to the other levels of the organization. The new campus “needed someone who... was a champion... because it was critical that the campuses accepted it” (JB Interview, August 12, 2009). This speaker also noted that leadership spent an entire year prior to the opening of the OC simply “selling it to the rest of the University and kind of massaging hurting wounds and so on and trying to get more acceptance across the University of this idea” (JB Interview, August 12, 2009). Leaders at the site level were considered to be important for a number of reasons:

We are dealing with people so we feedback to the system- we served sort of spy agents out there sometimes, feeding information back you know, to our central admin...and we had to play a role selling it to our people who are in operations because – we still play that role to this day. So we ourselves had to do a lot of selling in that regard. And we also have to sell it to ourselves too. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

Site heads are still very important as our link to the community...so the head then communicates ...to the director of the centres and that director sees whatever needs there are and then communicates that, so you know it could be both push and shove- we’ll be asking and they’ll also be telling. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

Another major challenge for the leadership in moving the organization forward was overcoming a variety of obstacles:

Leadership is critical. Because we are a fledging institution ....we have been operating for one year so and we are using many of the people who are in it have been in the system for a long time ... so we’re trying to bring about a change which will have some inertia from people who have traditional views about education.... we’re drawing people from outside the Caribbean different campuses, so leadership is critical in providing the focus and you know the rein... there are many obstacles. There are cultural obstacles, financial obstacles in trying to pull together 15 countries, sovereign countries- there are those kinds of challenges so I would say leadership is the key to helping to transform the....some of even the fundamental pillars of... higher education that we have used in the past into this very agile... flexible... technology driven institution. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)
One of the first challenges faced by the new campus was the creation and promulgation of the vision that would unify the Open Campus and move it into the future. One success was that at all levels of the organization, individuals could describe the main tenant of the vision (increasing access to tertiary education) and they believed that the use of online courses, which was the main method of delivery, could actually make the vision a reality. So the leadership has had a certain amount of success in convincing people to accept their vision for the OC.

Participants believed that the primary role of the leadership was to promote the vision and move the organization forward, despite obstacles. Participants indicated that they wanted leadership to be participatory and strong, but not dictatorial. It was also evident that the nationality of leaders had an impact on their ability to acquire buy-in for the vision. Overall, leadership was critical to the success of the transition and to the creation of the new organizational structure.
6 Organizational Structure and Implementation Issues

The leadership of the Open Campus created a new organizational structure that would be able to operationalize the vision as described in the last chapter. The organizational structure had an impact on several of the areas identified in the research questions (i.e. curriculum, student support and staff training) so it was used as a means of grouping the areas and their respective challenges. There were issues that were related to the structure as a whole, and issues that were related to specific parts of the new organization. In order to clarify relationships for the reader, the implementation issues will be described adjacent to the part of the organizational structure to which they are most closely linked. Although this thesis is organized in a linear fashion, during this transition period the Open Campus behaved like a biological ecosystem in that changes in one area caused changes in another area. The OC has been described as a “bête noir... this beast is huge, it is diffuse, it is so strange, it’s like there was a movie called the blob- you cut one part off and it grew again somewhere else- that’s happening here”(MC Interview, June 10, 2009). In other words, the changes and challenges are integrated over a number of areas and cannot easily be untangled- they are not linear but organic. That integration will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The first part of this chapter (6.1) deals with the development and implementation of the overall structure as well as related issues. The second section (6.2) will describe the country sites and related issues. Finally in section 6.3, the Academic Programme Development and Delivery division (APADD) will be described. This chapter will describe the findings for the following research questions:

1. How is UWIOC addressing these areas in its transition to online distance education: organizational structure, curriculum, student support, staff training, and programme quality?

2. What challenges have been encountered in the transition and how have they been addressed?

The organizational structure of the Open Campus was intended to be a lean and nimble organization. In order to achieve that goal, the creators decided to:

Get rid of all the obstacles and bureaucratic stuff, all the stuff you would want to get rid of. So we said you won’t have departments and you won’t have faculty and you won’t have this, and you won’t have that... (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)
The structure of the new campus (Figure 6) was to be organized by function:

Units were going to be functional units. So what we did- LC and a small group of us- we got all the different functions- registering students, taking money off students, putting money in (the) bank- all those down to a very fine level and we had a huge board of all these functions. We grouped those together and those are the departments, those are the units. Nothing to do with academic, nothing to do with how the university organized itself. (TN Interview, 2009)

![An Organizational Structure- Based on Functional Imperatives](adapted from UWIOC Council, 2008)

The final functional divisions of the Open Campus are illustrated in Figure 7, along with their reporting relationships at the time of writing. The ten divisions are the same ones as shown in Figure 6, although the new arrangement lost the centrality of the student to the organizational structure. Although the idea was to base the structure solely on functional imperatives, it wasn’t quite as easy to implement those ideas. “We didn’t have faculties but we do have divisions and heads of departments so we got back those barriers to fluidity and improvisation that we actually started off not wanting” (FC Interview, May 21, 2009). One of the participants commented that the idea was to pursue, “centralization, specialization, maintaining expertise in one particular
area. And that’s the principles on which distance education as an industrial process was originally founded” (TN Interview, 2009).

\[\text{Figure 7. Open Campus Organizational Chart (reprinted from UWIOC Council, 2008)}\]

The Consortium for Social Development and Research consists of several smaller research units in a variety of areas, grouped together to form one division. The Division of External Relations and Inter-Institutional Collaboration (ERIIC) deals with all franchise and collaborative agreements between UWI and other institutions. There has been some subsequent discussion that ERIIC should be removed from the OC and placed in the office of the University Chancellor, but at the time of this manuscript’s writing, that had not yet become official. The reason for the consideration of this move was because this department acts on behalf of the entire university and thus should be positioned above the campuses and not within a campus. The Registrar deals with all administrative matters relating to students. The Director of the Open Campus Country Sites provides oversight for all of the sites in both the campus and non campus countries. The sites are the physical presence of the OC in each country. The Academic
Programming and Delivery Division (APAD) is the division that controls course production and delivery. Even though there are ten major divisions of the OC, only two divisions will be discussed in detail in this paper, and those are the Country Sites division and the Academic Programming and Delivery division (APAD), because they are central to the thesis research questions. In each division, staff members from the original three units were used to fill most of the positions.

6.1 Implementation Issues

The implementation of this new structure was fraught with difficulties in a number of areas, including finance, organisational structure, human resources, communication and resistance. Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

6.1.1 Implementation Issues: Finance

Almost every participant mentioned that the most critical issue “without equivocation, it would have to be cash” (GT Interview, March 16, 2010). Much of the funding for the UWI comes from the governments of the countries that are serviced by UWI. However, these governments are “always in arrears- we’re dreadfully in arrears- I mean I think the figure we mentioned the other day was 9 million dollars for this year” (FC Interview, May 21, 2009). This makes it difficult for budgeted projects to be executed as planned. The Open Campus was no exception, especially as it was launched at a time when the world financial markets had just plunged into a recession. Many of the small island states of the Caribbean were severely affected because their economies are heavily dependent on tourism and therefore OC suffered from funding difficulties.

The economic downturn happened in the middle of this whole process and all the countries in the Caribbean were hit hard by that and, of course, that means UWI, which is funded by all the countries in the Caribbean, was hit hard so here we are trying to create an OC which itself will be totally self funded eventually, but not yet. We need funding to get going- just at the moment when we needed that funding- oops- it’s gone. (TN Interview, 2009)

The other issue in the transition has been funding and as you are aware that the university is always severely underfunded. Well, a new operation like ours required, I think, some dedicated funding that was not put in place and we’ve also coincided unfortunately with the world’s major recession and financial disaster. So it has affected our ability to transition and to live up to some of our plans and promises because we have 1) started off underfunded but 2) even with the budget that we did get approved, we have not been able to collect all of the funds that we needed from governments and from students from
student fees in order to really move our plans forward rapidly for improvement. So those are the two major transitional issues that we have had to face in the last year. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

One of the issues caused by the funding shortfall has been an inability to hire all of the support staff required by the organizational structure:

But we were hit with a depression - the results of that were that the governments didn’t pay so whilst we had a budget of so much, which would have given us staff to do those things, we now suddenly find we have cash of this much - 50% of our budget - we had to operate on that. We had barely enough to cover just the staff we’ve got. (TN Interview, 2009)

While the OC could not force regional governments to pay the monies owed, it has sought to deal with the shortfall by not filling all of the positions created on the organizational chart. However, this is only a stop gap measure and does not solve the problem of funding. The impact of funding on human resources will be discussed in Section 6.1.3.

The lack of funding affected every single area of the transition, including the management of the change process and the visioning strategy:

We don’t have a lot of money and money is extremely important because it is one of the biggest tools you can use to propel a vision. So I accept that is one of the critical aspects of the OC that impinges on us doing the work that we have to do. I accept that. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

As one leader commented:

We didn’t have money - the resources to bring on a team to manage that or even to manage the change - so we were doing it - trying to do it the best we could...Because of the economic crisis we couldn’t have a retreat this last year, but then what did we have? We had everybody or as many as could come together for the graduation and the induction. That gave another sense of inspiration. That’s not...because everybody doesn’t participate because you can’t just empty out the place and everybody go. Beside which there is not enough money to have air fares for everybody. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

It is the view of those interviewed that the lack of finances also affected the OC by reducing the number of programmes that they could offer and by limiting the ability of the organization to acquire the human resources required to design, deliver and support those programmes, as well as to support the implementation of the organizational structure:

Well financial is always at the top of everybody’s list, we still need quite a bit of funding. Not only to implement the programmes that we would like to offer to the world on a global basis but the fact that we have to put certain infrastructures in place, both in terms of human resources and programme support, technology and all of that. (KC Interview, February 26, 2010)

The fees are what helps to run the whole OC again in terms of developing new courses, developing new programmes we need and so far we have not been able to get that kind of
resources to develop new courses as fast as we would like to. (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

As a result:

In the early days whilst we are getting our fund base, we have to pick the courses very carefully as to what we run so that we are financially viable as a whole. If we don’t... if we aren’t financially viable as a whole we’re just gonna collapse and nobody will have anything. So we have to learn to say no, I’m sorry, we can’t actually do that- it’s not financially possible for us to do that. ...It costs a lot of money to put a course online...we estimate about $12,000 US for a course, certainly $10,000 US. If we amortize that over 5 years to deliver, so that’s got to then be spread out across the student fees and becomes then a very small amount. So that’s fine. But we need the money now. So what are we going to do- go to the students and say for the next 5 years we want you all to give the money so that we can develop these courses? No- we need the money now. And that’s our problem- it’s a cash flow problem. We need the money now to develop these courses. (TN Interview, 2009)

In order to make the UWIOC financially viable in the future:

The OC had to create a costing model- a dynamic costing model that actually modifies based on what the input is by each party. So if the campus does all the development work and we give them a curriculum development specialist to help them shape it, if they have the coordinator for delivery, if they have the e-tutor, then their percentage would be a little more but for what we deliver we would have a smaller... if it is the other way it flips and then they get a percentage...it’s a win-win” situation (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

In terms of the costing model:

It’s a beautiful diagram- it’s a model now that will fit all circumstances. Because sometimes a department will put in the writers for free or they’ve put in this or that. But we’ll say no- there’s no putting in. If you provide that service you get the money for that. There none of this- too many people in UWI think- no it won’t cost anything extra to run this course because we’ve got the staff already. Well, you can’t. The marginal cost idea does not work. Its seems to work but it doesn’t really work- that person’s time is being used and they can’t do something else- they can’t do something else- they can’t do the research then they say have you published anything this year ... well, no because I’ve been doing this course- duh! (TN Interview, 2009)

The costing model includes all the components for course development and delivery and assigns a cost to each component. If another campus wants to have the OC develop or deliver an online course for them, then the appropriate cost is charged to the campus according to the inputs made by each campus, such as the course writer, course coordinator or e-tutor. In addition the profit is split according to the inputs made by each campus.

However, there has been some resistance to the costing model because in the past “UWIDEC always provided its services for free” (TN Interview, 2009) and the campuses are accustomed to that model:
Right now we are dealing with the situation where they figure that they don’t want to have to pay that much even if we do the work. It’s the sense of getting something for free that they want. But we are trying to say no- we have to live we have to survive- we’re a business. So the dynamic costing model, I think, is a good one that will help them realise what has to be done in that regard. And every time we have to negotiate for a course or programme, we have to sit down and work through the model with them to negotiate to show them how it will work and so on. So I think we are going to have to do that year after year after year until they get used to it and they see how its intended and when they are comfortable with it, these year after year or semester after semester meetings will stop because they will see that they are benefiting from it and that we are not charging them for things that we’re not delivering or not intending to deliver. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

Lack of finances has been a significant issue for the OC in that it has affected a variety of areas including visioning, change management and course development. The lack of finances for human resources and programme support has also affected organizational culture since “it’s hard to persuade people that they need to change the way they are doing things to this other way which actually we can’t afford to fund yet” (TN Interview, 2009).

6.1.2 Implementation Issues: Organizational Culture

It has been noted that “the Open Campus brings together the old realities of different units, each having its own organizational culture and modus operandi” (UWIOC 2009, p. 1). In implementing the new organizational structure, the Open Campus is also attempting to instil a new culture and this has been a significant challenge:

Bringing together a team of people coming from different backgrounds and perspectives is a quite a challenge and the primary difficulty in the transition phase has been the integration of cultures...in that the three units and particularly the two major students oriented units- the SCS and the UWIDEC had different roles and different organizational cultures. It is more of a challenge in terms of integrating the units in the campus countries or the fixed campus countries of Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados… I think our major challenge therefore has been the human element of the transition... to get people to… move their mindset away from the former DEC or the former SCS. And looking at the OC as a new structure. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

There are two ways in which the OC is seeking to change the organizational structure: (a) to merge the units into a single OC culture, and (b):

To try and shift from a traditional concept to a business and commercially-oriented enterprise that will be efficient, that will be service oriented, that will give students the quick and immediate responses that they need, that will provide the immediate support that students need for them to be successful. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)
You have to change one culture- you know- you have to change the tradition, what people are accustomed to and move them onto a different, you know, a different plane and that is not easy. That is not easy. But people must see that it will benefit them in some way. And it will meet their needs. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

Changing culture is challenging because “culture change really is based on behaviour change” and it is difficult “to change the behaviours of people who are used to certain things” especially if “we’re talking about 500 strong staff in a disparate environment used to doing things in various ways” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

At present, even though the divisions have formally merged, there are still differences in organizational culture:

This has resulted in a sort of cliquishness in some parts of the world...This last month when I had the meetings- November...they’re saying us and them. I’m saying what kind of language am I hearing- us and them? I thought we were an OC...I don’t know of anything... any title any name of any section in the OC that is SCS or UWIDEC or we or us. So it was funny but they got the point but I’m saying no, no, no- if we use that language it will always perpetuate a sense of division and separateness. So we have to begin to look at us. And they said, oh we even invited them to your Christmas thing... I said it’s our Christmas thing... so we send invitations to all our people to come to our Christmas thing- you know? That’s how they were talking. So you could sense from them that there was still this separateness between UWIDEC and SCS. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

The transition from the old culture was difficult to make:

People have been used to the… civil servant, the sort of civil service kind of structure that the university adopted because of how it developed, a system where they are supported, sort of a welfare thing... we give you what you need and when you need more you open your hand. We would have to shift from those old ways of being and doing and expecting that every time we held out our hand that somebody would pour money into it, to looking to how we could then become our own... income generating unit...but to move towards that we had to have a different attitude, and a different way of doing things so we are working on that and I think it’s going to take us a good two years at least if we start now. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

So there was no notion of a service culture in that respect. This shift was deemed necessary because “unlike the other campuses, the Open Campus aimed to be largely self-financing” (UWIOC Council, 2008) and will therefore need to adopt a service model to successfully compete in the education marketplace.

One of the ways that OC is trying to grapple with the need for changing organizational culture is by hiring a human resources manager:

I was talking to the lady about how we can use expertise like hers in human resources to begin to create that common vision. We’ve had meetings, lots of meetings, to present the concept for them to buy into it... PowerPoints, input ...but then people said we don’t know what this is about... you have a meeting today and you go back tomorrow and people say... I never heard this before. That’s one of the things that... even if the initial stage it has to be so constant... so in their face that they cannot possibly say they forget it … (TN Interview, 2009)
One of the things that needs to happen in order for cultural change to be effective is a new sense of professionalism:

We need to give them the attitude and the professionalism and the emotional maturity that they need to begin to look at themselves differently in their roles, and not just think that they can go on in a happy go lucky way and think that everything is just going to be alright and that there is some god at the top who is going to just wave a wand and make it happen. (TN Interview, 2009)

In order to make that change, “we can’t just bring on new staff we have to streamline and clean up” because of financial challenges and in some cases the limited number of people with the specialised skills required, such as “technical people to be able to do the online... we need curriculum development specialists.....That’s how we can begin to change how people look at the service- we have to have a service oriented campus” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010). This issue of hiring new staff to change the organizational culture is linked to wider issues of human resources that will be discussed in the next section.

6.1.3 Implementation Issues: Human resources

When the OC was created, a new organizational structure was implemented in order to provide for service centralization in terms of programme delivery. Implementation revealed the following major human resource issues:

(a) concern about job security among staff,
(b) lack of clarity re job descriptions and roles,
(c) poor human resource practices in the old units,
(d) lack of funding for a human resource manager,
(e) dissatisfaction with payment for work, and
(f) the inability to acquire new staff.

After the unveiling of the new organizational structure, “there was a lot of discomfort with what will happen to my job with this amalgamation and what will happen where will I fit in and all of that stuff”(GT Interview, March 16, 2010). Staff were “wondering about where their job will be, what they will be doing- all those kinds of concerns” (TN Interview, 2009).

People are not sure how it is going to work and until they feel comfortable about it, and that it’s going to serve them well... I think we will have that. And it’s part of the process of change- you introduce something new and unless people can feel that they have a place in it. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)
As a result:

Job insecurity set in and people are stressed out and not functioning so it has a ripple effect. Because they are looking for a letter any day to say go home. Especially those who have not been tenured - people on contract are on pins...we’re going through changes of the structure- the uncertainty is there- you’re going to get complacent because you are not sure if your job is going and if yours not going ...so all of those things should have been structured and comunicated. We’re going to merge so and so- in the merger some positions will be lost but some will be created- this is where you will fit in- that is where you will fit in. This is what will happen. (KX Interview, October 13, 2009)

Not only were persons concerned about whether they would have a job, but even those in leadership were “still feeling as to what we are supposed to be really doing” (KX Interview, October 13, 2009).

Even at the levels of heads of department, heads of sites, people who report to me and so on, there was some lack of clarity as to their role. We’ve had a lot of ambiguity in people’s roles that really needed to have been clarified before we even launched and OK that has caused some real challenges for the management. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

One leader commented that they were “still doing business as usual when really I should clarify” and admitted that with reference to the organizational structure, “to be honest I myself have not even looked at it yet” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010). This confusion about staff roles occurred as a result of “staff not necessarily understanding why their roles have to change” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009) or what exactly their new roles entailed.

Persons were asking:

Am I going to have to do something differently? Am I going to have to learn new things? But what’s wrong with the way I do things now? Why should I do things differently? Why do I have to learn all this new software? I’m happy just going to the beach on the weekend. (TN Interview, 2009)

Not everyone feels the need to continuously learn “so there is a challenge also of motivating staff to go the extra mile, to do the extra thing, to learn something new” (QP Interview, June 11, 2009).

People had differing views of their roles, such as the following interpretations of the ‘site head’ role:

A site head, especially in those countries where we do not have the traditional brick and mortar campus, a site head is seen as really representative of the university on the ground. And in our small communities our site heads are seen as the academic or the luminary in residence. So we sit on boards, we give feature addresses, we do workshops– apart from our administrative roles which take a lot of time, of managing our staff from day to day. In a broad sort of global sense I like to see myself the university’s representative in the country to assist in carrying the university’s mission of unlocking the potential of the Caribbean people. We are intellectual guerrillas and we are out there in the trenches and
we are educating people not to be servile and not to be antagonistic either, but to engage
their societies, to change their societies for the better. Change agents as it were. (GT
Interview, March 16, 2010)

The role of the site head is one of guiding the change process. Helping to recruit students
is a part of it...it’s almost Jack of all trades- you have to do finance, you have to help
students, you are a counsellor you are ... a jack of all trades. The OC sites do not have
counsellors and students are always having problems so you are expected to do that
across the region. You have to also give academic counselling- you have to provide all
other student services that are required. You have to assume the role of doctor when it is
necessary or nurse- because it is so different from the physical location where you have
all these facilities and departments and it’s not fully online so you have a mixture of
everything. (KX Interview, October 13, 2009)

As a result of the amalgamation of the three units, the OC inherited pre-existing problems
from the previous organizational structures:

In the case of the SCS sixty years of operation and the case of the UWIDECC twenty odd
years of operations which means that there are issues of anomalies that we inherited that
we have to clear up- unclear organizational structures and so in the last 11 months... a lot
of our time has been spent on the organizational structures. (MM Interview, October 14,
2009)

I think that some of the impatience and the irritability came from the fact that people did
not see their own little positions being dealt with as quickly as they would have liked. So
they felt insecure and were raising issues like I’ve been a temporary person for 15 years-
what are you doing about it? Which stumped me because I could not understand a
system in which a person had been hired 15 years ago and was given a year to year
contract. And there are quite a number of them. Twenty years on a year to year contract.
Can you imagine- that’s a big part of a life! And I suddenly come on and they are telling
me fix it! And I now need to see, well OK have they ever done performance appraisals
with them? I find nothing. Nothing on record. Nothing! And we trying to repair and to fix
things and streamline... so this is what we dealing with. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

UWIOC staff indicated that they gave priority to human resource concerns in an attempt
to more quickly address organizational issues:

We went for a long time without an HR director, we were using somebody from Cave
Hill and in a transition like that where people are moving from an older system, new job
descriptions and all of these things had to happen and it could not happen fast enough.
And we didn’t have money... the resources to bring on a team to manage that or even to
manage the change- so we were doing it- trying to do it the best we could... (IN
Interview, January 7, 2010)

I think we needed to somehow find more resources to put into HR and into
communication early in the process. And do it systematically and methodically. And that
means allocating funds for travel and so on. So I don’t know what we could have done
differently. (TN Interview, 2009)

That lack of funding for the management of human resources contributed to the problem
because in each of the non-campus countries there were different interest groups with competing
demands and expectations:
There were all these different interest groups that needed different kinds of attention. So it’s a hell of a job to do that. I don’t think we realised, well maybe we realized but just couldn’t do anything about it. But we should have probably somehow tackled that issue up front. You know the unions- speaking to unions speaking to those different groups- remember how many unions we have to talk to. So we just have it different there and different there- the poor HR manager- and we didn’t have one then- the poor HR manager has to run around and talk to every single one of these... What a job! And there is only one HR manager and one kind of administrative assistant so they are managing the whole HR. I think we needed that HR earlier in the process. (TN Interview, 2009)

The human resource issues were compounded by different practices in different countries:

Not only because we were three separate units but because we are in different countries. Different union agreements, different labels because you see you also have to bear some relationship to the country in which you are. So you will find that an administrative officer in Jamaica may be an administrative something else in Barbados. So you have to align those so that is challenging. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)

In each of the sixteen countries:

The cost of living is different... so you are paying them relative to that. And you negotiate separately.... But as time went by ...the Jamaican dollar devalues and it goes down and when the union is negotiating they will say well since you can’t pay me exact salary maybe you could give a little more housing, or you could give some kind of special allowance to help to support or whatever... (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)

The human resource manager was hired in January 2009 with the mandate of attending to “staff issues, such as the contracts of existing staff in the new organization” in order “to sustain our optimism, enthusiasm, and good will” (UWIOC, 2009, p. 1).

Another human resource issue was the remuneration for the course coordinators and e-tutors:

We paid people $4800 US per course- to develop a course and then to deliver the course we paid them it was $15000 TT (about $2362 US) per semester... we started an hourly rate but that couldn’t work so we changed to a flat fee over time but they complain that it is not enough. Right now for a course it’s about $900US I think is the highest per semester- per group and the group wouldn’t be more than 25 students. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

The tutors comment that “if it were (only) for the remuneration, I would probably not bother to do it” (BX Interview, April 6, 2010) and “I’m not teaching with UWI for the money- if I wanted money I would not teach for OC. And I want to say that clearly” (QC Interview, October 21, 2009). Others commented on the tutors’ high workload:

In some cases they are working much longer hours than the average worker and it’s not reflected in any remuneration that you get” (BX Interview, April 6, 2010) because if you “look at it from an economic perspective. You get a hundred and eighty thousand Jamaican per course- in US$ that is roughly $2000. You take out the tax that boils down to about $1700. So let’s look at that. You have a 12-14 week course, you realise you only getting paid $1700-1800, so basically you getting about $100 or so a week. So how many
hours are you spending a week? That is the thing! That is the thing now! Ask yourself that question- so how many hours a week should I spend on this course? The more hours I spend the less my hourly rate is. So now you realise there is no incentive for you to over commit to the course. (PQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

The tutors suggested that the university pay tutors a more reasonable wage:

Pay the people more! If you want better and greater commitment you have to pay... But if you pay them more everything will follow. Yeah- everything will follow. Because you are going to want quality for your money. You’re not going to just dish out money- you’re going to have some accountability standards, you are going to have some quality assurance. (PQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Another human resources issue was the difficulty in acquiring people with the expertise in designing online courses in the numbers required to create a large number of courses.

We need somebody with the expertise to design the programme, to pick out the bits around the place and mould them appropriately. But that’s not happening yet and partly because of money... we’ve always been understaffed in terms of the core curriculum instruction development people and even with the new structure and the new expansion, we’re still a very small number of people doing the actual work and I think a lot of the actual work is done contract – on a contract basis because of that. (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)

The other thing that I find with the OC is that there are not many people trained in writing courses for online so we need to have the type of human resources to be able... people with that kind of facility- instructional design and whatever else that is needed to be able to write those courses for online. (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

We need curriculum development specialists to really work with the new material to shape it so that it’s interactive, its top quality. We need to have lots of program coordinators, CDSs to do that work for us. To get these people in because there weren’t many of them- there might have been two when I came on. And for us to talk about the magnitude of change... the magnitude of improvement of programming to be done. You know how many we’d need to have? (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

Change requires communication. Official documentation acknowledged that communication was important by stating, “we recognise that managing change of this magnitude is a challenging task and requires dialogue and frequent communication between and across all the sectors and levels, incorporating all appropriate channels of communication” (UWIOC Council, 2009, p. 1).

6.1.4 Implementation Issues: Communication

The difficulties in implementing a new organizational structure over a campus which has staff and students geographically distributed over 42 sites in 16 countries were compounded by the inability to speak to face-to-face in a region with an oral culture. Participants felt that “communication is key. The way you communicate information that is very, very important. Communication is probably the biggest and most critical part of the process” (XD Interview,
March 8, 2010). Communication was a very strong theme in the data, as exemplified by these comments:

I think communication is at the heart of it really. Communication with all the stakeholders, external as in outside of UWI, external as in outside of OC but within UWI and also internal as in within the OC. So- but the communications were done carefully, but probably not enough. (TN Interview, 2009)

Part of the reasons for that was the sense of a little bit of a haste in launching the OC. I think it needed more time for change management... but the university has obviously realized that they have to move fast in this environment. So something suffered and one of the things that has suffered in terms of the leadership is clear communication channels, clear ideas of people’s individual roles and functions and these things are now being worked out. But obviously it has caused some discomfort to the staff in the transition period. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

Official documentation encouraged “management through dialogue to further engage staff in the development of processes, procedures, and structures, harnessing the valuable, collective experience and talent that existing staff bring to the Open Campus, particularly in distance, adult and continuing education” (UWIOC, 2009, p. 1). This idea was echoed by comments from leadership:

So the whole idea is that as management we discuss things- directors are supposed to have meetings- regularly with their people- all of them. And the heads with their groups ... so that they feel that they’re part of it, but if you don’t have meetings with them how do you expect them to feel? So I have had to insist, yes, that directors and heads have to meet with their people. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

One of the challenges to effective communication, “of course is the distributed nature of the environment” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009) and “how to constantly communicate, how to include everyone so that no one misses the message” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009). This challenge is being addressed through the use of the website as a communication tool, the use of online newsletters, regular meetings with various levels of staff both online and face-to-face, as well as a general administrative open door policy.

In terms of internal communication, the use of the website as a communication tool seems to be working for the students as is evidenced in Figure 8. The majority of students (71.5%) found that the website provided the information that they needed.
Leaders use a variety of tools for communication, “Skype for instance is one way that I communicate with staff in the sites. Although some sites are not really able to use Skype because either they are blocked or they don’t have enough bandwidth that sort of thing” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009), but “what we have to do then is to keep very close in terms of constant communication and using multiple sources” (MM Interview, October 14, 2009).

So in my division and I know in other divisions of the Open Campus we do regular staff meetings and I encourage the heads of those sites to also have regular meetings with their staff so that they can pass information on. Because you still need in this age to have that face-to-face contact especially for people to buy-in to the concept and also to reassure people. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

This speaker acknowledges that although the OC is a virtual campus, the culture of the region is still about personal contact and that it is necessary to help people to feel comfortable. As one of the students commented, “I prefer to meet and communicate with people verbally rather than in a written format” (Student Survey Data), and this seems to be true for the general populace.

Some administrators suggested that email forms of communication sometimes failed because the recipients didn’t read the messages. This, in turn, limited buy in:

What I also do is to try and send updates. The updates were intended to let them know what we’d done and where we were going and who had been brought on to the OC team to do what and so on and I discovered that they weren’t reading them. So I’m saying here am I busting my buns off trying to write updates for them and they aren’t reading them and they complain about things that are in the updates that they have not read saying that they don’t know. And then there’s the Open Letter too- it’s online and they don’t read...
that either. So and they say they don’t know what OC is about- they don’t know about OC. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

I find that we depend on documents- and who reads boring documents? You don’t have time sometimes to read these documents, sometimes they are big –you don’t want to read that! I find because we are an oral culture, if you send documents to read, we don’t have the time. We probably glance through it and so on... so it has to be more of a meet the people. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

One of the failures in communication was that staff members felt that their views were not being solicited before the changes were implemented. In their opinion, this lack of timely communication caused frustration and limited their ability to provide correct information and sell the vision to the students. There was some feeling that leadership had not communicated the change adequately to the sites and that the “change process was a challenge because it has not been communicated and bought into before the implementation” (KX Interview, October 13, 2009).

They were not communicated timely enough to the support staff and to the staff full stop from the implementers or the policy makers and its only when perhaps something might not be happening right then you realise oh- that had changed. ..Or the change is communicated the last minute so you did not get chance during orientation to tell students of the change. Or students just come and meet up on the change without prior warning- that is what it is in some instances. Like for example the school fees changes. Now it was not communicated properly so that ... although you will be getting the online, what was told was that the school fee would not have changed, or that was the impression that was given. Then when the fee schedule came out it had something else. They’re unhappy- we’re unhappy- everybody’s unhappy. So the change process has not been smooth enough, it has not been timely communicated and the involvement of end users has been non-existent. (KX Interview, October 13, 2009)

A student described this perceived lack of involvement of end users by saying:

Recently it has been said that the books will be cut out and CD’s will be used instead, this I am not comfortable with. The idea or option was not given to us- it was handed down without any discussion... This can't be the way forward if they intend on make online learning a better choice and cater for persons who wish to conduct online studies with the Open Campus. (Student Survey Data)

As a result, some site heads felt that:

Half of your day is spent trying to get the information that you should have ....so it wastes time as well because you have to be gathering information and as you go along things are happening so you know it kind of puts some strain on the psyche of the staff. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

In addition their lack of knowledge meant that, “when you’re giving information you are not speaking with that amount of authority as you’re used to because you are not sure if that has changed overnight and nobody communicated”(KX Interview, October 13, 2009). Some students appeared to sense the uncertainty of site staff, remarking that, “ ‘I don't know’ is becoming a
theme song from my site coordinator, which is pretty disturbing most times” (Student Survey Data).

Interestingly, sometimes communications problems were deliberate, particularly when it involved communication to parties outside of OC but within UWI:

We didn’t communicate with the deans and with the rest of UWI deliberately to start with. Because if it had it would have been stalled in meetings forever and ever and ever. So normally things are discussed and taken though faculty boards and academic boards and eventually permeates up to council and then is approved, you know... So that was a dangerous way to go and it has had a backlash from principals and deans and so on who have said eventually that they support the idea, that they recognize that- well it’s hard not to because it’s so self evident that it was what was needed. But then it’s kind of like does it have the full support all the way down? It’s meant that our job has been that much harder in getting the involvement of people down the line. Because there’s all kinds of ramifications for degrees going from the OC going up for approval and the kind of policies that we need, which are opening up access- all that stuff I think has been that much harder because... this is coming from a body that we really weren’t that sure about. And so it’s made it harder, so that is a communication difficulty that we’ve faced. (TN Interview, 2009)

Sometimes communication was done effectively, but that could also cause different problems, such as an inability to meet heightened expectations:

First our expectations of what the OC would deliver and what it would be – those were very high and people thought that by saying one would have an OC it immediately became one and that everything that an OC needed would be there presented. Which is not the case....we told them what marvellous things we can do. That thereby raises their expectations and they think oh great- so a year after we open- right- where’s all our stuff?! Why aren’t the thousands of courses available? The expectations were too high. So I think we needed to control that in communicating this brilliant concept of the OC that hey- it’ll take time to introduce it and to get new programmes- new programmes means new courses which means money and you governments haven’t paid us- because it’s a bad time- wow what a bad time- this is not the time to introduce it. Just when America causes a worldwide collapse but it has to be done. So we are faced with that and I’m not sure we would have done anything differently because if we didn’t do it then it was gonna get delayed and delayed. (TN Interview, 2009)

6.1.5 Implementation Issues: Resistance and Doubt

Not everyone accepted these changes readily; there was resistance to the changes being made and some negative feelings about the OC in general, for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons for the negative feelings was the speed of the change:

There was a sense of a little bit of a haste in launching the OC. I think it needed more time for change management... but the university has obviously realized that they have to move fast in this environment. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)
Another reason was that “I don’t think we accepted the fact that change is not easy. Change is difficult” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010). People often felt excluded from the process:

People on the ground who are implementing the change have not been a part of the change. So it is harder for everybody, because I’m just telling you to do something and when asked why I can’t tell you the reason why because I wasn’t a part of the process. (KX Interview, October 13, 2009)

This resulted in “the grumbles about this change and nobody told me. And you can pick up the level of frustration” (KX Interview, October 13, 2009).

Some resistance arose because people felt that “rather than come in and say let’s look at this and let’s see how we can fix it the things that are not working- they scrapped the whole thing and created a new thing,” (EO Interview, June 11, 2009).

They should have learnt from the mistakes that they made. We are starting a new campus but we are not starting from new experiences. We have seen... how things have happened previously. So now that we are setting up our own system we should have taken all of those things into consideration. We have to learn from our mistakes. Because we are not starting from scratch- we have a foundation that we could have learned from. But we set up the system as if we are working from scratch. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

Another example of this was the following description of one location, which was:

very used to what they used to do before in their own way, very resistant to change, very, very critical of every single little thing...I’ve had to go back there most... to work with them. And then you see them in this big group it’s not going to work... and I said why don’t we have focus meetings and next time we will see whether we can have a larger meeting. I think some people need to say things and they are not saying them. You know what they said to me? I was having these small meetings to divide and conquer. No matter how you do to change things they find some things to be critical about. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

There were also some negative feelings about whether the OC could realistically accomplish its goals or whether the structures were appropriate given the challenges faced by the OC:

We have an organizational structure but does the organizational structure make sense given all the other things that I described where we are and what we have? Well maybe it doesn’t make sense to me as somebody on the inside having come out of one thing- maybe I am just not...able to see the bigger picture. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

I have a lot of grouches with the programme not with for the sake of being critical because I know what online learning can be and I don’t think that OC is truly doing all that it can- maybe in time. Maybe it needs to develop. I guess, OC is sort of fitting into what I call the UWI rut- with the old, tired, tried academic boxes and so on and if it does that its gonna be a huge failure. And it should not- it doesn’t need to be it must not be. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

So I am very... you know... just concerned and waiting to see how it’s going to play out because you can’t just make an assumption. Maybe there are things that I just don’t know
and when I see it playing out I could probably at that point say, look this isn’t working. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

Will it work? I want it to work. Will it work? I will decide to pass that one- (she laughs in a way that suggests she thinks it will not). But bear in mind I have worked with the system for a long time, I am probably on my way out now, in terms of age wise and so on. But I would love to see it work. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

Leadership reported that it was often difficult to sustain and manage the change given the resistance they were encountering. It was tiring. “The first year I have had too many meetings dealing with this nonsense. It really is not worth it and it just holds up everything going to stupid meetings. I’m tired of them!” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010). Someone else commented “I’m getting back some of the excitement back ...and I needed that kind of boost because it’s hard to sustain it... by yourself...” (TN Interview, 2009)

Despite the issues of finance, organizational culture, human resources, communication and resistance, the new organizational structure has been implemented and is operational. The areas of especial interest to this research project are the Open Campus Country Sites and APADD. Those structures and their related issues will be addressed in the following sections.

6.2 Open Campus Country Sites

The Director of the Open Campus Country sites is responsible for the overall administration of the forty-two sites across the Caribbean.

The director of the OC sites coordinates the activities of the sites and acts as a sort of conduit of information and guidance for the heads of the various sites with relation to the other functional areas of the OC which would entail the marketing, the finance, the HR and the student services. So that gives a sort of very broad picture of the job. In terms of other elements of the role, part of the role also has to do with liaising with the government and the public and private sectors in the various countries as necessary in order to advocate on behalf of the OC sites in the individual countries. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

The general structure of the division is shown in Figure 9 and a template structure for a medium sized site is shown in Figure 10.

The country sites are the face of the OC in each of the countries and the locations where administrative contact between students and the OC takes place. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of these sites to the past and future of the Open Campus.

We operated very much on the periphery and not at the centre of education of the UWI control. We were on the periphery and given some scope and some leeway to make changes to make changes- we were very country specific- we were allowed to do things
as we saw relevant within the particular jurisdiction...It worked well then because these operations ...tended to be self financing- not all of them were but a lot of them were self financing. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

However, the industrial model of distance education being implemented at OC required centralised control in a number of areas in order to provide efficient service, high quality courses and economies of scale.

Figure 9. Office of the Open Campus Country Sites (reprinted from UWIOC Council 2008)

The Open Campus sought to centralise many of the country site operations including marketing and the budget, which is “no longer done locally in the local bank account and so on- it’s all centralised and I’m sure that some of them don’t like that” (TN Interview, 2009). As mentioned by the previous speaker there was indeed resistance against centralisation:

So some things used to work at the sites and then they centralised everything one time. In my mind you can't do that! You can’t centralise everything when you don’t have money. You are centralizing things but this is the experience we are having so why not keep the decentralised system until you have money, and work with it and then step by step you centralise some key areas. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

The centralization process:

It was necessary from, the point of view of purely external things now- auditing- you can’t have all these bank accounts all over the place and control and...they’re not superficial and they’re imposed for a reason. Then you can make sure that the funds are going where they are supposed to go and that they are being used to maximum effect. And so all this centralisation has got to be for improved service ultimately and maximizing efficiency and so on. If it doesn’t do that then it’s not worth doing it. (TN Interview, 2009)
One reason for the resistance was that centralisation reduced the ability of the site to be responsive to the needs of the local community.

Previously, they put on whatever courses they wanted, whatever courses the community needed, whatever they felt would earn them some money and so on. They were driven by their own needs - the needs of their own communities and their own needs in terms of raising funding. In the past a government would go to the resident tutor and say we need a face-to-face course on ICT for our employees - that resident tutor would identify someone to write it and you know 2 months later the course is run. Very responsive in that kind of way, because there is this close relationship and all you are dealing with is just that. (TN Interview, 2009)

There was also concern that the centralized system might jeopardize the ability to respond to site specific needs in a timely fashion:

Imagine if now that tutor has now to come to us and we say well we’ll design this thing and we’ve got processes and all this quality control and like a year later it comes out the other end - that’s not good enough. (TN Interview, 2009)

In other words, in the centralization process OC needs “to be just as fast but more efficient in terms of our utilization of resources across the whole system. So that’s the balancing act we have to do” (TN Interview, 2009).
The problem with local control was unnecessary redundancy and the replication of effort. There were, “a whole bunch of those all doing similar kinds of things and actually not all of them were really sharing resources- that seemed like a tremendous waste” (TN Interview, 2009). Although that resource wastage was much reduced after the creation of the Open Campus, the lack of responsiveness to the local community was a concern:

That is a tension which we need to handle carefully- at the moment what we are saying is that anything that is run in the country- just in that one country that isn’t being run elsewhere- they can just get on with it. (TN Interview, 2009)

Another reason for the resistance was that centralisation reduced the autonomy that Site Heads had previously enjoyed. One speaker made it quite clear that “from an admin perspective, the challenge has been for the management of the enterprise to find the balance between autonomy and centralization in a distributed environment” (JB Interview, August 12, 2009) because “you’ve got to make sure that you don’t introduce enormous layers of bureaucracy which then make it harder and slower for implementation of things” (TN Interview, 2009).

When you create a structure that attempts to centralise in a bureaucratic environment it means you always have to send information upstream for ratification. The top will become overloaded with decisions to make and so decisions take forever to get back to you and so that creates a student problem right away. The students then begin to think that these guys are really slow and this is a university... and eventually the word gets around that this is not all that you think it is... OK and that then casts a negative view around the whole thing. Which is not what you want- no because you then have to spend a tremendous amount of time reversing that- rather than spending time building on a foundation we’re reversing negative stuff now to building on a new foundation again.

And I think that is part of the challenge and that’s why you see students now expressing frustration. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

The new organizational structure imposed centralised control on the country sites, which previously had been operating in an autonomous manner. This imposition of centralised control, exacerbated by the lack of funds to adequately support the new structure resulted in resistance from some site heads, and may have also reduced the ability to respond quickly to local demand for specific courses. The department responsible for programme design is the Academic Programme and Delivery division and this will be described in the next section.

6.3 Structure of the Academic Programme and Delivery Division

The Academic Programme and Delivery division (APAD) was designed to manage the approval, design, delivery and evaluation of all academic programmes for the Open Campus. The
work of this division directly impacts the student in several ways. In this section the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How is UWIOC addressing curriculum design and delivery, student support, staff training, and programme quality in its transition to online distance education?

2. What challenges have been encountered in the transition and how have they been addressed?

In responding to these questions, this section will describe the organization and operation of selected components of this division, especially the process of course development and delivery, mechanisms for student support and staff training, and the feelings of participants regarding quality. In each area, the opinions of research participants will be used to illuminate the structures and processes. APAD’s organizational structure is illustrated in Figure 15 and includes several areas: the Pre-Service University and Professional Development, Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, the Production Unit and Special Projects.

The Director of the Division reports directly to the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Principal of UWI Open Campus. Each academic department manages the delivery of courses, supervises part-time academic staff engaged in the learning environment and evaluates the quality of the programmes, courses and academic staff supporting our students. (UWIOC Council, 2008, p. 7)

As mentioned earlier, the design of the organizational structure for the OC was based on functional units in order to exploit the industrial model of distance education. However, it was acknowledged that the new organizational design may not have been optimal. “When we split that up we split it into undergrad, postgrad the usual kind of thing. And that’s not what it should be at all- it should be head of curriculum development, head of production, head of delivery” because it was difficult to ensure “that the walls don’t get established” between those departments (TN Interview, 2009). The speaker is indicating that all curriculum development should have been contained within one larger department, instead of three separate units as is currently the case (Figure 11).

This division resulted in an inability to evenly allocate workload across departments, for example:

There’s this curriculum development person here that’s really stretched, can’t manage any more work and there’s this other one over here that’s got two courses to look after... whereas if you had had them all in one unit the work would have been evenly developed and shared- theoretically you can always ask the other person to help. Huh! Right- that happens? No, no, no- that’s my person. So it’s difficult. So I think we made a mistake there. (TN Interview, 2009)
One of the noticeable differences between the OC structure and the structure of the other campuses is the lack of faculty. One of the reasons that OC did not want to have faculty was the desire to be able to control the development and delivery of their own curriculum through contractual agreements rather than tenure.

We pay staff to tutor for us and to co-ordinate and to write courses...when we bring in contract members of staff they are contracted to us- we can fire them. If they don’t perform we can fire them. If on the other hand the faculties are simply providing a service and the members that they choose to do those services doesn’t perform what do we do about it? We tell the faculty, and the faculty says well, it won’t happen again. Next term it happens again. What do we do? How do we go on like that? The faculties don’t fire their staff. (TN Interview, 2009)

Maintaining quality in course design and delivery would therefore have been difficult, given that the UWIOC would not control the delivery of their courses. However, the use of adjunct faculty to design and teach online courses meant that full-time faculty would not get appropriate credit for contractual work with the OC. Their work on course design and teaching would not be “on

Figure 11. Academic Programming and Delivery Division Organizational Chart (reprinted from UWIOC Council, 2008)
the points system- we have an established set of criteria for assessment and promotion and it doesn’t have that in there... it is not on the official thing” (EO Interview, June 11, 2009) so it did not factor into tenure or promotion decisions. This was a disincentive to participate in the work of the Open Campus.

6.3.1 Curriculum: Course Design

One of the research questions asked how OC was dealing with curriculum, which includes course development and delivery. Figure 12 illustrates how APAD is linked to the components for course approval and presents a sample of the courses that each is offering. The OC’s Academic Council is the highest academic board in the campus and it reports directly to the UWI Board of Undergraduate Studies and the UWI Board of Graduate Studies and Research for the approval of courses and programmes. Figure 12 also shows the linkages between the OC and the faculty at other campuses, who provide the content expertise needed to create the course material and the courses to be offered in each of the departments.

![Figure 12. APAD Academic Process and courses (reprinted from UWIOC Council, 2008)](image-url)
The official statement on course acquisition was outlined in the UWIDEC 2003 paper on pedagogy: “UWI Faculty will be the first resource responsible/approached for building programmes and courses, setting examinations and evaluating examination scripts. However, as and when needed such academic services will be sourced from elsewhere” (UWIDEC, 2003, p. 1).

One of the issues related to course design was that there was not yet “enough of a wide range of courses...because of the cost I’m telling you about and the constraints it’s going to take a while to build up” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010). So even though “there are plans afoot to increase the amount of courses – they haven’t come on stream yet” (JB Interview, August 12, 2009).

We have to do a lot of programme development- we have to be liaising with faculties around the other campuses to bring programmes while developing our own OC programmes. For example we just launched Leadership and Management- and that is an OC one we didn’t import from the Faculty of Education. And so things are working, but in time. (KC Interview, February 26, 2010)

Since course development was costly, the OC was willing to adopt courses that were designed elsewhere:

We don’t mind taking courses from outside. Part of our policy is open access - the OER (open educational resources) we believe in that in a big way. So if you’ve got a course and you’re giving it to us, beautiful we’ll take it. But let me tell you one of the other things... within the university there is this belief that if it is from foreign then we’ve got to adapt it to the local environment- so the maths has to become Caribbean Maths. And as a philosopher I’m a bit suspicious of that, but anyway...But I’m saying to you is that even with something like that we would have to get somebody in the faculty to comment on it and say- yeah this is great, this is good” (FC Interview, May 21, 2009).

As the last speaker mentioned, even though some members of the leadership were eager to use open educational resources (OERs) in order to increase the number of courses, there was some concern that the Caribbean flavour would be lost by using OERs or courses purchased from external sources.

How will we provide the range and quality of courses that are needed... in our country? Because the cultural aspect is important. If I can hire a hundred experts from outside and pay them God knows what because I got money from the World Bank and they have given me something that my people are saying what? What is that? So you have to be concerned about culture, concerned about the kind of learning experience that you are offering. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

In order to answer the question about “what unique feature- what niche does it (the OC) fill?” (TN Interview, 2009) given that many other universities were offering online programmes, it was stated that the curriculum had to reflect Caribbean realities:
So we don’t just offer a management course—so you (offer) management for the Caribbean—so the curriculum itself has to be specific. And then I think the learning experience has to be somewhat different as well. I think we have to create that different learning experience as well. (TN Interview, 2009)

What was different about our programs was that it was a UWI program and when you come to UWI its about meeting other people from the region, it’s about doing courses that you could do somewhere else but having a particular Caribbean flavour to it...whatever that flavour is...you could go and you could buy a course and just...but remember at UWI we have our lecturers who teach accounting who teach sociology— they bring their experiences, the cases that they would do with the students, the examples that they would give, would be ours—so that it makes its relevant to our students. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

The implied issue with using OERs was that they would not take into account Caribbean culture or reflect Caribbean realities, because they were originally designed for other contexts, or were too generic in nature:

Well, the thing with online learning, or online education as we probably know it is that it of necessity it has to be somewhat standardized— it has to be packaged and standardized. And in that regard it is it does not necessarily allow for I guess for a certain amount of customization and regionalization and so on. (MM Interview, October 14, 2009)

However, in response to the argument that OERs would not take into account Caribbean culture, one individual insisted that such resources could be tailored to the local culture:

We still will have that— we’re not saying that you just take an OER and plop— that’s it. You modify it —that’s the whole point about it OERs they are— under the creative commons licence— share alike. You can do whatever you like with it. You can put it up and change it how you like. Your only obligation is to put it back into the pool for everybody to use. So yeah I know.... people are frightened of that but more and more it’s being accepted by universities. And initially we can do on it a kind of...closed shop basis almost— a kind of reconversion of creative commons and can say this is a creative commons licence that only applies to Caribbean institutions. (TN Interview, 2009)

This issue is by no means resolved at the institution, and will most likely require considerable discussion in the future, especially given the need for a large number of courses in a short period of time, the cost of development and the resistance to the idea of using and promoting OERs.

Course development in the OC utilizes a multi-disciplinary team approach. The course is passed from department to department within APAD until it is completed. The course goes through the approval process and a writer is hired, usually from the faculty at one of the other campuses. The course coordinator’s role has been described in various ways:

They are responsible for the course content largely and for supervising tutors who interface directly with the student. So what I do is decide on what the content is going to be and the way it is going to be presented and the tutors actually carry out those instructions, interfacing with the students directly. So I give the general academic leadership for the course. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)
Each division in APAD (pre-university, undergraduate or post graduate) has curriculum development specialists who work with the course writers to produce course materials. A course writer would bring their course materials to “the curriculum specialist- you come to me, we talk about it and we go through it and we work out how you going to do this, what (are) you going to use” (EO Interview, June 11, 2009) and how the course is going to be written, according to a particular “format- you have your learning objectives, your course content, your activities and your evaluation” (QP Interview, June 11, 2009) which is provided by OC to the writer. The departments “assign their CDS (curriculum development specialists) to actually work on the content of the different courses” (LS Interview, January 14, 2010).

The CDSs and the writer are responsible for the academic integrity of each course:

- The CDSs work along with the writer to make sure that the instructional elements are met ...
- the intention is that the student should be able to go through the material and learn independently. The material comes in units- broken down in manageable portions and you can give up to 10 units. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

According to the previous speaker, a course can have up to ten units for the entire semester. The course writer usually becomes the course coordinator for the course once it is completed. The course writer is also responsible for drawing up the course guide:

- He is responsible for writing up the course guide. It contains the answers all the rules and regulations for the course, the expectations of the course coordinator of the tutor and everything that is relevant to discharging the responsibilities as a tutor that is supposed to be contained in the tutor guide. The course coordinator writes this, with of course given a structure or template from the OC. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

The intent of the OC is to infuse a sense of course ownership among the course coordinators:

- We are trying to make the course coordinators own the property that they write- they are paid to do it and the ownership we are trying to bring to it is that this is your course that you are delivering and so your responsibility lies not only to write the material and put it up there but to make sure that the students are interacting with the material and enough material is there for the students. But the ownership- there is a gray line in between the ownership because once you have written that course, signed the contract and delivered that course and you have paid for it- it is not yours really. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

Figure 13 shows the components and staffing of the Productions Unit that is “responsible for copyright matters, quality control over products, course production, the learning environment (Moodle) support team, a multimedia development team and a materials distribution team”(UWIOC, 2008, p. 7). The production unit creates any multimedia elements that are needed for the course and acquires the necessary copyright clearances for all materials.
We scan and OCR the material and develop it into an actual book of readings—that book bears the OC stamp—the OC quality stamp. The units are produced as a book also...a bound book. So the actual handouts become a book for students—that book is the printed material that for the course that the student gets for the course. It’s mailed out to the students...we look at the registration information per site and ship the book across the Caribbean. And then we distribute it to them on the sites—it goes to the site and the students go to the site at orientation and at those times when it is face-to-face and they would pick up the materials. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

Once all the materials are written and copyright clearances have been acquired, “the pdf or html version is sent to the learning support specialist who places it on the course site” (QP Interview, June 11, 2009). The Learning Support team’s “main function or role is actually to ensure that the environment is up and ready and that the courses are ready for students” (LS Interview, January 14, 2010).

![Production Unit Organizational Chart 9](reprinted from UWIOC Council, 2008)

*Figure 13. Production Unit Organizational Chart 9 (reprinted from UWIOC Council, 2008)*

The Learning Support Supervisor manages the Moodle servers. The Learning Support department’s function is to build the online environment:

We get the list of courses then we prepare the shells for those courses. Normally... we backup and restore the previous offering, if it’s a new one we have a template we build it off of. But most of the courses (were) offered previously so we have the content, the general content in terms of the units—the general layout of the course. What will be refreshed would be the course outline, the course schedules...and probably the tutorial sheets. So that’s the process to get the shell into the environment. After we do that we
then start to interact. We have learning support specialists- people from my team on all the campuses and they start interacting with the curriculum development specialists (CDSs) for their assigned courses. We just make sure that we have the shell up there and course coordinators can start putting in their welcome notes and all those things. And we try and split up the work as evenly as possible to try and make it as easy as possible we trying to allocate the learning support specialists to the courses off of their campus you know so it’s easy to get information and to interact with the CDSs on their campus. (LS Interview, January 14, 2010)

Once the course is uploaded to the CMS, the delivery team takes over. The delivery team provides support for instructors:

They will deal with you in terms of selecting tutors for your course, making sure that you have your orientation to the course and that you have your teleconference time... and you know when you are supposed to send in your marks and... they help with the administration, the delivery... (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

The delivery team’s role is to “monitor the running of the course, the interactions between the tutors, the students, the login of the students and the login of the tutors to ensure that people are getting the content delivered to them as it should be. (LS Interview, January 14, 2010). This larger team approach has only been implemented since the OC came into being. Prior to the OC, the team worked together in a fashion that was more long term in nature:

A team would be an instructional designer or curriculum specialist working with an editor or assistant curriculum specialist, and the production assistants and a web designer- so they would create the course material and the course website and they assist with the delivery of the course online and all of that... so you’re involved with basically everything ...so you have a handle on what is happening, how its playing out, what it needs to be changed and all that- everything feeds into the other....(but)...you have a structure now where the instructional designers/curriculum specialists are out of.. they are more or less out of the production loop in the sense that you deal with the content specialists and you give input on the design of the course and then that’s it. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

There was some feeling that the new method of producing courses left something to be desired because of its more impersonal, decentralized nature:

That is the model we have, and that has been working- it’s not bad- but it’s just that now everything is decentralised and everything is ...more impersonal, especially when you come from... a small place and you are used to... being a part of the whole process... it’s difficult because you don’t know how it’s going to play out...you’re out of touch because before you would know exactly what was going on with this course so when it was time to review you could say I looked at what was happening with this and maybe you need to add something or change the way you are doing this or whatever. Now to do that you would have to look at the data and look at a research...the evaluation and at what people are saying and extrapolate from that rather than you being in it and getting that gut feeling and saying let me change this....is not that anymore its well... data says so and so, so then I’m going with what the data says because that is what you have to do now because you’re just not involved you’re away from it. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)
However, this new process was necessary because of the pressure to develop new courses quickly:

With the OC- because there is almost a mandate to ... to have a certain quantity by a
certain time it is almost like you are being pushed to mass produce and if you have to
mass produce you can’t do it in the way were doing it- its time consuming, its resources
intensive and if you want to mass produce you have to now look at other ways. So ...you
know, to me now that whole vision is shifting and yes you want to provide the tertiary
education that’s still there, still want to provide access that is still the bottom line, but
now you are providing the access but it seems as if there is a cost to it because you’re
moving in the direction of massification... I was reading somewhere McDonaldization of
education? Yes, so you want to mass produce this thing so you gonna set up a template
and churn out some courses. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

There were a few other issues associated with the course development process, including
copyright clearance, training for technical staff, course acquisition from outside of UWI faculty
and quality assurance. These are discussed in turn:

(a) Copyright clearance

Some instructors were adding print material or links to websites without having obtained
copyright approval for the use of that material, which could cause legal problems.

If the material is within the library so we have no problems with it ...that is already paid
for...but a lot of people are providing support from Internet sources that are not
copyrighted- they don’t seek approval for it or anything like that. ..There is something in
the contract that says you need to seek approval if you are using secondary resources that
are not copyrighted or approved by UWI. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

(b) Training for technical staff

So there is a challenge also of motivating staff to go the extra mile to do the extra thing to
learn something new- in the production area- there is now supposed to be a multimedia
environment- we are moving in that direction- audio, video and all the moving things
...we do not have all the equipment, we do not have all the software so that challenge
needs to be addressed.

In terms of technology now... there are increases and advances in tech and more
and more new stuff where and people instructors are lectures have a newer idea or they
see it somewhere and they want to replicate it. Staff in different places they have been
saying the same thing- what about the training when are we going to learn this because
the lecturers are asking for this and we can’t deliver because we don’t know how or we
don’t have the equipments or the software to do it. That’s another challenge-training so
the cost is a problem in terms of how much training we can get in within a year. (QP
Interview, June 11, 2009)

What I think we have to pay some attention to is some training in terms of our site
technicians and so on because- things have gone forward so quickly that one suspects the
site technicians are woefully inadequate in some areas. Not all sites but in some sites
where the technology has left them. They were employed when all of this technology was
not entrained- and things have really unfolded very, very rapidly in the last 4-5 years from 2005 to now. (GT Interview, March 16, 2010)

(c) Quality assurance

A paper presented to the Academic Programme Committee (APC) stated that UWI was unclear in its approach to quality assurance in distance education and suggested that the quality of distance education should be measured in terms of curriculum, transactions, support services, learner achievement, learning resources and quality assurance mechanisms (UWIDECAcademic Programme Committee, 2003). The research findings were unclear as to whether OC has an explicit mechanism for assessing programme quality in distance education, although it does show that OC addresses quality assurance issues such as curriculum, transactions and student support through the course design and delivery process. When participants were asked about quality assurance, their responses suggested that there were quality assurance procedures in place at various levels but there did not appear to be a policy that governed online courses specifically. One participant outlined the quality assurance practices in this way:

The basic assumption is that if you’re teaching Economics 101 at Cave Hill and you’re also co-ordinating Economics 101 at the OC you’re not going to let the two fall apart and have totally different standards. So there’s gonna be an equation that way. The other part of it was that the university has quality assurance units that run regular reviews. Now we’ve never been part of that. But we always intend to be part of it... And so we would expect to become part of it at some point very soon, so that when the university decided to look at management studies at the campus it will also decide to look at management studies in the OC... For some reason... although we’ve had a lot of discussion with the board of undergraduate studies, it’s never actually materialized. So we’ve never actually had any of our programmes go through that... it’s never happened. It’s certainly intended to happen... it’s certainly part of the structures that we would want to have. (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)

Quality assurance is being done in different ways…we like the other campuses - we are in the process of recruiting a quality assurance officer that will function more or less in that way…for us. We are also sort of trying to infuse in our development process checks along the way so that when we develop our courses we have peer review of the courses and when, before the courseware goes out there are technical people who will check to see that is it doing what it should be doing…we would have learning support people who will do online checks questionnaires with students to see what they like, what they don’t like, what’s working, what’s not working. We have a course delivery section that monitors the frequency of online interaction and also the quality of the online interaction between our e-tutors and students. (XS Interview, June 21 2010)

Another problem and I am seeing it now that I am moving around is to get everyone to operate in terms of quality- with the same thing – what I mean is that a particular standard needs to be maintained in terms of the quality of the material- the look and the feel of it and I think we need to get most of the people working in my team to that level
where everyone wants to do it that way- everybody you know has this creative you know aptitude but we have a template- stick to it. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

One issue with quality assurance was voiced by an instructor concerned about the need to properly prepare the online course environment before it is made available to students:

When I enter the course site it’s clean and it’s got 10 units and not 3 units sitting at the end because the designer didn’t clean it up. That’s typical- I’ve made that comment- even this last course there are still two extra units at the bottom which should not be there- that looks unprofessional. If there are 10 units there are 10 units - that’s it. Its little things like that and then in this particular course the co-ordinator introduced what I thought was a brilliant activity- it was a peer review activity. But the thing was riddled with errors- in terms of marks computed, how to grade, where to put the student’s grade and so on. Those things are supposed to happen before you put the thing on line. You’re supposed to critique the course before you put it up. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

One problem was to ensure that the material produced by course writers met the required standard:

Chasing course coordinators and writers ...to get the work up to the standard...sometimes people are very busy and they have other courses that they are delivering face-to-face and it is a challenge to get them to bring in enough material for an entire course. The substance of what needs to be taught is not fully in it and people are not delivering on time and so you take what they have. There are courses that are being written now- the courses that are being written should really not be offered in the semester that they are being written- they should be written 6 months. Say the process is a 6 month process- you start up there and you get the materials you revise the material you bring it up to the standard you want in curriculum and in structure. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

Another quality assurance issue was the lack of adherence to the course review schedule, which resulted in courses that remained in draft stage for a long period and some never achieved completion status.

I’m going to be talking plainly we have a lot of courses that say draft and pilot and these come up semester by semester and they are being revised and edited and rewritten. I have been saying to people this can’t be ...delivering drafts... and pilots for 3 years straight when the course longevity is 5 years. Because after 5 years you are supposed to revise the material - but you haven’t gotten it to the standard, after 3 years- something is wrong with that - I have a problem with that- that is one of my biggest challenges. (QP Interview, June 11, 2009)

Course feedback was another issue. One of UWIOC’s aims is to “create a support and feedback system that allows students, academic staff and staff to observe and provide feedback about how we are succeeding in exercising our responsibilities” (UWIOC, 2009). There is a course evaluation at the end of every course:

The tutors submit a report that says this is how I feel about the course. The students evaluate the course... I’m not sure how much if any of that is actual tutor evaluation. And
I am assuming that the person who is hiding in the background monitoring us does some kind of evaluation...the supervisors. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

Student opinions on the course development process were limited (there were no specific questions asking them about this) but their comments centred on the issues of late delivery of print materials and the organization of course content:

I have a serious problem with a course starting and the resource material is not available and then having to journey to campus every week to collect the material as it becomes available one week at a time. That is so frustrating. (Student Survey Data)

Another problem is that sometimes the course material is delivered late, and you have assignments to do based on that same material that you have not received as yet, and it sets you back a bit with your reading and getting the assignments done well. (Student Survey Data)

I find that it is the organization of the course units and content that is one of the biggest flaws. It seems my tutors/course coordinators do not fully understand how to use the environment. This annoys me as Moodle is an application that I use in teaching. Another big problem is that the courses are too reading centred. A recorded lecture or podcast may make the content delivery less monotonous and would also meet more diverse learning style/needs of the students (Student Survey Data)

Although these issues were mentioned there were no explicit solutions proposed by interview participants. However, one tutor commented, “I have been in the Open Campus environment for about four years now and each semester the team has tried to improve the learning environment both for students and tutors” (Tutor Survey Data). The overall course design process in the Open Campus is depicted in Figure 14, although this is not strictly a linear process.

**Figure 14.** An overview of the Course Design Process
6.3.2 Curriculum: Course Delivery and Staff Training

Once the course has been completed and uploaded to the CMS, two of the important positions in the delivery of blended and online courses are the course coordinators and the e-tutors. The Director of APAD is responsible for filling these contractual positions. Course coordinators and e-tutors are responsible for providing support to learners and working with assigned staff in one of the academic divisions.

Immediately prior to course delivery, the course coordinator makes “sure that the relevant documents are in place so that once the students come online everything that they need is already set up” (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010). As one course coordinator explains:

I’m responsible for the course material- the organization of the course units, the delivery of content, coordinating student participation, coordinating the efforts of the e-tutor and working as a part of the team with the curriculum development specialist and other administrators in the OC. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

The course coordinator is also “responsible for doing up the solutions to the homework, the mid semester exams and the final exams and marking those” (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010) as well as supervising the e-tutors. “If there are any difficulties that he cannot handle he refers it to me and I just try to follow up to ensure that he is marking papers, providing feedback you know and that sort of thing” (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010).

The e-Tutor facilitates the course and manages student discussion within his/her assigned group. Each group has approximately 25 students and a course may have several groups. The e-Tutor responds to all student queries and grades all student work under the supervision of the Course Coordinator, who does “the final tally and sign off, check over and submit the marks” (EO Interview, June 11, 2009).

The e-tutor is responsible for encouraging the students who have signed up for a particular course, also answering any questions they might have for the whole module or for the particular topic that’s being discussed at the time. Facilitating their discussion, monitoring their discussions on the particular topic.... remind them of various teleconferences or any projects that they have to do with deadlines. There is a particular timeline that we are supposed to answer any queries that students may have. (DH Interview, April 23, 2010)

These roles were relatively new to OC and thus there was need for staff training to prepare course coordinators and tutors to adequately carry out their duties. When the concept of blended and online learning was first introduced, there were few standards in place:

When they just started off there was quite a lot of disparity, especially in the marks given ...maybe one tutor might give a certain mark when for a similar answer ... whereas for another tutor…. there was quite a lot of confusion. There were some tutors who were not
taking on the kind of responsibility that they needed to take up. (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

In the early days of the UWIOC, it was noted that course “delivery was now very uneven” (UWIOC Council, 2008, p. 3). One person attributed this to the lack of experience of the initial set of online instructors and a lack of adequate training:

Simply because you don’t just pick up anybody off the street and tell them go teach online. You don’t just pick up somebody off the street and expect them to know how to facilitate an online course. And that is what happened with the first batch. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

Since then, the OC has learned “that you do have to prepare people to really participate in the online environment” (BH Interview, March 16, 2010) and that “training is important” (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010).

As a result, one of the policies of the OC was that “every new appointee will undergo orientation/training provided by UWIDE and/or Centre/Site management, before s/he starts working with the learners” (UWIDE, 2003, p. 5). Both e-Tutors and Course Coordinators are required to participate in a “managing and facilitating online learning course- which is itself online, in which they are the students. So they get to experience what it’s like to be a student and they have to do that and they have to pass it (TN Interview, 2009). The following comments were made about the training course:

This course transitions a face-to-face lecturer/tutor to the online environment. It goes through the tools of Moodle as well as the communication skills that they need to develop. It’s online. It’s a 5 week course and they have to do it within those 5 weeks. It’s a very intense course. (LS Interview, January 14, 2010)

And that is why that course that they made us do was very good in that you recognise that you have to really try different ways to motivate the students to get them online, to get them to participate because that is key. That course was very instructive in really assisting you in terms of the delivery mechanism and how to motivate the students and how to have your interaction, your discussion forum and those types of things. (BH Interview, March 16, 2010)

The attendance requirements for this training course were strict:

As soon as somebody’s not logged in for a week they get told about it. You’re on this course- and if they are not in for 2 weeks that’s it-they’re out- we kick them out- that’s it. And so they failed. And so they can’t teach for us. They have to take it again. If they are allowed to take it again. If they’ve done it two times already… or we think they are so bad, or their attitudes all wrong or something –so we don’t stand any nonsense. (TN Interview, 2009)

The reason for this attitude was that the OC was determined to provide the highest level of support to its students.
6.4 Student Support

During the strategic planning process, it was recognized that the OC “must ensure that students are adequately prepared to manage on-line education and the blended learning methods it will be using. Student support must be very strong and, if nowhere else in the university, our student-centred policy must be a reality” (BNCCDE, 2006, p. 10). The UWIOC has taken this stance in order to significantly “improve service to its students” and remedy “the many deficiencies in what was currently being done by the units that were being transformed into the Open Campus” (UWIOC Council, 2008, p. 3).

One of the reasons that student support is so critical to the OC is because:

We still face... the apprehension to the online learning and ... we started off with the face-to-face so there are still some persons who still believe in wanting to do the face-to-face instruction. In as much quite a number of people are doing the online environment, not many people are very proficient with the computer... and there are still some people who are very afraid of using the computer. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

One individual reinforced this point by explaining that it was important to provide new and apprehensive learners with additional support:

I keep telling them you need to do a lot with the student so that he or she feels comfortable in this new medium. You don’t just chuck them out there or give them a little bit of help- you need to give them a lot of help. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

At the OC, student support is provided through several mechanisms, both within class and outside of class, all of which are illustrated in Figure 15. The aspects of learner support examined in this research are orientation courses, the Student Charter, the helpdesk and e-tutors.
6.4.1 Student Support: Orientation Courses

The first level of support that is offered to students is an orientation:

There is an orientation to the whole online learning system that is done for all new students coming into the programme. It’s an online programme- it’s supposed to be a 2 week course. It just basically tells you how to enter into the courses, what you should do, how you can upload an assignment how you can view your profile and thing. And also we give them the hands on where we ask them to come in and our technician will walk them through (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

The orientation is intended to demystify online learning:

To let them see that it is not that it is not a formidable thing to work the computer and so on. So that they can feel comfortable doing that. We are building on that even now- continuing to build on that kind of support. But we do already have in existence at least 2 introductory courses that they can use. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)

“Within that orientation package there is introduction to online learning, there is also resource study skills, there is improving your reading skills- all of those (courses) are done upfront” (XS Interview, June 21, 2010) before the student actually starts their course. Some of the courses are online and independent study, while others are tutored:

The reading skills is tutored... the math skills is tutored- when I say tutored there are online components but there will also have a face-to-face tutor periodically- at various intervals during the course. And then there is a face-to-face orientation at the site so...there would be an orientation period where you go to the site in Montserrat and your head of site will take you through the ropes show you how things give you a package and all of this. So you’re being... oriented both ways- both face-to-face as well as online. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)
In addition, “we have a student support services assistant registrar and she is supposed to provide the support that they need” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010).

6.4.2 Student Support: The Helpdesk

A Helpdesk was established as part of the strategic planning for the OC:

The new campus must ensure that students are prepared for the use of the technologies it will be employing. Further, it must monitor the state of ICT in all client countries to ensure that its technology is manageable in the least favoured environments. This must include connectivity, cost and user support systems. (BNCCDE, 2006, p. 10)

Technical support was also identified as critical to the success of the OC:

You have to be open to the possibility, to the fact that the system will crash- you’ll send your assignment and it doesn’t show up and you know there will be glitches so you have to be psychologically prepared for that and that’s why you have the support, the technological support on the site when you are doing that kind of thing. (KC Interview, February 26, 2010)

Student comments suggest that technical issues often arise:

Technical difficulty with computers does creep up from time to time. I have experienced it first hand with an assignment I gave up before the due date and when I thought I was going to receive my grade I got a message, "did not submit". (Student Survey Data)

“There are times when the tutor does not receive your assignment. This is very frustrating. Also, there are times when the Internet is not working because the service provider is experiencing technical difficulty and the tutors are not always understanding” (Student Survey Data).

We should be given the option to upload out files in pdf format. Can we trust the system with the upload? Are we sure that our papers and assignments are safe when they are uploaded? Anyone could make changes and we will never know. The system doesn't merit trust and this is scary. (Student Survey Data)

Technical support was also needed because:

The new platform that is online learning, can at times, especially initially, be overwhelming. Information is disseminated 'en masse' and meaningful navigation can be tedious at times. The platform is very effective, however at times it poses a considerable challenge until total familiarity is obtained. (Student Survey Data)

Another student commented that “if we are expected to use specific on-line resources and sites - it should be easier to access instead of us having to navigate so extensively to find information we HAVE to use” (Student Survey Data). The importance of software usability was echoed by an interview participant:

And it has to be easy- you understand? Not complicated for them… I know that you can have a good online lecture, but you have to be prepared- when you set up your system- it should be set in such a way that a student does not need to go anywhere else. And that they are comfortable with interfacing with the computer in terms of an educative sense.
Now I don’t think that we were prepared for that...or that we have set up our system that it works that way. There is too much difficulty when students try to access the system.

(XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

However, there were varying opinions on the user friendliness of the system. Some thought the system was easy to use:

The system is quite user friendly actually… But as I tell you need to make the time to be able to use it. Even though orientation, the pre-orientation course that you do- it’s quite simple and it gives you the general steps as to how to use the system.

(FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

The site itself, it’s user friendly, you can navigate it easily, and find things easily basically and there are ways and means that you can get help if you don’t understand it. So I think a lot of thought has gone into really ensuring that the learning environment is one that is conducive to the students actually learning.

(BH Interview, March 16, 2010)

These differences of opinion may reflect other differences beyond the actual course management system, such as familiarity of the speaker with the Internet or the acceptance of online technologies.

In order to alleviate some of those challenges, the OC helpdesk began as part of UWIDEIC in September 2005. It was envisioned that it would provide:

Web-based self-help in the form of ‘frequently asked questions’ (FAQ) responses, intelligent question and answer systems that can look up answers for students, bulletin boards, and conference and chat areas; and would be staffed by senior students to provide responses to email and telephone queries, or refer such queries to appropriate authorities, utilizing appropriate software to ensure tracking of queries and adequacy (in time and content) of responses.

(UWIDEIC Academic Programme Committee, 2005, p. 5)

The existing student helpdesk provides email based support and is staffed by four members of the Learning Support Team. Students “would get a response within 24 hours… but we don’t have a person online 24/7- it’s an email response because it costs more money to respond in that way” (LS Interview, January 14, 2010). Typical questions that students would ask include:

The time has passed how do I upload my assignment? I’m doing the quiz my electrical power went- so you get a lot of those, or I opened the quiz- I didn’t know I opened the quiz I need to get a retake of the quiz. Right these things we don’t facilitate... we just facilitate the medium in which they learner works but all these things have to go back to the course coordinator. The course coordinator is the central person to manage the course- the person has to give the OK... to have any of those things reset. So all these things we interact with that person to ensure that they are fully aware of what is going on.

(LS Interview, January 14, 2010)

The helpdesk uses:

Google for our email and we use Google docs- so it is a Google form- that we have the students link to the form and fill out the form and all the information on a spreadsheet-
our team accesses the spreadsheet and ensures that we respond to it... And like capturing the data now we can do reports at the end of the semester. (LS Interview, January 14, 2010)

However most of the students surveyed had never used the helpdesk (Figure 16). The survey data is supported by the comment that “last semester we had 544 queries actually coming out of the Learning Exchange ...we had close to 6000 registered in the environment. So that’s not a lot of queries for that many students” (LS Interview, January 14, 2010).

![The Open Campus Helpdesk staff provided support in a timely manner.](image)

**Figure 16.** Student comments on the timely response of the helpdesk service

### 6.4.3 Student Support: Increased use of face-to-face tutorials

In some subjects, face-to-face tutorials are offered to students.

In (location withheld) a lot of our people have a weakness with math. Math and accounts—some people seem to have a fear with those two courses. So they, quite a number of them feel that they need to have the face-to-face support also. Somebody to be able to be there to direct them and to take them from point A to point B. (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

In response to those concerns, the UWIOC decided to provide blended courses in quantitative courses:

We’ve conceded with math and statistics courses there is some backup because they can’t do that on their own or we haven’t got such beautifully self instruction materials that anyone can learn. So we are conceding a little in those things. (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)

Several student comments supported this need for extra face-to-face tutorials in quantitative subjects:

There are some courses that definitely should not be online - maths, stats, accounting. These are not reading courses. These are courses that need to be taught face-to-face. To be successful in these courses although the university is being paid, students have to seek additional help in a face-to-face environment where they can be walked through these
courses. Having assignments in the book and e-tutors posting solutions is of no help. (Student Survey Data)

“Also especially in the mathematical subjects it is very difficult to read through a text book and the examples are different from that of the topic discussion and what is being taught has errors” (Student Survey Data).

Take for example Accounts, how can we really get to understand Accounts online? It is crazy, face-to-face we would get step by step teaching which would help us to understand better especially for people like myself who had no previous knowledge of accounts. Online students are treated as if we know it all and just need a bit of guideline. More reading courses, such as marketing, human resource management etc should be online. Imagine Statistics online? (Student Survey Data)

Instructional staff also agreed with students regarding the difficulties with quantitative subjects, both in teaching and learning. One of the teaching issues was the difficulty writing mathematical symbols in the CMS.

But when you are coordinating quantitative courses now, it’s far more difficult because you are talking the whole range of mathematical symbols that mediate the relationship. And so now you have- writing up the symbols, typing all these things together, its far more intense and far more time consuming and the face-to-face interchange is productive at one level but insufficient. What I’ve done this semester is that I have Skype conferences. So ...on a weekend we would have discussions about the unit. It is helpful in going through and hearing the concerns of the students, right. But you do need a facility where you can physically exposit the material. It might be an e-chalk board or something like that. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Some suggested that there was a good reason why students often had difficulty with quantitative courses. They felt it was not because of the medium used, but because the students lacked background domain knowledge.

There was a good reason why...because they didn’t have a good grounding coming in- the students didn’t have sufficient maths when they entered. But now, when we tried to make it a prerequisite that they do a maths course – oh the squeals you could hear them from here to ...Belize you know- because they feel they shouldn’t do it but then when they failed the fault is because they hadn’t had the face-to-face tutorials, but really it was because they hadn’t been properly prepared for that particular course. So we have to get over that by appropriate programming - we have to build in to the courses beforehand, some maths and not make it appear like it’s some kind of additional thing they have to do for the whole programme, it’s just part of the programme and then they won’t scream about it. How do they say...- I don’t need to take maths because I’ve already done O level maths- 20 years ago. (TN Interview, 2009)

6.4.4 Student Support: Prior Learning Assessment and Scaffolding

The Open Campus seeks to have a prior learning assessment program in place to support students who may not have full matriculation requirements but may have work/life experience.

At the moment the programme is in the planning stages:
It is not really operational as such but there is a proposal to actually launch a prior learning assessment (PLA) program. We are looking forward to starting something officially in September. The University has always had what it calls a mature student clause which allows students over 21 to enter regardless of their qualifications. You know allowing the faculty to make a judgement on whether they have the necessary qualifications to succeed but we were hoping that not we were, we are hoping that the PLA will go a bit further in that it wouldn’t just allow the mature student to enter but it would provide an opportunity for the mature student to demonstrate what skills and knowledge they have acquired over the years and be able to get credit for it. And we would also like to use it as a way of also helping students identify gaps that they may need to fill through courses. The PLA would not necessarily rely on you sitting an exam... what it could do, would be to give you the opportunity to prove that you had learned something even before meeting the university. So I am saying for the challenge you would have to interface with the university first- get some course or whatever and then do the exam. The PLA can do that but it can also but if for example you were doing a course in journalism and there are people who have been working as a journalist for many years it would provide an opportunity for the person- or an artist- to prepare a portfolio and demonstrate that quite before any interaction with you they met you they have been doing stuff that would count for- they could show that as an equivalent of a course and ask for advanced placement or something. (XS Interview, June 21, 2010)

UWIOC also seeks to provide scaffolding to students through the services of the “student support services assistant registrar” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010) so that they choose courses appropriate to their academic level. As a result “of how we’ve tried to set up OC by having a pre university department in the APAD we will provide what’s needed” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010) to support students. The OC’s goal is to provide “a whole slate of courses if there are people applying who haven’t done one thing” (IN Interview, January 7, 2010):

If they are applying to do a level 3 course in real arcane economics and you can tell that they are wasting money they are just going to flunk it, so we are trying to provide a serious counselling component that will say this particular course usually requires of normal students a prerequisite and you don’t have that and we think that if you want to take that it would be better to prepare yourself. How about taking these courses that will really give you the scaffolding you need to go there? And once you do that you can go there, there, there- laddered program all the way up. So we try to get people to see that and it’s in their interests because they are developing themselves. Not be frustrated by going here wasting your money and doing it. So I think it is a service we need to offer, to help people to access what it is that they need to get successively higher levels. But they don’t have to go immediately- they get certification for what they’ve got. And that certification can help them later on to come in at a different level if they wish to do other things. So they are leaving with something- they have been successful. I did this basic set of foundation courses. And look! I can do it I can go for a job and I can do these things. (IN Interview, January 7, 2010)
6.4.5 Student Support: The UWIOC Student Charter

A significant piece of the student support architecture is the Open Campus Student Charter (Appendix 5), which is a document that outlines the “promises that the OC is making and the expectations that we have of the students- for example, we expect them to be responsible for their learning and mature people and so forth and so on” (XS Interview, June 21, 2010).

Some of the promises in the charter are as follows:

If a student posts a comment you are required to respond within 48 hours. Assignments are to be back on time - if you don’t get assignments back on time you need to explain to the students. If one assignment is dependent on another then the students need to be granted an extension and so on. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

However, one tutor made this comment regarding the charter:

If there’s an agreement, it’s within the hidden curriculum or it’s an unwritten contract. If there is a student charter it hasn’t been promulgated. The reality is that my job function is independent of any charter. Basically I discharge the course as best- to my ability as possible and that’s it. I check at the end of the course and that’s the end of that. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Although this comment was only made by one tutor it does raise doubts that the charter is well publicized and adhered to. This may provide some insight into student responses to survey questions on student support.

OC leadership has a strong commitment to the Charter and its adherence:

We have to keep that. In order for us to keep that we have to have a contract with the staff saying you will be online every 24 hours and that’s it. We say that- you will be online every 24 hours- what about weekends? There are no weekends. You will be online every 24 hours. If you don’t like it don’t sign up for it. End of story. There are no weekends for our students, that’s the time when our students work- and if the student submits a query online on Friday evening at 9 o’clock and they have to wait until Monday morning at 9 o’clock that’s no good to them. They want the whole weekend to work. Yeah so we have contracts and we enforce them. (TN Interview, 2009)

This idea of enforcing the terms of the contract is supported by one instructor’s comment that, “I remember one case where somebody’s pay was cut by 50% because they had failed to make enough appearances online and so on- that sort of administrative issue. It is something which requires people to be monitoring quite closely” (BX Interview, April 6, 2010 2009).

In the UWIOC Student Charter, two of the promises that the OC makes to students are that tutors will respond within 48 hours and that grades will be returned within 14 days after the submission deadline. Tutors are critical to meeting these commitments because the fulfilment of the promises hinges directly on the effective performance of their duties:

In terms of the calibre of tutors- we need to have tutors that are able to impart knowledge to their students as much as possible because as I told you our students are depending
heavily on those persons and they need to have the type of tutor who actually shows that they care and that they know what the students are going through. (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

Students had a plethora of comments to make on the learning support that they received from e-tutors in the course, including comments on the ease of discussion, the timeliness of the response and on assessment.

One of the critical components of student support is online communication between students and e-tutors. This aspect of support is influenced by student and tutor beliefs on online communication, which will be examined in detail in Chapter 7. Only the beliefs, which are central to student support, will be addressed here, which are their beliefs about communication with their tutors and the timeliness of the response to their queries.

One of the survey questions asked about how it easy it was to have discussions with the e-tutor. Students were almost evenly split when it came to agreeing that it was difficult to have discussions with their tutors; 46.6% agreed that it was difficult, but some 41.5% disagreed (Figure 17) which would suggest that there are some tutors who communicate regularly with their students and others who do not. The open-ended survey comments suggest that there are a significant number of students who are not happy with the level of communication with tutors. In contrast the majority of tutors (82.1%) felt that it was easy to communicate with the students (Figure 18) although some 14.1% disagreed with this statement.

![It is difficult to have discussions with the tutor in my online course.](image)

*Figure 17. Student opinions on the ease of discussions with tutors*
The most significant problem students had with student support was the timeliness of tutor responses. Students were accustomed to immediate feedback to their questions in a face-to-face educational context, but asynchronous communication is “not a thing where I pose the question now and I get an immediate answer. So there is a time lag between the question and the answer. So you have to be able to deal with that” (BH Interview, March 16, 2010). While email is commonly used in the Caribbean, asynchronous communication in education was new and the intrinsic time delay was a problem for many students. The largest number of student comments (72) was made about tutors needing to be more responsive in terms of answering student queries in a timely and effective manner. The effect of the embedded delay in asynchronous communication can be compounded if e-tutors do not login to the course every 24 hours regularly and respond to students according to the terms of the UWIOC Student Charter. Many students compared the responses they received from tutors in the online forum to face-to-face classes. These students suggest that in a face-to-face class, responses would have been much more immediate.

“With online courses when you ask a question you have to post it and wait maybe a day or two or even longer to receive a response. With face-to-face classes responses are immediate most of the times” (Student Survey Data).

Online students have to wait, sometimes long periods, to get a response from the tutor. The on campus students can see their tutor in the classroom and have their questions or concerns met almost immediately. Sometimes we are in the middle of an assignment and want to have a point cleared up but we have to wait for over a week for a reply. Not fair! This puts us off badly and we sometimes have to do what we think is right and hope for
the best. We need quick responses to our concerns as if we were right there with the tutors. (Student Survey Data)

There are times when one needs a particular topic to be explained and this is best done right at the moment of misconception. Also often times there are queries about an assignment and feedback from tutors are not done in real time. (Student Survey Data)

Online courses are very difficult for me, because some e-tutors just do not answer your question, sometimes you have to ask them if they are ignoring you then they will answer in a very hostile manner. Sometimes because you are not familiar with the subject area, when you are having problems with the subject, you sometimes cannot even ask the right question, so most times the e-tutor will say he or she did not understand the question so ask it in a different way or they might give an answer and say hope it worked, sometimes these answers come days after the question you asked and then you do not feel like asking again. We all know when you are face-to-face you get the problems solve there and then, than to be waiting for answers. (Student Survey Data)

With the blended option you are able to clarify any problems you may have at that particular moment, as opposed to having to wait 2/3 days for a reply from your e-tutor, where you still may not grasp what he or she is trying to say. (Student Survey Data)

“I find some e-tutors very unresponsive. When I ask questions and don't get a prompt answer, I feel as if I am somehow being ignored” (Student Survey Data).

These comments contradict the survey data (Figure 19), which indicates that most students (54.5%) felt that tutors responded within 48 hours, in accordance with the terms of the Student Charter and returned grades in a timely fashion, even though some 43.8% disagreed.

![My course tutor responded to my questions within 48 hours.](image)

Figure 19. Student opinions on the responsiveness of e-tutors

There were some positive comments on the behaviour of e-tutors however:

Not all e-tutors are bad, since the past semester I have seen great improvement as both e-tutors and coordinators are now interacting with us online. Answers and assistance are forthcoming. I have seen where one e-tutor took forever to respond and was replaced and another was reprimanded online by the coordinator and (an) apology extended to us as
students. This showed concern and loyalty. If each e-tutor and coordinator took this approach then I believe online learning will be worth its while. (Student Survey Data)

“It is truly a wonderful experience. There is great support from the E-Tutors and I really appreciate the efficiency and response to assignments and also discussions” (Student Survey Data).

“Some tutors are excellent in steering forum discussions and in responding to students' questions and they make the learning experience something to look forward to” (Student Survey Data).

By contrast, my other course is so interactive that it is evident that the tutor and coordinator genuinely want to help as best they can. Notwithstanding different personality types, ALL tutors and Coordinators should be open to address each and every concern of the students, and maybe some training can help with this. (Student Survey Data)

With respect to assessment and evaluation, just over half of the most students (52.8%) felt that their grades were returned to them within a reasonable time (see Figure 20). However, 41.1% of the students disagreed with this statement, which again points to uneven delivery of support services.

Figure 20. Student opinions on the timely return of grades for coursework

The interview and survey data presented on student support suggest that although the OC has a strong commitment to a variety of student support mechanisms, the most important one from the student perspective is the Student Charter and this hinges on the behaviour of the tutors. However, the delivery of the services promised in the Student Charter is somewhat uneven.
Although there is some success in this area, there are still significant numbers of students who are dissatisfied with the level of service being provided.

This chapter outlined the new organizational structure for the UWIOC, which was designed to address the functions required for the centralized delivery of distance education and to emphasize the importance of efficient service to the student. Although leadership had carefully designed a financial plan for the fledgling campus, a shortfall in promised finances curtailed the full implementation of the organizational structure. Larger issues for leadership were the human resource concerns and the admitted lack of attention to the change management process. The new campus used Peters’ (2010) industrial model to train staff, design and deliver courses. This was generally successful, although there were some teething pains, in terms of slow course delivery from course writers, a lack of well defined quality assurance process and most importantly uneven e-tutor response to student queries. However, UWIOC has a variety of student support mechanisms and appears committed to student success. Overall the implementation of the new organizational structure has been reasonably successful, especially given that the leadership is attempting to meld three separate units with staff geographically distributed over sixteen islands into one new organization and establish a new culture without adequate financial provision.

In summary, Chapter 6 illuminated the challenges encountered on implementation of the new organizational structure, especially those in the areas of finances, human resources, curriculum, student support, staff training and programme quality. Chapter 7 will describe the attitudes of staff and students towards online education and show how these attitudes impacted the change.
7 Attitudes towards Online Education

The previous chapters examined the new organizational structure and issues that arose from its implementation. This chapter will answer the research question: What attitudes do stakeholders (i.e. administrators, faculty and students) exhibit towards online learning? As has been mentioned previously, in this paper, attitude is defined as positive or negative feelings towards online learning. Attitudes towards online learning were determined by the following sub-constructs:

a) Perceived ease of use: Degree of effort required from the user (Davis, 1989)
b) Perceived usefulness: Likelihood of improved performance (Davis, 1989)

In this survey the researcher hypothesised that if students could perform the same functions as they could in the face-to-face class, and perform them easily, then they would have a positive attitude towards online education and be more willing to use the system. The areas that were chosen for the survey were; communication with e-tutors and peers, finding resources, working in groups and understanding course material. The findings for these areas will be reported in this chapter.

One individual conceptualised the move to online learning in this manner:

Really you’re talking about a massive revolution in the whole learning experience, which is why I say don’t hold up face-to-face as the criterion we have to match-No! We have to do a hell of a lot better than that- goodness me- you're setting the standard very low! (TN Interview, 2009)

This paradigm shift required several changes in several areas of teaching and learning and revealed beliefs about several areas in the online context, including (a) the role of the student, (b) the role of the instructor, (c) communication, and (d) learning.

In order to explain the effect the transition to online education had on the staff and students, it is necessary to first provide a description of the student population so that the description of their beliefs is understood in context.

A significant majority of the UWI Open Campus student population are young working professionals. They range in age from 17 to 64 (over 64% are below the age of 35) who hope to enhance their employment opportunities through education and professional development. The gender breakdown of the student population is: 80% Female; 20% Male. Most learners complete an average of two courses per semester and take about six to seven years to complete an undergraduate degree. The majority of learners are either working in a public education institution, the banking and finance industry or in some management role in government or the private sector. (TN Interview, 2009)
This description of the age and gender of the students in the UWIOC was supported by the data gathered in the student survey, as shown below. Figure 21 shows a similar spread of ages, with 64.6% of the 336 students surveyed aged between 17-35. Figure 22 shows a slightly higher percentage of females at 84% and 16% males in the survey sample. This preponderance of females is not limited to the OC but is common within the entire UWI.

**Figure 21. Student Survey Data on Age**

**Figure 22. Student Survey Data on Gender**

Other demographic information collected in this study related to the use and familiarity with computers and the Internet. Most students in the study (86.4%) agreed that they enjoyed using the computer (Figure 23) and most (69.5%) have been using the Internet for a minimum of four years (Figure 24). It should be noted that Internet usage may include a variety of things, from email to Facebook and does not necessarily mean that they would be effective users of course management systems.
Figure 23. Student feelings about computer use

![Bar chart showing I enjoy using the computer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24. Length of time students have been using the Internet

![Bar chart showing How long have you been using the internet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 years</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13 years</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 years</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 25 shows that over 57% of students are frequent users of the Internet (at least 2-3 times per day) even when they are not taking online courses. However, over 1/5 of the study sample used the Internet less than once a day. Given that these students were all currently enrolled in online courses, this is a large percentage and may suggest that they are not online enough to optimise their learning. This idea is supported by the following comment:

Also, for the straight online courses you have to be disciplined enough to be constantly online to keep up. So for a person who just goes online to check emails or for research probably once or twice a day, it is really difficult to keep up with the other students and the E-tutor, especially if you have a full-time job and family. (Student Survey Data)
The data in Figures 23 to 25 have established that the students in the survey sample enjoyed using computers, have used the Internet for more than four years and use the Internet at least 2-3 times daily. All of these findings suggest that the study population was computer literate to some degree and had some degree of comfort with computers. It is within this context, therefore, that one can examine the attitudes towards online learning and how that affected the transition.

7.1 Attitudes towards Teaching Online Courses

In terms of teaching, both instructors and students believe that online teaching is different from face-to-face teaching in that it takes more time and is more difficult. They feel it requires more interaction and a different type of preparation to meet the needs of students due to the lack of non verbal communication.

“Online teaching takes up way more administrative and student contact time than the face-to-face option. While I prefer the online modality, I am unsure whether I can continue considering the time factor” (Tutor Survey Data).

I think it’s actually much more strenuous in the online in that you are on the ball as it were quite regularly. In the face-to-face, you don’t have to have a day to day interaction which you do in the online... You can interact- in other words once the programme is set, sort of weekly session- which you can’t do in the online programme you need to be on the ball at least monitoring the email every day or every other day. So it’s actually much more demanding. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)
But I find that the online courses are more demanding in the sense that to meet the requirements for... what should I say- to meet this academic standard it seems as if much more content is put into online courses than for face-to-face. I think that maybe whoever oversees these courses needs to see a lot of content to approve them or something.” (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

Online teaching is not really better but different. The tutor has to make an adjustment in teaching methods and preparation (Tutor Survey Data).

It takes you a while to get accustomed to the online environment. You sort of have to change your methodology because you need to reach out to someone to whom you don’t have a visual perspective of those persons. When you have a visual perspective of persons it’s usually easier to communicate and dialogue. Even if you know it would happen at some point in time. Now in the online environment you may never ever see these people- it is not automatic... So you have to then look at the way you deliver... the presentation, the way you deliver the information that you want the students to take onboard. And it’s the way you stimulate and have the discussion forum. It’s definitely a whole different type of setting that you have to do it. (BH Interview, March 16, 2010)

Some of the difficulties with online teaching may be associated with people’s lack of familiarity with the medium:

The lack of interaction, the lack of participation, changing your methodology of delivery, presentations etc...I found the transition difficult initially. Yes, it’s different. It takes a lot more out of you than in face-to-face. Because you are not there you can’t see their reactions, you don’t know whether they understand you or not. So you have to assume a lot of things so your presentations have to be maybe more detailed more geared towards bringing them out. So if you are in a face-to-face setting you could have your pointers and you go in a face-to-face classroom and you are delivering your lecture based on the pointers you have but in a online environment you have to write everything down and you can’t sort of then go with the flow or change direction because then you don’t know what the reaction is... Participation is key in the online environment... so you have to find a way to motivate them basically. (BH Interview, March 16, 2010)

Well in the face-to-face courses I don’t have to do so much planning in terms of preparing to meet individual student’s needs. Though it should be and I do prepare to meet individual student needs, because I can do more whole class teaching in face-to-face and deal with other things that I am sure that everybody is receiving the information at the same time, it is a little less demanding than the online environment where I am relating to students individually. I may be dealing with email, I may be dealing with their posts online, I’m dealing with their work individually in a way that because we don’t have face-to-face contact then I try to give more, greater details in my assessment so when I comment or when I give feedback they can learn from that. I think that the main difference is that your presentations have to be more detailed...you have to be proactive rather than reactive in delivery. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

Another difficulty with online teaching was the lack of non verbal cues to assist the instructor:
The teacher is accustomed to talking – you explain something and as you know even as you’re explaining something you can see from the person’s body language how it is being received and there isn’t anything like that so you tend to have to think a lot more about what you are saying and how to put it across in an acceptable way and so on. I keep going back to the point that it is not natural; it is a sacrifice at the moment. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)

There are certain things that are specific to an online modality that someone who is only used to a face-to-face modality would not appreciate immediately. So that sort of sensitivity and that sort of awareness and that sort of consciousness building- unless the person is motivated to do some research and some reading outside of the normal parameters of his job description, then you know you just going to meet the difficulties as they arise rather than anticipate them and put into place things to avoid them. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Tutor interview comments suggest that tutors generally believe that online teaching is more difficult. The data presented in the surveys supports that viewpoint. The difficulty does not seem to lie in the physical use of the course management system but in the teaching strategies and in the mode of communication that has to be used to reach students. It is no longer simply talking but writing, which necessitates increased precision and thought from the instructor.

Figure 26 suggests that most tutors (57.2%) disagree with the idea that online teaching is easier than face-to-face. A second issue of the survey asked the question in a different form (Figure 27) and indicated that 60% of the respondents thought that online teaching was more difficult than face-to-face, a result which supports the interview comments.

**Figure 26.** Tutor beliefs about the difficulty in teaching online
Although tutors rate online teaching as more difficult, they do not think that online assessment is more difficult than face-to-face, which indicates that issues could lie in the preparation or in the facilitation of the online courses (Figure 28). This may also point to the fact that a significant part of the assessment for many courses is the final exam, which is not administered online, but rather in the traditional face-to-face manner. Student comments indicated that there were issues with online assessment (as described in Chapter 6) in terms of consistency in marking. In spite of the difficulties encountered in teaching online, most participants (over 88%) enjoy teaching online (Figure 29).

*Figure 27. Tutor beliefs about the difficulty in teaching online*

![Teaching online is more difficult than teaching face to face.](image)

*Figure 28. Tutor beliefs about online assessment*
However, some feel there are enough similarities between online and face-to-face teaching that some skills are transferable:

Similar tools and transferable skills relate to both... so you’d expect to use information and communication technology in face-to-face as well. But it is just that the tools in the online environment and the channel are different. In a face-to-face you’d be speaking directly, in an online it’s mostly a writing- they will get the teaching from me, from the course reading through written form...the interaction is asynchronous not synchronous... (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

### 7.2 Becoming Independent Learners

One of the key changes that the OC introduced was the expectation that online students were to become independent learners, to “develop a capacity for independent thought and critical analysis” (XS Interview, June 21, 2010). There was some resistance against that from the students because it represented a stark difference for them from their previous experiences with learning.

But we do have to create independent learners- I think the university has a responsibility to create independent learners. But thinking of it just from the point of view of distance education- it’s essential, because you can’t survive as a distance education student unless you are an independent learner. So we have to find methodologies to encourage that within the online environment. So that’s what we do- we wean them off the idea of being dependant learners to becoming truly independent and if we can do that as a university then you’ve given them a skill for life. You’ve given them everything they need to know- the factual knowledge is really nothing because... the half life of knowledge is so short anyway. (TN Interview, 2009)
“I think that is what we are trying to do…trying to encourage people to be self directed learners…so I think we have that approach to how they should learn, not being spoon-fed.” (FC Interview, May 21, 2009).

I think that online teaching and learning provides an opportunity in that kind of environment for us to (develop) a kind of learner that would function in the wider society... recognizing that each one of us … has to bring something to the table and each one of us has to take responsibility for … learning and making use of what we have learnt for the good of the whole society. (PL Interview, June 11, 2009)

As an online learner:

you need to be a more self directed person to engage in the course material to identify your questions, post them, get feedback from the lecturer and continue the discussion, relate to your colleagues’ question and discussion and so that you learn from them. While in face-to-face all of that happens synchronously and we can be more sure that they are participating in that they are benefitting from that. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

Students agreed (94.4%) that online courses at OC required them to be more independent learners than in face-to-face classes, as can be seen from their comments and by the data in Figure 30, so this message is being promulgated successfully.

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Taking courses online requires students to be more independent learners than taking courses face to face.

Figure 30. Student beliefs about independence in online classes

Student comments also support the idea that student are required to be more independent learners in online classes:

Most teachers giving face-to-face classes more or less regurgitate information so that the class would benefit whereas with online students we have to make sure we are on top of our game in that we have to make sure we research and know what we are about. (Student Survey Data)
The online “component requires students to study independently on their own. Well it’s prone to cause failure for those who can’t or who have not yet programmed so to do well” (Student Survey Data).

“An online course requires discipline and dedication because one has to work independently. Working independently is not a challenge for me and I am grateful for the opportunity to complete my degree with UWI Open Campus” (Student Survey Data).

This shift to becoming independent learners was not easy because of the culture of schooling in the Caribbean:

We also have to realise that you have to start from the backend... our students...not a very good thing that I’m going to say but education system is too much rote learning when they are in the schools. So we have to train them from the high school to be more independent learners, not rote learners, so that the kind of partiality or preference for the teacher just standing before them and just spouting out and they are listening and they are scribbling the notes and so on. We have to change the back end...before they actually get to us as tertiary students, we have to change the way we teach them in the secondary schools so we prepare them for this kind of independent learning once you get into tertiary education. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

Past learning experiences for students include five or six years in secondary school (Wolff & Castro, 2000), and typically two sets of examinations: (a) the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), and (b) the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Certificate (CAPE). Achievement in these examinations is used to determine access to tertiary education and employment. Both CSEC and CAPE examinations are designed, administered and marked by a regional body called the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). This ensures parity across the region and allows for comparison of qualifications in thirty three subject areas (CXC, 2010). CXC is supported by nineteen countries in the Caribbean and has links to UWI and the University of Guyana. The Chancellor of the University of the West Indies is also the Chairman of the Council of CXC (CXC, 2010).

This educational structure has resulted in a culture where “in the Caribbean, there are many tests and the focus is on the test’” (DN Interview, March 18, 2010). This system has been criticised:

You do what you need to do to pass...These tests really don’t tell much, because you just focus on students’ test results that they just regurgitate material and do things to get the qualifications and the teachers who we train, teach children who they themselves also look at education from that standpoint. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

Although students agree that they need to be independent learners, their earlier learning experiences make them reluctant to take on an independent role:
Students don’t want that, they want to be spoon-fed— we used to go around talking to people on the other sites and they would all basically why don’t we have more face-to-face and why don’t we have more teleconferencing— you have to tell them you’re meant to do this on your own. (FC Interview, May 21, 2009)

The students wanted to continue in their dependant form of learning. Because they sat in these lectures and they listened to this crackly audio sound and they took their notes and in the exam reproduced their notes verbatim and crackles as well you know— so they want to stick with their dependant learning. And they still do, a lot of them. So weaning them off dependant learning still is a big problem. That is an ongoing challenge. (TN Interview, 2009)

Some of our students say they’re tired when they get home in the evenings, so to log on or to get on to the Internet in the evenings it’s very difficult for them. So they prefer to just go and sit down in front of somebody and just sop up or just write notes... like a sponge— you know— that kind of thing. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

Students justify their desire for dependent learning by saying that face-to-face students “get better opportunities to learn with an actually teacher standing in front them and teaching. Online students have to do all the work on their own” (Student Survey Data). They asked, “What are we actually paying for? Course material and the degree?” (Student Survey Data)

In reference to the transition to online, some leaders don’t think it will be an ongoing challenge with new generations as they come through:

We’re talking about I think a transition here- with the old generation still passing through but is kind of resistant to online learning- the younger generation hopefully will be more accepting of it because they are used to MySpace and all that kind of stuff- so they ought to be able to accept it better. We haven’t totally been able to test that ‘because we don’t actually have a lot of that younger generation. (TN Interview, 2009)

Only time will tell if TN will be correct. However, at least one person thought that self directed learning was required in both face-to-face and online classrooms:

If you are a student and you are not doing your part in doing your reading, in participating fully in class, it will locate itself into your experience whether it’s online or face-to-face. So there are some elements which happen, whether it’s face-to-face or online and it’s sometimes up to the student how you present yourself and how you get engaged. So whether it’s online or face-to-face makes no difference- if you don’t have the right attitude and the right study habits and so on. (KC Interview, February 26, 2010)

7.3 Beliefs about Online Courses: Communication

In order to teach and learn online, participants must be able to communicate effectively. This section examines student and tutor beliefs about communication in a number of areas including:

(a) communicating with other students,

(b) online discussion, and
the relationship between communication and learning.

The main issues that students and tutors seem to have with asynchronous communication are the time delay, the inability to communicate clearly through writing and the lack of nonverbal communication signals. The time delay has been discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.4.5) and will not be repeated in detail here.

I would think that everyone would agree that because even now the online programme is still more demanding than the face-to-face because I think it is less natural. You are dealing with a medium- you are accustomed to seeing and talking to people and here you can’t. You’re interacting remotely- it takes longer- it’s like talking to somebody on Mars- you say something and you wait for it to reach and then they reply... whereas if you are talking to someone you get an instant response which I would say is more natural for us. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)

With online courses when you ask a question you have to post it and wait maybe a day or two or even longer to receive a response. With face-to-face classes responses are immediate most of the times. There is also more opportunity for personal contact during a discussion and for sharing of varying viewpoints freely. (Student Survey Data)

While I am working person at times I am unable to read the material and get an understanding and it can be clarified within a face-to-face setting. Some things are just not able to ask or explain over an online forum. (Student Survey Data)

“Sometimes there are some things that might not be understood when trying to convey it in writing as oppose to verbal communication” (Student Survey Data).

“Added face-to-face tutors have that human touch, can observe firsthand, feel/display emotions and can provide immediate and timely feedback to contributions” (Student Survey Data).

They can be even though although I think I still believe strongly in face-to-face because there are things that will arise in a face-to-face interaction between us that may not come over the same way in a computer interaction between us. For example I sit here and I talk to you. Now you may be listening to me and you may notice an expression on a particular point that may even alert you that this is even more important than the last point I made. I’m not sure you get that through the online interaction. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

Despite the aforementioned concerns about online communication, there were some individuals who recognized the advantages. These advantages included the ability to deliberate over responses and to provide written feedback as well as increased access to instructors.

I think whereas in face-to-face you are forced to shoot back answers, in an online situation there is more room for reflective learning, ponder and then you respond. You don’t have a physical audience - all eyes on you- that intimidates you. You sit back, you respond at midnight, at 5 o’clock in the morning and you add value to that discussion rather than be reactive by having an audience in front of you. (GT Interview, March 16, 2010)
You are able to communicate immediately to students the concepts and materials of the course at anytime during the course, you don't have to wait until class time to do so. Additionally, you are able to respond to student queries much faster and in written form rather than just a verbal response which is more likely to be forgotten, a written record is more long lasting. (Tutor Survey Data)

“Students online are able to communicate better with their lecturer discussing what they do not understand and getting ideas on where to source information and some tutors motivate and encourage students to work“(Student Survey Data)

The main difference is that you are not lost in a huge lecture hall trying to listen to the lecturer. You can gain access to your resources as well as your tutors, at your convenience, and are assured of getting a response as soon as possible. (Student Survey Data)

In reference to the comparison of online verses face-to-face courses, some staff members said, “I don’t think that there is pedagogically a lot of difference because we still have the same kinds of interactions both with the students and with other tutors” (BX Interview, April 6, 2010).

### 7.3.1 Communication between students

Students were asked about group work, ease of communication between students and social interaction. The following four graphs illustrate student views on communication in the online course. Overall, just over half of the students disagreed (54%) with the statement that it was difficult to communicate with other students in the class (Figure 31) and they also disagreed (54.9%) that it was easy to do group work in the online class (Figure 32). In other words students found it easy to communicate with other students but not to do group work online.

![Graph showing student feelings on the ease of communication with other students](image)

**Figure 31.** Student feelings on the ease of communication with other students

Being able to communicate with other students easily is something that would happen normally in a face-to-face class. It could take the form of small group discussion or group work,
as is explained by this comment which compares the interaction in face-to-face to online communication:

In face-to-face you say we are a team we are together we have to work together so if you have done this thing you check your neighbour to see how your neighbour is doing. So you check your neighbour and when you have projects, you have persons either within your group or in another group you have to connect with sometimes you connect at times that are... ‘ungodly’ in an effort to get a project done. So you get this closeness and you are able to see things or realise different nuances about others and therefore you can connect with them or you can say OK this is as far as it goes I don’t want to see that person again, or you call them up on the telephone, or you go somewhere and you see the person that you are dealing with and you connect and you keep that connection. So face-to-face is different. (DH Interview, April 23, 2010)

In comparison, in an online environment “sometimes it feels as though you are in an empty room” (Tutor Survey Data) and “the online environment seems a bit impersonal as one is not able to see the persons you are interacting with and the students do not really interact with each other within the groups as one would being on campus” (Student Survey Data).

Figure 32. Student beliefs on ease of group work

The 23.5% of students (Figure 32) who answered ‘no opinion’ may have chosen that response because they had not experienced online peer to peer collaboration, as it appears that there are fewer opportunities for group work in the online classes. When one tutor was asked if there was group work in online courses, her response was, “No. Well... in some courses. Well I’ve done it in... not this one but others before” (DH Interview, April 23, 2010). When courses were visually scanned by the researcher, there was also little indication that group work was a common practice in online courses at OC.
Survey responses suggest that students felt that it was easy to communicate with each other, but not to work together in the online environment. Social interaction was conceptualised as non academic talk, although this was not explicitly stated in the survey questions. Academic talk was described as online discussion. The majority (75%) of students believed that social interaction was important in an online class (Figure 33) but the majority (77.6%) also believed that there was less social interaction in an online course versus a face-to-face course (Figure 34). Tutors (62.9%) agreed with students that there was less social interaction in an online course versus a face-to-face course (Figure 35).

**Figure 33.** Student views on the importance of social interaction in an online course

**Figure 34.** Student beliefs about social interaction
Tutor interview comments supported the survey data from the students and tutors relating to the lack of social interaction in online courses. It also offers some insights as to why social interaction is often missing:

It doesn’t happen- people don’t have time to chat. Because even though a lot of persons in the region might sign up for a course, there is no physical interaction. We ask students to put the face on the site- to put up a picture, but that’s just a picture. Well this semester a lot of them did. But that is as far as it goes. Because of the limited discussions that students participate in then there is no hi how are you – nothing like that. (DH Interview, April 23, 2010)

One of the things that OC seeks to do is to do that- in terms of having these classes where you have a Grenadian, a St Lucian, a Belizean and so on but I’m not sure that its achieving that objective because people are more concerned with getting the degree and passing than about interaction with people all over the place. I mean I’ve tried- we have this cafe- you know where you’re supposed to lime. Nobody limes in these classes- nobody has time for it. (QC Interview, October 21, 2009)

Because they are still so into themselves and into the whatever it is that they have to do and it is suggests participating in a discussion then they participate in the discussion but to go the extra mile, maybe to get to know someone else, more than just a colleague in a group I don’t think that there is much of that happening. (FQ Interview, March 3, 2010)

7.3.2 Online Discussion

Online discussion is a critical part of online courses because it is provides an opportunity for individuals to share thoughts and ideas and to participate in the community of learning. However, the data from both students and tutors suggested that students did not participate regularly in the online discussions. Although just over half (53.8%) of the students indicated that they participated regularly in discussions (Figure 36), some 35.2% disagreed that they participated regularly in discussion.
Tutors also believed (54%) that students participated more in discussions in face-to-face classes than in online classes (Figure 37) but a significant percentage (45.2%) did not agree or were unsure. This does not mean that opportunities for discussion were not provided, since each course is required to have a discussion section in each unit, but rather that not much discussion was taking place, for a variety of reasons. Participating in the discussion seems to have two meanings: (a) posting a note in the forum, and (b) responding to another student’s comments and promoting dialogue. Both seem to be lacking, but the latter was more marked. Students also believed (69%) that there was less discussion online than in face-to-face classes (Figure 38).
Students and tutors made several comments on the lack of participation in online discussions:

They don’t participate enough in the discussions. I don’t think they understand that the discussions are really meant to sort of mirror the classroom setting. And so discussions tend to be individual. So you know you have a discussion question and you have individual postings rather than someone posting and then another person commenting on that post as you do in a classroom setting. But everybody wants to put in their input but not discuss what other people put in. (BH Interview, March 16, 2010)

If you have a tutorial then some of them are online they will come on and engage in the discussion and that is good but in terms of posting their questions and responding to their classmates and so on which is a part of the learning environment that could be improved. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

I would go online and I would say well a discussion is the type where you give your opinion and then you say something about somebody else’s opinion, but I have found that a lot of the students just go and post something and they don’t respond to other students. So then I would go back and say well you need also to respond to what- or I might go into the discussion itself, say something and then at the end I would say, comment? For somebody to come and say something about what I had said or about what the student had said. But I don’t get a lot of that- well this semester I didn’t get a lot of that. (DH Interview, April 23, 2010)

In terms of online discussion:

What we don’t want is dialogues between the lecturer and the student- the student asking the lecturer questions and then getting a reply to that student and so on. A whole series of dialogues that we don’t want- that’s no good. That’s just...perpetuating the dependency of the students….We’ve got to have a course which reduces the dependant learning syndrome. (TN Interview, 2009)
Some students don't post their contribution to the online discussion until the last minute and it seems as they wait to read what everyone else has said and just make a few additional points. I think the individual posts should be hidden until all persons have made their contributions then they are made visible for persons to comment. (Student Survey Data)

One reason suggested for the low participation in online discussion was the inability of students to communicate effectively online because this mode is new and they belong to an oral culture: “Because I mean our culture is to sit down before somebody who lectures. This online thing is new” (KX Interview, October 13, 2009). The novelty of the online environment meant that students were not accustomed to this mode of communication. “It is not something that is at our fingertips in the Caribbean or in Jamaica. We are not... we are more of an oral people so a lot of people would prefer face-to-face.” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010) This last point is reinforced by another participant who commented:

I think we find it easier to communicate with each other by talking and in the online thing you write everything- it takes longer you have to be more circumspect about what you write and as I said it’s not natural. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)

You will need to know how to communicate online- and we haven’t bridged that as yet. You still have students just going in and lurking- getting the e-discussions, so they just using off other people’s post and information and we don’t see the interaction that we would like…and then again... our teachers’ course coordinators aren’t able to engage students to have them participate online. (LS Interview, January 14, 2010)

Other individuals suggested that a lack of structure to support discussion or incentives for discussion was the reasons for the low participation rates:

I think what has to happen is that you try to create an environment where participation is encouraged. So you try to put in place topics that are- you know week to week I post the topic and ask for responses. Put persons in charge and ask them to summarize at the end. And outside of structure it is foolish to expect that students will …out of the bounty of their heart and intellect they are going to write stuff. It’s not going to happen. But two things I see- are important. One, structure and two, incentives. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

So as the tutor or the facilitator of that discussion you really have a key role to play that it then sort of flows on so you have to sort of encourage them …I used to tell my students when I was an e-tutor think of it as if you were in a classroom so therefore you have a question or you have a comment and you are really sharing that with each other rather than individually so that is what I have tried to then in my new role as course coordinator I have put guidelines in place for my e-tutors to encourage the students to do that. (BH Interview, March 16, 2010)

“Most time you interact to ensure you get the marks for doing so” (Student Survey Data).

I don’t really participate in the discussion forums because I don’t really take it seriously. It’s like there is no real motivating factor to push you to (although you know it may assist in your understanding of the course). If per say there was a quiz on every chapter or two
chapters then maybe the participation level would be better because we all want to pass the quiz so we make an effort to participate and follow the reading/study schedules. (Student Survey Data)

“The participation rate of students is dependent on whether marks are awarded because if marks are awarded then students will be motivated to participate” (Tutor Survey Data).

Students participate when it benefits them, (for) example, graded discussions, assignments, quizzes - these have scores awarded. Thereafter, very and I mean very few students participate in weekly discussions or units discussions void of scores. An approach, I took, with permission, was to award a point to each unit discussion that there were replies to. The replies had to be meaningful and support shown via theorist and experience. (Tutor Survey Data)

“If there is no participation mark, students do not respond in the online classes. In the face-to-face, when there is no participation mark, once you call on a student to respond, he or she will, whether willingly or not” (Tutor Survey Data).

There was one comment that indicated that there was a course in which the students all participated readily in online discussion. However, in this particular case, all of the students were from one island - Grenada. While the tutor makes the point that it is the location that makes the difference, it is possible that these students felt more comfortable because they were all from Grenada or that they knew each other, since the population of this island is very small.

But let me not make a general condemnatory remark about that because there is one course that I e-tutor for- the students are all from Grenada- lovely students. I mean they bring joy to a tutor’s heart you know because the level of engagement and the level of participation at a high intellectual level. Deeply treating the material. And I’m saying something is happening in the Spice Island that I don’t know about. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Although there was one example of students participating fully in online discussion, in general student participation in online discussion was very low. According to study participants, this can be attributed to the inability of students to communicate effectively online and the lack of suitable structures and incentives for participation. With some exceptions, students and tutors generally find online communication to be more difficult and less effective than face-to-face communication.

7.4 Attitudes towards Learning Online

In the context of the OC, in order to learn, students must be able to interact with the content, with the instructor and with other students. Thus far, the interaction between students and between the student and the instructor has been examined. One of the survey questions
probed the accessibility of online resources. Most students (66.5%) felt that it was easy to access resources in their online course (Figure 39), but almost 27% disagreed. Just over half of the students also believed (54.2%) that online courses were less student centred than face-to-face courses (Figure 40) although over a third of the population disagreed with that comment (32%).

![Figure 39. Student beliefs on the easy accessibility of online resources](image1)

![Figure 40. Student opinions on the student centeredness of online courses](image2)

Although students thought that online courses were less student centred than face-to-face courses, one comment from a tutor suggested the reverse.

The lecturer knowing the student’s background, being able to pitch the work to give the students access to the knowledge at an appropriate level based on their background...is also there for face-to-face but it becomes more pertinent in the online environment, because you’re not there necessarily at the same time. There is a greater need for understanding individual students in the online environment although it is also pertinent for face-to-face. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)
His comments suggested that online courses are actually more student centred because in the absence of the physical presence of the student, the course writer and e-tutor must be more considerate of the student’s needs because they cannot use visual cues to direct their instruction.

While there are different types of interaction -- social and academic--in this study academic interactions were labelled online discussion and non academic interactions were labelled social interaction. This was not made explicit to the students, but there was no indication that they misunderstood. In this study, students believed that social interaction increases learning (58.6% in Figure 41) and a much larger percentage of their tutors agreed (92.9% in Figure 42).

![Social interaction in an online course helps me to learn.](Figure 41)

*Figure 41.* Student beliefs on the relationship between social interaction and learning

Most students also believed that online discussion helps them learn (59.8%) although 26.6% disagreed with this statement (Figure 43). Given the relatively strong support for this statement, it is curious that more students do not participate in online discussion as was described in Section 7.3.2. Although only a very small number of tutors responded to the statement on online discussion and student learning, 80% agreed (Figure 44).
Figure 42. Tutor Beliefs on the relationship between social interaction and learning

Figure 43. Student beliefs on the relationship between online discussion and learning

Figure 44. Tutor beliefs on the relationship between online discussion and learning
Two questions were asked about student understanding of course material online as compared to face-to-face. These questions were asked in both a positive and negative manner to see if the response would be consistent across the same application of the survey. When students were asked about how well they understood the material online, 54.9% disagreed that it was as easy to understand the online material as it would the face-to-face material, although some 41.1% believed that they understood equally well (Figure 45). In support of that finding, students also agreed that it was more difficult to understand material in the online class than face-to-face (52.7% in Figure 46). So in both the negative and positive versions of the question, students answered in similar ways. It appears that while students may find it easier to learn in a face-to-face modality, this is by no means an overwhelming majority.

**Figure 45.** Student beliefs about understanding material online

**Figure 46.** Student beliefs about understanding concepts online
Most students disagreed (63.2%) that they found it more difficult to demonstrate their understanding of material online (Figure 47). Students did not seem to have significant difficulty demonstrating their understanding through online assessment, although the open ended comments point to issues related to tutor marking practices.

**Figure 47.** Student beliefs on demonstrating understanding in online courses

Several students commented on the inequity of marking practices used by tutors: “Also, e-tutors mark differently, some mark harder than others, which results in inconsistency in marks for pupils with similar calibre of work. This needs to be addressed” (Student Survey Data).

What you also find is that even when a coordinator sets out a general scoring rubric for assignments different tutors have varied marking schemes. Think of it from experience where two students did an assignment together (bearing in mind that they may have the same points but they are put together differently and they have different tutors) you may want to think that both students would receive grades that are close in nature if the tutors use same rubric, however this is not always the case... (Student Survey Data)

There is no equity. Some e-tutors do not know what they are looking for in an assignment. One tutor would give one out of six for an assignment while another e-tutor gives five out of six for the same assignment. I think tutors should discuss what they need to see in each assignment to ensure equity. (Student Survey Data)

The next two questions asked students to compare how well they learnt in online as compared to face-to-face classes. They show some disparity in student response. The surveys were taken at different times and represent different numbers of students. One question asked if students learn less online as compared to a face-to-face class. Figure 48 shows that 53.4% of students disagree that they learn less in their online class, in comparison with 38.9 % who agree with that statement. So this group of students thinks that they do not learn less in an online environment. It may be that students do not think that they learn less *material* online than face-
to-face, rather than the question referring to how well they learnt in the online environment compared to the face-to-face delivery.

Figure 48. Student Beliefs on learning online vs. face-to-face

In the second question (Figure 49) on learning online, students were asked to state their level of agreement with the statement that they learn as well online as face-to-face. The majority of students (54.1%) disagree and 37.5% agree with the statement. It would appear that students don’t believe that they learn any less material, but rather something about the quality of that learning is diminished in the online environment. The tutors generally agree that students learn as well online (54.6% in Figure 50) but there is a significant percentage that disagree or are unsure (45.5%). This points to an uncertainty that their students can perform equally as well in the online environment.

Figure 49. Student Beliefs about learning online vs. face-to-face version2
7.4.1 Choice of Course Delivery Mode

Given student and tutor opinions on the efficacy of online courses and their preferences for face-to-face communication, it is no surprise to discover that, given the option, both students (Figure 51) and tutors (Figure 52) would overwhelmingly choose blended classes if given a choice of delivery modes.

Like the speaker in this quote, the students, “grew up in a different system (and) I think I would have found it more difficult to learn in this environment, so I can understand if some students find it more difficult than in the regular environment” (BH Interview, March 16, 2010). In addition, “most of our students come from a face-to-face background and for them that is how you learn. A lot of them would prefer a classroom and sit around a table ...with the teacher and that’s what they like” (QC Interview, October 21, 2009).
These students are used to learning in the face-to-face modality and they do not believe that they learn as well in the online modality. The reasons why students chose blended courses included (in increasing order of importance): social interaction, flexible scheduling, and most importantly, effective communication. Each of these will be discussed in turn:

(a) Social interaction

“It would be helpful to meet other people from the class and discuss. Although the strictly online course is convenient, the blended will provide actual human interaction and some form of socialization” (Student Survey Data).

“Participating in a blended course will give me the opportunity to participate physically and put a face to go with the electronic name. This way, I think that I will be better able to benefit from the course” (Student Survey Data).

(b) Flexible scheduling

Through the open ended survey responses, the majority of the students indicated that they appreciated the flexibility of the online course offerings. Most of them were part time students who were working full time and could not attend daytime classes. Many of them gave reasons such as “I can stay at home and study because I have a family and a job which take up all my time already so it would be hard to find time for school” (Student Survey Data).

“The blended option gives individuals the convenience to do work at varying times in a 24 hour span” (Student Survey Data).

I found the blended to be reasonable because with it I can be able to study in my own time as well as attend classes when the need arises, especially when you are not too clear on a certain topic or online discussion. (Student Survey Data)
“Working and doing a degree is tiring, very demanding, hectic and time consuming. Travelling or driving to class on a regular basis is too difficult for me because of traffic congestion on the nation's roads” (Student Survey Data).

(c) Desire for effective communication

The most compelling reason for the choice of blended courses was the desire for effective communication with the instructor and, to a lesser extent, with other students. Students want explanations for difficult concepts immediately and they want them delivered face-to-face. They seem to believe that some things cannot be communicated clearly online, whether it is explaining their question to the e-tutor or receiving an explanation from their e-tutor. It would appear that oral communication for them is easier and it is certainly the mode that they are used to and prefer.

This relates to the familiar nature of face-to-face instruction in the culture. “All my life I had face-to-face learning. But online goes hand in hand with my work schedule, and face-to-face enhances the learning experience, beyond being all by yourself studying, gives clarity & visual to numerical courses” (Student Survey Data).

Some things (you) are just not able to ask or explain over an online forum. The blended aspect is good for person(s) who have to work and study in that you can access your assignment online and get help on a personal basis not just when the e-tutor chooses to go online and read a bunch of email from 30 students and responded in two days time. (Student Survey Data)

I chose a blended mode because I am responsible for my own learning in one way and I love that and on the other hand I love to have face-to-face interaction so that I can voice my difficulty in speech rather than in condensed writing form where I think more time would be spent in discussion and explanation. Plus, the tutor can be more explicit in his expectation when assigning task that may be a bit difficult to understand. Where misunderstandings occur he can assist individual students after a class session, rather than having to deal with many students through an electronic mode. (Student Survey Data)

“I would prefer more face-to-face classes. Some things are better taught face-to-face because reading on your own does not clear up misunderstandings and sometimes you're not sure how to explain the misunderstanding to the tutor” (Student Survey Data).

The blended option helps us to have face-to-face discussions with a tutor, who will go more in depth than the online tutors. Sometimes they may not fully understand the question being asked on line, but in face-to-face you can explain in more detail. (Student Survey Data)

I would like to have both face-to-face and online because some courses are better learned face-to-face than online. Sometimes I am dying for feedback immediately and it can get
discouraging when there is no feedback but at the same time online is really convenient and you have the reading material at your finger tips. (Student Survey Data)

“Because at times you may not understand when information is given to you online but, by having a face-to-face interaction with your classmates and tutors can be very helpful” (Student Survey Data).

“I prefer blended mode because there are some explanations to the courses that are difficult to understand on your own. It is best discussed face-to-face” (Student Survey Data).

However because some concepts are better understand, explained or grasped face-to-face, blended would be the obvious choice to me... and being able to participate in the discussions, getting some things explain or clarify and also the direct feedback to pertinent questions or issues is refreshing and rewarding. (Student Survey Data)

Some online students expressed the interesting viewpoint that face-to-face students received more attention than online students and were therefore at an advantage. One student said they always “prefer a class setting where there's undivided attention” (Student Survey Data)

Some students seem to believe that the “face-to-face student is seen and as a result is given better attention” and therefore, “they are at an advantage” (Student Survey Data). Other students made similar comments, saying that:

Face-to-face students get more attention from tutors and administration... whereas Open Campus students have to struggle on their own to get work done and I think that Open Campus students should treated fairly as full time/on campus students because we’re paying the same for courses. (Student Survey Data)

Students felt that their needs were “disregarded and there is no assistance given from the site coordinators” (Student Survey Data). In contrast, one tutor felt that the level of individualized instruction was greater online:

The individualised attention in online courses is much greater. For instance I may have a student concern that I dealt with and I responded in the online discussion forum- other students don’t read that, they might ask me a similar question and then I go over that again. Even if I refer the student to the chain of discussion that is already started they may not be able to fit in or they feel that they don’t read it sometimes, so they will still have the question and I just answer so we can move on. So there is a greater demand in the online environment for individual attention and work and the fact that it is harder in the online environment to ensure that all the students get the information or benefit from the assessment details in the way that it is in face-to-face. Because as I said, the online classes would facilitate what I believe is a better form of learning which is individual. (DN Interview, March 18, 2010)

So although students believed that online courses are less student centred, at least one tutor believed that online courses provide more individual attention.
In spite of the large number of students who preferred blended courses, there were many positive comments about completely online courses. These positive feelings about online courses were related to the following concepts (in order of increasing importance):

(a) a preference for writing rather than speaking out loud,

(b) rapid feedback,

(c) increasing access to tertiary education (discussed in Chapter 5 section 5.1.2),

(d) access to quality resources, and

(e) flexibility in scheduling.

There were two comments from students who preferred online communication by writing rather than oral communication: “I find it easier to express myself online than face-to-face” (Student Survey Data), and “the online experience is not bad as in some cases I prefer give my opinion in words instead of speaking out” (Student Survey Data).

Several students indicated that the quality and amount of feedback in the online course was the reason why they preferred that delivery mode: “Studying online provides individual attention from your tutor because he can respond to your questions and concerns individually. In a face-to-face classroom, there are several students clamouring for the tutor's attention” (Student Survey Data).

“It’s more personal, deliveries are made directly to an individual and we get quicker responses to questions asked” (Student Survey Data).

“I am extremely satisfied with the assistance rendered at the Open Campus site and its personnel. They are very professional and efficient and I get feedback quickly in person as well as e-mail as opposed to phoning in” (Student Survey Data).

A couple of students preferred online because of the ability to easily review material and the provision of high quality resources: “The course materials, info, online questions etc are good” (Student Survey Data).

“The option of online learning makes it easy for students to 'catch up' with classes and in addition all information relating to each topic is always available so that is something is forgotten or misinterpreted one can refer back” (Student Survey Data).

“In my online course work, we are given text books; reading articles, etc. The tutors would vet our graded assignments prior to final submissions. Campus students have to purchase their own texts and research their reading materials”. 
The majority of the reasons, however, centred on the flexibility of the online courses in that you can work at any time of the day or night. Students valued this aspect highly, especially since many of them were working or had family commitments.

“The online courses are a great way to complete a degree without giving up your job” (Student Survey Data).

“Travelling time is cut down. Study at my convenience. Less hassle” (Student Survey Data).

I am a “working mother of 3 children. Online is more flexible for me. I log on at any hour and put in my quota for the given subject, whereas with face-to-face I'm restricted to a particular time” (Student Survey Data).

“It has been a rewarding experience. I have benefited from the programmes offered. It has given me greater flexibility than a face-to-face class given the fact that I work long hours” (Student Survey Data).

“Open campus as just as effective as face-to-face or even better” (Student Survey Data).

“At first I thought online learning was going to be hard because of the absence of face-to-face classes, but I have realized that it is more convenient and geared toward those who are working, which is a plus” (Student Survey Data).

I am a parent who has young children and I live more than an hour drive from the Open Campus site in my country. Additionally, public transportation is a problem in the area that I live and I do not own a vehicle so an online course is the most suitable choice for me. (Student Survey Data)

“I like the fact that online courses are not timetabled as face-to-face classes are, and I can access my course anytime I want day or night, in the comfort of my home” (Student Survey Data).
Over seventy percent of the student sample agreed that they enjoyed taking online courses (Figure 53). One of the reasons why the students chose online learning was that it would support their career paths, as is shown by the level of agreement (86.4% in Figure 54). This finding was supported by this comment: “I prefer face-to-face tutoring however I can't attend class as I need to work to finance this course and in order to work I need to take distance classes to accomplish my goals” (Student Survey Data).

Figure 53. Student feelings about taking online courses

Figure 54. Student reasons for taking online courses
7.4.2 Different Treatment

As a result of some comments on an early version of the survey, students in later surveys were asked if online students were treated the same as face-to-face students. Most of the participants disagreed with this statement (54.1% in Figure 55). Their main difficulty was with access to resources (especially the library), as is evidenced by the comments below.

Figure 55. Student opinions on the treatment of online versus on campus students

“Online students have less access to campus facilities than on campus students, e.g. campus library” (Student Survey Data).

They are not afforded the same benefits as on campus students. They are treated as outcast or not having any right to be there. Even having access to such things as wireless Internet on campus and the main library are not given. Student Survey Data)

“We are treated as outsiders or lesser beings when we have reason to be on campus or have to receive course materials. It seems as though we are thought of in a 'by-the-way' manner; an afterthought” (Student Survey Data).

“There is less access to resources, minimal guidance when seeking assistance relating to course problems including lack of understanding of certain concepts or topics, there are delays in retrieving id's and course material making library access unavailable” (Student Survey Data).

“As an online student I am yet to get access to my Local Site Library. I have not been issued with an ID card” (Student Survey Data).
7.5 Exploring the Regional Cultural Identity

One of the research questions sought to determine from interview participants whether or not online education was promoting a regional cultural identity. In response to that question, there was considerable discussion as to whether a regional cultural identity existed, the nature of that identity, and how it was developed and promoted, both in the past and at the time of the research study.

Definitions for culture abound in the literature, but this thesis will use Masumoto’s (1996) definition: “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next” (p.16). Although each of the islands has its own individual culture, there is a perception that there is also a regional cultural identity. From the perspective of the study participants, the exact nature of this regional cultural identity was elusive. No one seemed to be able to define it precisely, but it seemed to include the feeling of belonging not only to the group of people who were born in the same island, but also to the larger group which includes everyone in the Caribbean region. This identification seems to be strongest when you are outside of the region and weakest inside of the region, when the national identity asserts itself.

I think people see themselves as Bajans, as Trinidadians or whatever and they see that they come from the Caribbean- I don’t know if there is a regional cultural identity... I don’t know if there is a regional cultural identity. I mean I identify with the region but I think... let me put it this way... when you are out of the region and you are somewhere else with other people from the region there is a regional cultural identity, but when you are in the region there is an island cultural identity. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

Two other aspects of Caribbean culture that were mentioned were the idea that Caribbean people are people oriented and that Caribbean culture is an oral culture:

The Caribbean cultures, although the cultures aren’t all shared in common but they are people oriented that they are contact oriented, that they are face-to-face contact and OK, phone next maybe and although I think in Jamaica it’s phone first! (TN Interview, 2009)

The speaker illustrates this by describing that they had designed a technical support process which was based on email, and that the face-to-face culture of the Caribbean was negatively impacting on that process. Instead of logging a problem with the technology, people would complain that it was not fixed, and when queried say:

Well, I saw so and so and told him. I told our technician that this wasn’t working... but did you log it? No.... Well sorry- you didn’t log it, it doesn’t exist. So we have a quality control process, but you couldn’t have that by talking to somebody in the corridor, so again it’s that thing- personal contact. That’s not the Caribbean way to do that, but it’s the only way you can do it efficiently. (TN Interview, 2009)
Another speaker agrees. “We are more of an oral people so a lot of people would prefer face-to-face” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010). This individual explains her preference for face-to-face meetings for the dispersal of information rather than the use of documentation. “I find because we are an oral culture, if you send documents to read, we don’t have the time. We probably glance through it and so on... so it has to be more of a meet the people” (XD Interview, March 8, 2010). This preference for the receipt of information could cause significant difficulties for leadership given that administrative staff is dispersed over forty-two sites in sixteen islands.

Some participants also thought that a business service model was not part of Caribbean culture and that most institutions took clients for granted:

I think that as in any organisation of 60 years and over there is a tendency to take for granted your clientele. I don’t think that in the Caribbean either that we have that tradition….I think we have tended in the Caribbean to take people for granted. I think in Canada and these places they might not necessarily like you but they know your importance, so we’ll flatter you we’ll make you feel wanted and so on. I think we in the University of the West Indies are a microcosm of the larger society. (GT Interview, March 16, 2010)

This idea of the Caribbean not having a service model was reaffirmed by one participant who commented:

We’re not a people who can do a McDonalds efficiently…To me our thing is- we don’t have a lot of resources- we never do. We don’t have a history of service in business in the way that a McDonalds would have that kind of efficient modelled service. (EO Interview, June 11, 2009)

Part of the regional cultural identity lies in the interconnectedness between people in different islands. This is a function of their small size, shared experiences and the relationships between islands, but most importantly was fostered by UWI in its early days. “Because in all fairness to UWI when it started it was truly a regional university, where there was one campus and everybody went there. You couldn’t want it more regional than that” (XS Interview, June 21, 2010). “UWI was established- yes- as a regional entity- to create a regional culture and to start with it did” (TN Interview, 2009).

In its (UWI’s) initial stages it helped forge all those links because everybody went to the Mona campus to study and I don’t know quite how they managed it but quite large numbers used to go from all the countries. But it was just Mona - All these countries – all got funding and everybody there, so all these people mixed together and then they went off back to their countries and became prime ministers- they all became leaders. And they all knew these other people by name. And so all the Prime Ministers and all the Ministers of Education and so on all went to UWI and they all had this sense of knowing one another personally and being able to get on the phone and talk to so and so. (TN Interview, 2009)
An understanding of the regional cultural identity, as well as how it was promoted by UWI, is explained in the following excerpt:

I went to UWI 30 years ago and...I had never been abroad I had never gone anywhere outside of Jamaica, so I went to Mona campus. And in the 70s when I went Mona Campus was not such a national campus as it is now, where you have 90% of the students are Jamaican. It was a mixture. And I have made lasting friendships from that time. And the culture- I learned things about the Bahamas, I learned things about Carnival that I didn’t know before. I learned to understand the Trini accents, the Bajan accent, I learned to eat flying fish and I love flying fish- there are other things that I learned to eat. And I’m saying all of these things to show you what I learnt. Being at Mona in the 70s and the kind of culture exchange and interchange that happened there and the way I was exposed to other islands, other Caribbean people. To be able to see that there were so many things that were similar about us. And yet there were so many things that were different about us. And in that sense it made me into a Caribbean person... I was more rooted in the Caribbean than anywhere else. So much so that when I had my own child I make sure that I told him he was a Caribbean man. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

Some individuals believed that the regional cultural identity was dying:

It’s a dying thing. I think that it is an identity that is disappearing- that it is an identity that my generation, probably yours- and persons who went before me also had that very strong identity. So I think to answer your question that is Caribbean, West Indian identity is a dying identity- its dying- dying in the sense that the older ones- the older generation- they’re the ones who have promoted it and hold on to it and keep it together but the younger ones seem to have lost it. If it is lost, then why? Is it is a case that we in the UWI have not done a good enough job of building something called the Caribbean or West Indian identity? And we have failed to educate our teachers to educate our people in the identity? And I think that may be the problem right there. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

Apparently, the intermingling of students from across the Caribbean at one campus “doesn’t happen anymore because the countries can’t afford to send all these people students over, they send a few but they’re a drop in the ocean and they’re just treated often with disdain” (TN Interview, 2009).

The numbers of students who are attending campuses from those other countries hasn’t grown at all. Whereas the numbers of students on those campuses has like doubled over the period since it was Mona. More than doubled. So, the new leaders may well have gone to UWI, but they would have- Bajans would have gone to CH and so on. So there is a danger of that loss of regional identity. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

Currently, instead of fostering the regional cultural identity UWI has started to adopt the culture of its host countries:

This university called the UWI that even that now has started to take on the appearance of this country focussed, national university. That in fact is what the criticism against Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica has been. You are taking on a very country focussed operation and one can understand why. Because they are funded by the host country. So your loyalty is to your paymaster not the others. Therein goes the breakdown of
something called this West Indian identity again. It breaks down again. (JB Interview, August 12, 2009)

In conclusion there is some sense of a regional culture or identity, but it is not well defined by the participants in this study. In the participants’ view, it includes a sense of interconnectedness, a preference for face-to-face contact, oral communication and the lack of a service culture. There was a sense in which this Caribbean identity used to be heavily promoted through UWI in its role as a regional university, but that promotion has suffered because the composition of the student body at each of the campuses has increasingly become a reflection of the country where the campus is situated.

7.5.1 Online Education and the Regional Cultural Identity

Although students were not asked this question, two students recognised the possibility that online courses could help promote a regional cultural identity. One student commented that “face-to-face only deals with the students in your homeland, but online help(s) you to meet other students from different countries and you get their views also” (Student Survey Data). Another student commented that the “interaction with fellow CARICOM colleagues in the learning process also develops a cohesion that will benefit the entire Caribbean” (Student Survey Data).

Instructional staff and administrators generally believed that it was possible for the OC to promote a regional cultural identity, but were not convinced that the OC was currently achieving that goal. Some respondents felt that there would need to be more interactivity between students within the online courses (see Section 7.3.1.).

It’s certainly possible but the extent to which it is happening I honestly don’t know. I would say that while it is possible I have no evidence that it is really... I would like it to do so but ... it’s just really in the realm of a wish. We have no mechanism for gauging that. I’m not overly optimistic in an advance in regionalism arising from this course. (BX Interview, April 6, 2010)

Well, there is the sense in which CARICOM is seeking to ensure that all the citizens of the Caribbean countries have this Caribbean identity and that is probably lacking in a lot of countries or is diminished in a lot of countries except when you go out of the country and then people look back and they are Caribbean people. I would see the OC as being one of the ways in which we can maintain that regional identity. Because we do span the whole region. Our students span the whole region. So if we establish teaching methodologies which enable those students to work together in groups virtually, maybe using a computer conferencing system or...when we’ve got enough bandwidth- if we can enable that then we will be an agent for establishing the Caribbean identity. So we deliberately try and contrive it – so that it’s not about putting in a course on regional identity and saying there you are this satisfies our obligations- all do these course and everyone goes yawn- when is this course ending? Because let’s face it, when you force
it- it doesn’t usually go well, so instead you contrive the learning experience such that it happens as part of the learning experience as kind of social aside. (TN Interview, 2009)

The fact that you get all these different perspectives from around the region and from around the world depending on where your classmates are from. It can, and it should… give them opportunity for connectivity to your classmates who are from around the region and share experiences as well as culture. And so from that aspect I would say yeah- it should and I would say it probably is (KC Interview, February 26, 2010).

So in the same way then,… if you do regional programmes and online programmes where students can meet, get to know each other, because sometimes you may have groups and if you can make the groups more inter Caribbean and people can get to know each other and talk to each other, get to know each other. Even more so if you have video conferencing where you can see the person and talk to them as a part of the whole process, I think it will promote regionality. I think it can and will, if we are able to use it properly, just the same way as the UWI from its inception has promoted that kind of regional thinking. (XD Interview, March 8, 2010)

I mean think what it promotes is regional integration. Because now what you have is that individuals from one side will have more access to individuals across the region. Well the online course becomes a host to facilitate that interaction because the persons will not know each other outside of the course. So the course provides a structure within which persons can interact now across the islands. And especially if they push this Skype thing- students are getting on it and they are connecting outside of the normal Skype office hours. You know they are trying to work out papers and assignments and dialogue about projects. I mean of course initially this will be within nationalities- Bajan to Bajan, Jamaican to Jamaican and Trini to Trini. But the expectation would be naturally once people get hooked up this way the boundaries will become blurred. So it would help to foster some sort of interaction and engagement across the region, if we continue to make this sort of push. (SQ Interview, March 14, 2010)

Given these comments, there is the hope that online courses can foster a regional cultural identity or, at the very least, a regional integration which could strengthen ties across the Caribbean through the building of relationships. Obstacles to this would include the difficulties in communication online, which has been a theme of this chapter.

Student attitudes toward online communication have been demonstrated to be somewhat negative. The majority of students believed that face-to-face communication was more effective than online communication and there were low levels of participation in online discussions. One explanation for this was the delay inherent in online asynchronous communication, which students disliked. Given the option, both students and tutors preferred blended courses. In spite of that preference, students enjoyed and wanted to take online courses, primarily because it allowed them to access their courses at a convenient time and location. Although both students and tutors understood that online education required students to be more independent learners, tutors felt that students generally did not want to change their learning behaviours. Tutors also
felt that online teaching was more difficult, in part because of the mode of communication and the lack of non verbal cues – cues that they are accustomed to using in teaching. Further analysis of the attitudinal data and the data contained in Chapters 4-7 will be presented in Chapter 8.
8 Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis has examined seven of the original eight research questions and has presented data to answer questions about how the UWIOC dealt with the context, vision, leadership, organizational structure, curriculum, staff training, student support and participant attitudes in the transition to online education at UWIOC. The final research question was: What strategies can be suggested for the successful implementation of online education at other tertiary institutions serving developing countries? This final chapter will answer the last research question, and in doing so, present an overall analysis of the findings. Research literature will also be used to support or contrast with the findings presented. Finally a description of the contribution this thesis has made to the field and further possible work will be outlined. The non linear nature of the changes occurring at the UWIOC necessitates that the analysis also be done in a holistic manner. To that end, instead of examining each area separately, the research areas will be grouped together into two main themes; organizational change, and educational culture.

8.1 Organizational Change

In order to shift an institution from print based distance education to online education, change is necessary in terms of participant attitudes, organizational structure, organizational culture and pedagogy (Bates, 2007; Czerniewicz & Brown, 2008; Levy, 2003). The institutional context (including culture) strongly influences the change (Holmes, 1981; Walker, Armenakis & Bernerth, 2007; White, 2007) and this was true at the UWIOC. Rogers (1995) stated that culture has so strong an influence on the adoption of an innovation that a lack of attention to this aspect can cause the failure of an implementation.

Armenakis and Harris (2009) state that participant attitudes in any organizational change are key indicators as to the potential success or failure of the change. Armenakis and Harris (2009) described a concept called appropriateness, which refers to the belief that the change will accomplish its goals, which in this case was increased access to tertiary education. The students and instructional staff at the UWIOC who participated overwhelmingly believed that the change was appropriate and would increase access. Armenakis and Harris (2009) also researched the concept of valence, which is the participant belief that the change will have a positive impact on the life of the individual. Those students whose life situation prevented them from coming to regular face-to-face classes were convinced that OC was achieving its goal because they had
been given access to tertiary education. Thus, for them, the change was appropriate and had valence.

Institutional change will only occur if there is some expressed need for change. Keaster (2005) suggested that a positive context for change must be present before successful change can occur. Table 5 illustrates that the development of the UWIOC took place in a relatively short period of time; it was about 3 years from the first concept paper that suggested a new campus to the actual launch. This rapid development would not have been possible without the presence of antecedents such as UWIDEC and SCS that paved the way for the new campus as well as a favourable internal and external context. This positive context included the strong demand for tertiary education in the region, the availability of the technologies to support the proposed changes and the presence of leaders who were willing to drive the changes.

Armenakis and Harris (2009) believed that studying change from the participants’ perspective involved examining several beliefs, one of which was the notion of discrepancy. Discrepancy refers to the belief by participants that a change is necessary, a view supported by Fernandez and Rainey (2006) in their description of eight factors that influence change in public sector organizations. A discrepancy existed in the minds of the governments of the then non-campus countries and the leaders of the UWI because although demand was increasing, the students of the Caribbean countries without a physical campus had limited access to tertiary education. This discrepancy was made even more acute because these governments paid support to the University of the West Indies and were getting little in return. In an attempt to meet this demand for tertiary education, many of the countries created their own community colleges or universities, including Jamaica, Trinidad, St Lucia, Grenada and St. Kitts (UWI TLIU, 2007), while continuing to pressure UWI to increase access.

It was in response to this demand that the BNCCDE and later UWIDEC were created in order to harmonize DE offerings (Table 5). In 2003, the leaders of UWIDEC recognized that the system for distance education delivery at that time was expensive and could not meet the current and future demand. They therefore opted to move to an online delivery mode. One of the reasons for the shift was pedagogical, in that they could not provide sufficient access to tertiary education with the requisite level of quality. This reason fulfils the criteria for shifting to online delivery, in that it was a solution intended to improve teaching and learning needs and not solely an economic solution (Bates, 2007; Levy, 2003) although economics was part of the motivation for the shift.
### Critical Event Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970-1980</td>
<td>Continually increasing demand for tertiary education in the region</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981-1990</td>
<td>The three campuses were restructured and became more autonomous</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-2002</td>
<td>1996 Board for Non Campus Countries was created in response to demand for DE 1996 New visionary director-LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>September 2005 Vice Chancellor held meetings to discuss the concept of the Open Campus 2005-2006 UWI Country consultations for the strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>2008 UWI publishes the 2007-2012 strategic plan</td>
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#### Wider UWI Context
- 1970 Edmond Ramesar suggested a new campus for DE but the idea was rejected
- 1977 Challenge scheme began: Students wrote UWI exams given only a book list and course outline
- 1978 USAID Project Satellite began - used teleconferencing for DE delivery

#### Distance Education at UWI
- 1981 UWIDITE created from Project Satellite
- 1989 School of Continuing Studies formed from the Extra Mural Department
- 1996 UWIDECC created - this was a formal structure for DE delivery using print, F2F and teleconferencing
- 2003 UWIDECC restructured and the need for asynchronous classes identified 2003 New UWIDECC director
- 2004 UWIT director presents a paper on online learning
- 2004 Blending learning project introduced at UWIDECC which used the internet for course delivery
- March 2005 JEDICT online journal is launched
- March 2005 Proposal for a 4th campus for DE outlined
- June 2005 Moodle chosen as the CMS
- September 2005 First blended courses began at UWIDECC
- July 2007 Policy for online education at UWI published
- 2007 Visioning meetings for the OOC
- March 2008 Inaugural meeting of the Open Campus Council held
- June 2008 Launch of the Open Campus in Antigua and Barbuda
Another contextual factor that supported this shift to online education was the availability of the technologies and infrastructure used to support online delivery. Online delivery requires a certain level of national infrastructure, including a consistent supply of electricity and affordably priced Internet connectivity. While electricity would have been available long before Internet connectivity, both of these were in place across most of the region in 2005 when the first blended courses were launched. In addition, the reduction in the price of personal computers and the increased penetration of the Internet across the region made online delivery a viable choice. Although there are still inequalities in Internet penetration and cost across the Caribbean region, the change was appropriate because computers and the Internet were accessible to many people. The student population was generally computer literate and had also been using the Internet for a number of years.

The final positive contextual factor in the transition was leadership. Leaders at a variety of levels within UWI propelled the transition to online learning by creating the necessary vision (Bates, 2007; Burich, 2004; Burke, 2005). The vision at UWIOC aligned with the wider UWI vision (the empowerment of Caribbean people), as required by Levy (2003) and Wright, Dhanarajan and Reju (2009). Crafting a vision includes creating new policies and organizational redevelopment, both of which drive change (de Freitas & Oliver, 2005). The establishment of policies for online education can support its institutionalization (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2008; White, 2007). In UWIOC, it was the establishment of the policy for online learning that provided UWIOC with the political clout to enforce the idea that only the UWIOC could provide online courses to non campus students. Without this policy, the OC would not have been able to control online DE delivery and provide quality courses at a reasonable cost.

Leadership was a key factor in the transition to online learning in that it took strong leadership to create, promote and realise the vision in spite of obstacles and opposition. Strong support from leadership is required for a successful transition to online education (Abel, 2005, Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Bates, 2007; Keaster, 2005). Leadership can be “defined as a set of attitudes and behaviours that create conditions for innovative change, that enable individuals and organizations to share a vision and move in its direction, and that contribute to the management and operationalization of ideas” (Beaudoin, 2002, p. 132).

The research literature provides several models of effective leadership, including situational leadership. Hershey and Blanchard (1977) described situational leadership as an ability to understand the institution and gauge its readiness for change. In reference to the
development of the OC, some leaders in this case study exhibited situational leadership in that they recognized an opportunity and took advantage of it:

That moment in time was a serendipitous moment that had to be grasped. A good change manager is somebody who recognizes that moment and runs with it. Some people describe me as opportunistic and they mean it as an insult—I take it as a compliment because that is exactly what a good manager has to be. Opportunistic. They recognize the moment, they recognize in this person the possibility and they say go with it! And sometimes you make a mess. OK fine, but if you never try, you never know. But most times you succeed—or get away with it. Let’s put it that way. (TN Interview 2010) Sergiovanni (1998) suggested that effective educational leaders use pedagogical leadership, which focuses on creating a supportive environment for students and instructors and seeking academic excellence. Leaders at the OC originally designed the new campus on these principles, but it remains to be seen whether the OC can maintain this mandate. In terms of students, Tait (2000) suggested that there were three modes of student support:

(a) cognitive (supporting and developing learning),
(b) affective (that is related to the emotions that support learning and success), and
(c) systemic (helping students to manage rules and systems of the institution in ways that support persistence) (p. 289).

The UWIOC seemed to be providing appropriate systemic support (perhaps with the exception of the provision of library services to DE students) as was evidenced by the ability of students to find appropriate information in the website and the lack of a significant number of comments regarding issues with systemic support. It was the cognitive and affective support areas in which UWIOC needed to improve. Although those students who used the helpdesk were satisfied with the help they received, almost 50% of the students had never even used the helpdesk so it was not a major support mechanism. The main need for support seems to be through the intervention of the e-tutors, because almost all the comments regarding support referred to the e-tutors. Just over half of the student participants believed that they were receiving adequate support through receiving timely responses from the tutors and having discussions with the e-tutors. However, a significant percentage of students did not believe that the level of support they received was adequate. The OC must address those concerns in the future.

Instructor support was provided through the use of the helpdesk and through training courses that both course coordinators and e-tutors were required to complete successfully. Instructors found these courses useful and seemed satisfied with the level of support offered. Instructor support for the OC is very focussed, since the OC hires instructors on a contractual
basis. It does not need to target training at a large number of instructors who need to be persuaded to try online learning, as would be the case in an organization that was using regular faculty to deliver DE as part of their teaching duties.

The leadership also utilised the insider/outsider tension, in that someone from outside of the region and new to the organization was the key leader in initiating the changes and thus was less constrained by the relationships and political affiliations that are common to persons inside of an organization. The outsider was able to circumvent normal modes of operation and used unorthodox methods to quickly promote the concept of the OC, despite the consequences for this type of behaviour. In contrast, the individual who thereafter led the organization, and was responsible for acquiring buy in for the vision on a wider scale, was an insider both to the region and to the wider organization. This individual utilised previous relationships and political affiliations to successfully promote and gain acceptance for the vision.

The vision at UWIOC included the development of an entirely new organizational structure in order to transition to online course delivery. The new structure was based on a systemic view of DE, as touted by Moore and Kearsley (2004). A systems perspective was necessary to ensure that all aspects of DE design, delivery and management were addressed in a holistic manner, rather than having a piecemeal approach. Beaudoin (2002) suggested that leaders of DE in higher education must decide whether to use a centralized unit for the continuance of DE activities. UWIOC accomplished this by creating an organizational structure that provided for a team approach to course development and delivery. Beaudoin (2002) also suggested that this centralization approach is much more likely to result in the institutionalization of DE in a more cost effective manner than the propagation of small projects fostered by individuals or departments. This approach seems to have been successful in the UWIOC.

The implementation of the new organizational structure encountered several problems. The underlying causes of these problems seemed to be insufficient funding for the new venture, insufficient attention to change management and a lack of effective communication strategies. In order for the transition to online education to be successful, leaders must demonstrate a commitment to provide resources for the change (Abel, 2005; Bates, 2007). UWI made a financial commitment to the OC, but the downturn in the economic fortunes of the contributing countries resulted in a budgetary shortfall that severely hampered the ability of the fledgling organization to accomplish its goals. Organizations considering a transition to online learning must consider the cost of course design, faculty and student support (Bates, 2005; Folkers, 2005).
and have a comprehensive funding strategy. Too often, administrators automatically assume that a shift to online education will be cheaper for the institution, but this is not always the case. It is difficult to determine whether online education was cheaper for the institution than the previous teleconferencing option because the true costs of DE at UWI were never carefully monitored. Course development costs are higher than they were previously, but UWIOC has also gained more control over course development, delivery and quality. The cost effectiveness of online education depends on several factors, including, for example, the course population, how often the course is revised, the technologies involved, and the use of full time faculty rather than adjunct staff (Rumble, 2001). UWIOC dealt with this area by preparing a costing model which covered all aspects of course delivery and design, and so meets the systemic viewpoint criteria outlined by Rumble (2001). The model is also used to apportion fees for each service that they provide to other campuses on a per course basis.

Beaudoin (2002) suggested that “the future of distance education is ultimately not so much about enhancing technology or improving pedagogy, but rather about managing change” (p.92). The current study similarly suggests that people who lead the transition to online delivery must be able to manage people as well as the system for DE. This concept was supported by several researchers (Burich, 2004; Tipple, 2010; Williams, 2003). Leaders at the OC admitted to not having paid sufficient attention to change management and agreed that this had a negative impact on the change process.

Communication is a critical piece in any change management process and it was clear that an exhaustive communication plan was needed for all levels of the organization throughout the entire transition process in order to support the visioning and implementation processes. Critical areas for communication included:

a) Vision and organizational culture, as well as

b) New operational roles for staff (including job descriptions).

The initial vision for a new campus was stated clearly but had to be progressively elaborated to stakeholders so that the vision could be implemented quickly and so that resistance from the other campuses would be reduced. While this strategy worked initially, it also resulted in resentment from leaders outside of UWIOC who felt that they were not sufficiently consulted. In response, these leaders resisted the implementation of the vision in a number of ways. Clear communication of the vision in a transition is important in order to gain buy in and reduce resistance (Beaudoin, 2002, Levy, 2003; Strand & Thune, 2003). The communication of the
vision included the concept of a new organizational culture, one that was oriented towards the use of technology in every area of the organization (i.e. virtualization of the organization) and a service oriented business culture. Both of these ideas were very different from the organizational culture that prevailed at the time of the transition. UWIOC seems to have followed the Fordist model of change (de Freitas & Oliver, 2005) in that it was a top down, leader driven change, and therefore the leadership had to constantly communicate the vision through meetings, the website and newsletters. The difficulties in acquiring acceptance for the vision were also compounded by the preference for face-to-face communication in an institution with geographically distributed locations and a high level of autonomy enjoyed by each of these country sites.

A lack of effective communication also resulted in some difficulties with staff. This led to lowered morale in some instances and reduced job function. Browne (2005) described staff resistance to changes brought about by the introduction of information learning technology, and indicated that staff members were often confused about their roles, and about the motivation for the change in roles, both of which were seen in this research study. Staff needed to know clearly and early in the process what their new roles in the organization would be, and why these changes were important. This was necessary to forestall questions and avoid human resource issues. In the UWIOC transition, many staff members were concerned about how the change would affect them individually in terms of job security and job descriptions. Therefore, they had difficulty accepting the vision until after their needs were met. These difficulties were compounded because the precursor organizations had different human resources practices. In addition, the UWIOC had offices geographically dispersed over 16 countries, many with their own currencies, labour agreements and unions. Table 6 provides a brief snapshot of the major actions that were taken by UWIOC in terms of organizational change in order to transition the organization to online education.
Table 7 *Summary of UWIOC’s Actions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Actions of UWIOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>● UWIDEC leadership created a vision for the creation of the OC and communicated it to UWI leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Vision was then presented to leaders in the other campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Communication of vision through visioning meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Established and published a policy for online education at UWI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>● Leader driven- leaders made decisions and passed them on to staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Centralized many site functions and reduced autonomy and authority of site heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>● Created a new organizational structure which addressed all areas of DE including design, delivery, support and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>● New structure linked all outreach entities into one campus and gave it the power to deliver all online courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Attempted to instil a new organizational culture which focused on virtualization and was service oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Hired a HR manager to support new job descriptions and cope with staffing issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>● Established new processes for course design, delivery and monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Course writers and e-tutors were hired on contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>● Created a costing model to govern fees for service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Did not fill all staff positions as a result of budget shortfalls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Training</td>
<td>● Required that all e-tutors and course coordinators successfully complete an online training course prior to beginning work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Support</td>
<td>● Provided curriculum design specialists to support course creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>● Created and enforced a Student Charter to govern service to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>● Implemented several mechanisms for student support including a student registrar, orientation courses, the Student Charter and the helpdesk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Quality</td>
<td>● Used the course design process as a method for controlling course quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Monitored course delivery through course coordinators and other staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 Educational Culture

Culture has been described in this thesis as attitudes, values and beliefs shared within a group (Masumoto, 1996). The educational culture of the students has been described in Section
7.2. Uzuner (2009) stated that distance learning is sensitive to cultural differences and that “problems arise if the instructor’s pedagogical values are not compatible with students’ assumptions about how teaching should be done” (p.2). Bentley, Tinney and Chia (2005) agreed and indicated that learners define quality educational experiences as those that align with their own educational values. Their review of the research literature resulted in the statement that there were some eight value differentials in the way learner discern educational quality, including differences in language and educational culture. Educational culture encompasses learners’ educational values and the conditions under which they are comfortable learning (Bentley, Tinney & Chia, 2005). In exploring the transition to online learning at the UWIOC, it was noticed that reactions of students and tutors to the implementation of online education could be explained by comparing the educational culture promoted through the UWIOC online courses to the educational expectations of students and tutors. The differences between cultures were illustrated in the attitudes expressed by students and tutors toward online education.

This research examined student and instructor attitudes by using two constructs created by Davis (1989): perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Perceived ease of use was the degree of effort required from the user. Perceived usefulness was the likelihood of improved performance (Davis, 1989). The perceived ease of use construct was probed through several questions that asked if students could perform the same tasks online as they could in the face-to-face class. In general, students found the following tasks easy:

a) communication with other students,

b) finding resources online,

c) acquiring grades from tutors, and

d) demonstrating their understanding of a topic.

Students believed that they demonstrated their understanding equally well in online and face-to-face contexts, but that may be because the assessment methods were very similar across modes. Generally, the questions relating to ease of use were answered in a positive manner. Students found it easy to perform most tasks online, which would indicate that they did not have to expend a high degree of effort. In addition, these tasks were probably similar enough to their past experiences that they aligned with their educational culture and did not cause any dissonance.

Areas in which there was a culture clash between the educational culture created by the students’ past experiences and the new educational culture at the Open Campus, included:
a) independence in learning,
b) communication modes, and
c) social interaction and the use of discussion.

In online courses, students were required to be more independent than they were in traditional face-to-face classes. Despite the fact that students understood that requirement of the UWIOC, the views of administration and tutors indicated that students generally did not want to become more independent. Students did not value scholastic independence because it did not align with the educational culture that they had developed from past experiences. Students also believed that online courses were less student centred and that it was more difficult to understand concepts online than face-to-face. This suggested that students did not find online courses as effective for learning as face-to-face. Their comments supported this viewpoint. When asked directly how well they learned online, most students disagreed that they learned as well online as in the face-to-face mode. It is believed that this is partly a result of the disconnect between what students valued in education and what they experienced. Wolff and Castro (2000) stated that the dominant pedagogy in Caribbean secondary schools was passive learning with an emphasis on factual information and obtaining the correct answer. A study by Vaughn (2007) presented similar findings in that the majority of students appreciated the flexibility of blended classes but had difficulty with time management and the need to become more independent learners.

In contrast to the perceived ease of use contrast, the questions that probed the perceived usefulness construct generally had a negative response, indicating that students believed that their performance of these tasks was linked to improved learning, but that they did not perform those tasks well. All of these tasks involved communication in some form: online discussion, social interaction and communication with the tutor. It has been recognized in the online education research literature that culture and communication are tightly linked (Bentley, Tinney & Chia, 2005; Feenberg, 1987; Gunawardena, Wilson & Nolla, 2003; Uzuner, 2009). Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla (2003) quoted Hall (1998) who claimed that culture is communication. Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla (2003) stated that culture strongly influences communication, both in how we receive information and how that information is processed.

According to the participants in this study, Caribbean people have an oral culture, one in which face-to-face interaction is important. Traditionally, tertiary education occurs face-to-face with a tendency towards a ‘sage on the stage’ orientation and an examination focus. These
preferences for communication and teaching styles formed part of the context in which the change took place and had an impact on the change. Students were used to face-to-face classes that primarily used oral communication for interactions between instructors and students, while the online course relied heavily on written communication. There was some oral communication in the online courses through the use of Skype, but this was not institutionalized. Both students and teaching staff generally held the perception that online communication (i.e. written communication) was less effective than oral communication for teaching and learning. The main reason given by participants for the decreased effectiveness was the time delay that is inherent in online communication. Students were used to getting immediate feedback to their questions in face-to-face classes and they demanded that immediacy of response online as well. Feenberg (1987) described this feeling of concern regarding the lack of online feedback as communication anxiety and indicated that a lack of response (i.e. silence) was a sign of rejection or indifference. Hara and Kling (2001) also reported that students wanted immediate feedback to questions and indicated that this need was a source of stress to online students. So although students desired the flexibility of online learning, most of them preferred blended learning because it incorporated some face-to-face classes and therefore aligned with their beliefs about education.

Students also found it difficult to work in groups online and to interact with their tutor. Overall, students felt that there was less social interaction and discussion in online courses than in face-to-face classes, and they believed that both of these tasks were important for their learning. Tutors agreed. Vaughn (2007) suggested that instructors found that there was more interaction in blended courses and that the interactions were of higher quality. This result was supported by Rovai and Hope (2004) who indicated that blended courses offer a stronger sense of community than either face-to-face or online courses. In their exploration of communication in online courses, Stodel, Thompson and MacDonald (2006) commented that students found that online discussions were less active than face-to-face discussions, which supports the findings in this research study. Students in the study also felt the lack of nonverbal cues hampered communication. These results argue for the introduction of mechanisms by which students and tutors can have synchronous interactions online (e.g. via Skype) and for mechanisms by which social interactions between students can be improved at UWIOC.

Another reason proposed for the difficulties in learning online was that there were insufficient instructions and incentives given to encourage and support communication in the online courses, especially with regards to online discussion. Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla’s
(2003) review of the literature led them to suggest that students be provided with clear guidelines for online communication in order to maximize participation. This suggestion was also made by course tutors in this study.

In his descriptions of the advantages of online education, Bates (2005) indicated that one of the strengths was the speed of online communication and the opportunity for student-student interaction. While those possibilities existed, the students in this case study did not agree that online communication was faster, or more convenient. Similarly, although they understood that peer-to-peer interaction was available through the discussion forums, they did not use it to their advantage. This particular case study seems to have taken place in a context where students did not particularly value the ideas of other students, as Bates (2005) pointed out, but were primarily interested in the views of the instructor. The traditional model of education in the Caribbean values the teacher’s input much more highly than the student’s and discussion is not emphasized. These beliefs stand in contrast to Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla’s (2003) description of ‘Western’ courses. This illustrates another difference between the educational culture of the students and the model of online education that was being implemented. Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla (2003) suggested that prior to the launch of online courses, an assessment of the “receptivity to distance learning modes via communication” (p.763) should be executed. This would assist administrators in understanding the differences in educational culture between the traditional model and online education in a given context and this information could be used to smooth the transition.

Course writers and e-tutors believed that designing and teaching courses online were more difficult than face-to-face, and communication was also given as the primary reason for this belief. Participants suggested that the differences in communication modes, the requirement for more detailed course material and the absence of non verbal cues made the online courses more difficult to design and teach. In Stodel, Thompson and MacDonald’s (2006) study, instructors cited similar reasons for the increased time and effort required to teach online courses.

8.3 Suggested Strategies

In order for the Open Campus to become more successful in the future, it must address organizational change and educational culture. There are significant differences between the
educational culture of students and the educational culture being promoted at UWIOC, primarily in the areas of online communication and becoming independent learners. In order to be more accepting of online education, students need a deeper understanding of the differences between face-to-face and online classes before they begin online courses.

Students need to be explicitly told (and perhaps experience) the level of independence that an online course requires in this context, as well as understand how this can be beneficial to them academically and otherwise. Student orientations should also include information that specifically highlights the asynchronous nature of online communication and how to communicate effectively online. It has been repeatedly stated by participants in this study that Caribbean people share an oral culture, and it could be argued that the Open Campus should begin to seek mechanisms by which to provide synchronous online communication in classes in order for students to be more accepting of online education. However, these solutions may be costly and require a higher level of technology and bandwidth than can be easily accessed by the students across the region. In addition, one of the reasons why the Open Campus moved to online education was to free themselves from the limitations of synchronous communication. It is my view, that in the short term, it would be more effective and cheaper to help students understand and appreciate the inherent delay in online communication and train the tutors to be more timely and effective in their responses.

The Open Campus also needs to be more effective in its use of communication to spread the vision, describe the new organizational culture and define staff roles. The Open Campus has already hired a human resources director and has taken some steps towards creating job descriptions and rationalizing human resource policies and practices across the new campus. These steps need to be continued in order to solidify the new organizational structure and increase staff morale. In addition, a comprehensive plan to communicate and reinforce the new organizational culture should also be implemented, which may include orientation sessions for all new employees.

Communication is important in the transition to online education to support both organizational and pedagogical change. The following table (Table 7) lists several suggested strategies for the implementation of online education at institutions in developing countries. These strategies have been suggested by this research, and although they are not new, they are often neglected in the rush to embrace new technologies for pedagogical improvement. Use of these suggestions would significantly improve the probability of success for an institution
transitioning to online education.

Table 8: *Suggested Strategies for the Successful Implementation of Online Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Suggested Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>1. Understand the political and educational context of the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Understand how online education will fit into the institutional context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in terms of pedagogy, organizational culture and organizational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vision</strong></td>
<td>3. Identify how online education will meet stakeholder needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Ensure that the vision for online education aligns with the institutional vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Create the vision in a participatory manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>6. Leaders must actively seek buy in from all stakeholders and support the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Leaders must establish a strategic plan for the transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Leaders must establish and implement a clear communication plan during the change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Structure</strong></td>
<td>9. Use a systems model to create a feasible structure for DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Ensure that staff concerns about their role in the new structure are addressed early in the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>11. Use an appropriate model to create and deliver courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance</strong></td>
<td>12. Ensure that appropriate finances and a long term funding model are in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Support</strong></td>
<td>13. Provide appropriate training and support for staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Support</strong></td>
<td>14. Provide support to address the cognitive, affective and systemic areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Ensure that students understand the differences in communication between online and face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Provide and enforce a service level agreement for students re support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.4 Contribution to the Literature

The research literature is replete with single and multiple case studies of how institutions are moving into online education (Bates, 2007; Browne, 2005; Conole, 2010; de Frietas & Oliver, 2005; Uys, 2007). Many of these case studies were completed in North American or European contexts, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Wright, Dhanarajan & Reju, 2009). This
research study provides a different perspective because:

a) unlike most of the research studies, this transition took place within a developing region,

b) the institution is a regional one, which means that there are issues of multiple agendas for education and differences in labour relations (including compensation issues) across countries with which other institutions may not have to grapple,

c) the research addressed issues of organizational change from both an institutional perspective as well from the perspective of the students and

d) the impact of educational culture on the implementation of online education was considered.

This research contributes to the comparative, developmental and international literature in that it offers a perspective on a transition in a geographical region that is not often examined in the research literature, especially with respect to organizational change and online education. In addition, this study is one of the first studies to examine the transition to online education at the Open Campus, given that the institution is less than three years old at the time of this study. This research is also being published at a time in the Caribbean when several other institutions and governments are eagerly discussing the possibility of online education. It is hoped that this research may help contribute to those discussions.

8.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research would continue to explore the following aspects of the transition:

(a) Participant beliefs on communication in online courses

In this research study, participants held particular beliefs about communication in education. These understandings had an impact on their ability to learn effectively online. Further research would investigate these beliefs more deeply and the impact those beliefs have on learning.

(b) Role differences between online and face-to-face classes for students and instructors

There has been an ongoing discussion in the research literature on the differences in roles between teaching online and teaching face-to-face (e.g. Kuboni, 2009). It may be beneficial to undertake an investigation to explore the differences in this context.

(c) The effect of participant beliefs on the implementation of online courses
Armenakis and Harris (2009) have identified several participant beliefs that impact on the success of an organizational change: discrepancy, appropriateness, principal support and valence. While two of these were explored in this study, future research could examine the remaining factors to assess their impact on the transition.

(d) Institutionalization of online education at UWI

The transition to online learning at the UWIOC is still in its early stages. It would be interesting to continue observing its development to identify other important factors in the transition and to see if the policies that were initially implemented continue to have the desired effect. Educational culture could also be explored further to determine ways in which these cultural expectations might be changed. In addition, it would be interesting to explore and contrast the development of online education at the other campuses of the UWI to see if the factors that were important at UWIOC are also important at the other campuses.

This study could be the beginning of a series of research projects examining online education in at UWI and the entire Caribbean region, since there is growing interest in this area, but very few research studies in this context.

8.6 Conclusion

This research supported the view in the research literature that certain areas require particular consideration when transitioning to online education: context, vision, leadership, curriculum, finance, staff training, and student support. However, the research also strongly indicated that culture (especially communication) was also important in the transition to online education, in terms of organizational change and pedagogy. Utilizing an effective communication plan during a transition to online education is critical for success. Staff and students must be aware of the differences in communication that will be encountered in online courses. They must be prepared to deal with these differences for the use of online education to become successfully institutionalised.

It is the learners and the other stakeholders who are at the centre of any transition to online education, not the technology, although it too is important. Although online education has the potential to increase access to tertiary education in small island states, the shift will require significant changes in the structure and culture of an organization as well as in the methods of teaching and learning. These changes can be managed effectively if the emphasis in the change
process is on the management of people through the effective use of communication, and if a holistic view of online education is adopted. Moving to online education requires that individuals change their ways of working. Behavioural changes are often the result of attitudinal changes, which are difficult to effect. However, the effort will be worth it, if online education can deliver on the promise to increase access to tertiary education in the Caribbean and beyond.
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## Appendices

Appendix 1: Logic linking research questions and data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Types of Data to be collected and guiding questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can the context for the transition be described?</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Archival records, Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the history and political context of UWI and the Open Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is online education promoting a regional cultural identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do stakeholders describe the role of leadership in the transition?</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How do participants describe effective leadership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What role does leadership play in the implementation of the vision throughout the institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What beliefs do stakeholders hold regarding whether online education is increasing access to tertiary education?</td>
<td>Stakeholder Beliefs</td>
<td>Survey, Interviews</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• What beliefs about online education are held by faculty, students and administrators? How have their beliefs impacted their behaviour with respect to online courses?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What beliefs do stakeholders hold regarding whether online education is promoting a regional cultural identity?</td>
<td>Regional Cultural Identity</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Do you think online courses are promoting a regional cultural identity? Why or why not?</td>
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<td>Tutor and Student Surveys</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Survey Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Types of Data to be collected and guiding questions</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</table>
| How is UWIOC addressing these areas in its transition to online distance education: vision, curriculum, student support, staff training, programme quality, and organizational structure (Levy, 2003)? | **Vision**  
**Documentation, Interviews, Direct Observation**  
- How do participants describe the vision for UWIOC?  
- How was it created?  
- Is it being implemented? |
| What challenges have been encountered in the transition and how have they been addressed? | **Curriculum**  
**Archival records, Documentation, Direct observation**  
- What programs are/will be online and how is this determined?  
- How are these programs and courses designed?  
- Describe the philosophy of teaching and learning at the UWI Open Campus  
- What challenges have been faced in this area? |
|                                                                                   | **Student Support**  
**Surveys and Interviews, Archival records, Documentation, Direct observation**  
- What training on the e-learning system is provided to students?  
- Is training accessible to students from non-campus countries?  
- What information can be accessed online?  
- What challenges have been faced in this area?  
- What percentage of students drops out of online courses in comparison to face-to-face courses?  
- Is online education increasing access to tertiary education? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Type of data to be collected and guiding questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is UWIOC addressing these areas in its transition to online distance education: vision, curriculum, student support, staff training, programme quality, and organizational structure (Levy, 2003)?</td>
<td>Staff Training and Support</td>
<td>Surveys and Interviews, Archival records, Documentation, Direct observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>What challenges have been encountered in the transition and how have they been addressed?</td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ What training on the e-learning system is provided to faculty and tutors?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ How are faculty and tutors chosen for online courses?</td>
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<td>▪ How is leadership implemented in this area?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ How do faculty and tutors describe their roles in online teaching?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ What challenges have been faced in this area?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme Quality</td>
<td>Interviews, Archival records, Documentation</td>
<td>▪ What guidelines have been established for faculty and tutors?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Describe the guidelines for establishing the quality of the programme.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ What procedures are in place to establish equivalency with face-to-face courses?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>Documentation, Archival records, Interviews</td>
<td>▪ Is the development and teaching of online courses included as part of regular faculty duties?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>▪ Are online courses included in staff advancement strategies?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ How does the online programme fit into the organizational structure? What status does the Open Campus hold within UWI?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>▪ How are the online courses funded?</td>
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Appendix 2: Survey Questions and Sub-constructs

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<tr>
<th>Sub-construct</th>
<th>Possible Survey Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>1. It is easy to communicate with other students in my online course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Someone was available to help me with the e-learning system if I needed help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. It is easy to provide resources to my students in my online course.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. I enjoy using the computer.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. It is more difficult to illustrate concepts in my online course than it is in my face-to-face class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. It is more difficult to help students understand the material in my online course than it is in my face-to-face class on the same topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. I enjoy teaching courses online.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>1. It is easy to provide resources to my students in my online course.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It is easy for students to work in groups with other students in the online course.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. It was easy to teach the material in my online course.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. It is more difficult to assess students in a face-to-face class than it is in an online course.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Teaching online courses will help me to advance in my profession.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Students learn less in my online course than they would if I taught the same material in a face-to-face class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Online education technology is not useful for education.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. My students learn as well in my online course as they do in my face-to-face class.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. It is easy to communicate with students in my online course.</td>
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Appendix 3: Interview Questions

Administrator Interview Questions - Principal

1. Why did UWI decide to use online courses as a delivery mode for distance education?
2. Please describe your vision for the Open Campus.
3. What role does leadership play in the implementation of the vision?
4. What historical and political factors have had the largest impact on the development of the Open Campus?
5. What has been the most serious challenge that the Open Campus has faced thus far? How is it being addressed?
6. What are the major challenges that OC has faced in the transition to online courses?
7. How successful has the transition to online education been? (scale 1 poor-5 excellent)
8. How would you describe the relationship between the OC and the other campuses?
9. Do you think that online education at the Open Campus is promoting a regional cultural identity?
10. Do you think that online education is increasing access to tertiary education in the region?
11. Do you think that online courses are as good as face-to-face instruction? Why or why not?
12. What financial issues have you encountered?
13. What strategies for the successful implementation of online education in other developing countries would you suggest?

Administrator Interview Questions - Vice Principal

1. What guidelines have been established for faculty and tutors?
2. Describe the guidelines for establishing the quality of the programme.
3. What procedures are in place to establish equivalency with face-to-face courses?
4. Do you think that online courses are as good as face-to-face instruction? Why or why not?
5. How successful has the transition to online education been at UWI? (scale 1 poor-5 excellent)
6. How does teaching an online course contribute to your professional advancement at UWI?
7. What evaluative processes are in place to support continual improvement in the program?
8. Do you think that online courses are increasing access to tertiary education?
9. Do you think that online education is promoting a regional cultural identity?

Other Administrator Interview Questions
1. Please identify your role at UWI.
2. Why did UWI decide to use online courses as a delivery mode for distance education?
3. Please describe the vision for online education at UWI.
4. What is the greatest challenge that you face with respect to the design and implementation of online courses? How were they overcome?
5. How were faculty prepared to teach and support students in online courses?
6. How does teaching an online course contribute to professional advancement at UWI?
7. What evaluative processes are in place to support continual improvement in the program?
8. Do you think that online courses are increasing access to tertiary education?
9. Do you think that online education is promoting a regional cultural identity?
10. Please describe the student response to the online program.
11. How successful has the transition to online education been at UWI? (scale 1 poor-5 excellent)

Learning Support and Production Team Questions
1. Please identify your role at UWI.
2. Why did UWI decide to use online courses as a delivery mode for distance education?
3. What training on the e-learning system is provided to students?
4. Is training accessible to students from non-campus countries?
5. How are face-to-face courses converted to online courses?
6. What challenges were faced in the design and implementation of online courses? How were they overcome?
7. Do you feel that instructors were well prepared to teach and support students in online courses? Why or why not?
8. What has been the student response to the online program?
9. How successful has the transition to online education been at UWI? (scale 1 poor-5 excellent)

10. Is online education promoting a regional cultural identity?

Tutor Interview Questions

1. Which subject do you tutor online?

2. How many courses have you tutored? When did you first start tutoring for UWIOC?

3. Please describe the vision for online education at UWI.

4. Please describe the training for online courses that you were given.

5. Did you find the online course system easy to use?

6. Do you feel that instructors were well prepared to teach and support students in online courses? Why or why not?

7. Is your role as an instructor different in online courses than in face-to-face classes?

8. What was the biggest challenge that you faced in teaching online courses?

9. How does teaching an online course contribute to your professional advancement at UWI?

10. What evaluative processes are in place to support continual improvement in the program?

11. Do you think that online courses are increasing access to tertiary education?

12. Do you think that online education is promoting a regional cultural identity?

13. Please describe the student response to the online program.

14. How successful has the transition to online education been at UWI? (scale 1 poor-5 excellent)
Appendix 4: Survey Questions

Student Survey Questions

1. I have read the survey invitation and agree to participate in the research project by completing this survey.

Communication

2. It is difficult to have discussions with the tutor in my online course.

3. It is easy to communicate with other students in my online course.

4. It is easy for me to work in groups with other students in the online course.

5. Social interaction is important in an online course.

6. There is less social interaction in an online course than in a face-to-face course.

7. Social interaction in an online course helps me to learn.

8. I participate regularly in online discussions in my course (s).

9. Online discussion helps me to learn material in my course.

Attitudes towards Online Learning

10. It is just as easy for me to understand the material in my online course as it would be in a face-to-face class on the same topic.

11. I find it more difficult to demonstrate that I understand concepts in a face-to-face class than it is in an online course.

12. I learn less in my online course than I would if I the instructor taught the same material in a face-to-face class.

13. It is more difficult to understand concepts in my online course than it is in my face-to-face class.
14. I learn as well in my online course as I do in my face-to-face class.

Attitudes towards Online Courses

15. Taking online courses will help me to advance in my career.

16. I enjoy taking courses online.

17. If a course was being offered in all three modes, which one would you choose?

18. Please give a reason for your answer

19. Online courses are less student centred than face-to-face courses.

20. It is easy to access resources in my online course.

21. A wider variety of resources is provided to students in an online course than in a face-to-face course in the same subject.

22. Online courses do not increase access to tertiary education in the Caribbean.

Student Support

23. Tutors provide feedback to me in a timely manner.

24. My course tutor responded to my questions within 48 hours.

25. An explanation for how my course grade is calculated is provided to me.

26. How often do you use the Helpdesk in an average week?

27. The Open Campus staff provided all the support I needed to access the materials in my online course.

28. The Open Campus website provided the information that I needed.

29. Online students are treated exactly the same as on campus students

30. How are online students treated differently than on campus students? Please explain.
31. Please choose one of the words in the brackets to complete the statement: Online courses at the Open Campus are of (higher/equal/lower) quality than the face-to-face courses at the Open Campus.

32. The following paragraph is an excerpt from the Guiding Principles of the Open Campus: The Open Campus will adopt quality teaching and learning experiences, innovative pedagogic design, relevant research and community partnerships to deliver face-to-face, blended and online learning to all of its communities. Please comment on the extent to which you feel that the Open Campus is achieving these goals.

33. If you would like to add any other comments on your experience with online courses at the Open Campus UWI please add them here.

Computer use

34. I enjoy using the computer.

35. How long have you been using the internet?

36. How often do you use the internet when you are not taking an online course?

Demographics

37. Please indicate your gender:

38. Please indicate your age range:

39. Please indicate the island where you are registered as an Open Campus student:
Tutor Survey Questions

I have read the survey invitation and agree to participate in the research project by completing this survey.

Communication

1. It is difficult to have discussions with the students in my online course.
2. It is difficult for students to communicate with other students in my online course.
3. Students are required to work collaboratively in my online course.
4. Social interaction is important in an online course.
5. There is less social interaction in an online course than in a face-to-face course.
6. Social interaction in an online course helps my students to learn.
7. There is less discussion in an online course than in a face-to-face class on the same subject.
8. Online discussion helps students to learn material in my online course.

Attitudes towards Online Learning

9. Teaching online is more difficult than teaching face-to-face.
10. It is easier to teach concepts in my online course than it would be in a face-to-face class.
11. It is more difficult to assess students in my online course than it is in a face-to-face class.
12. My students learn as well in my online course as in my face-to-face class.

Attitudes towards Online Courses

13. I enjoy teaching courses online.
14. If a course was being offered in all three modes, how would you prefer to teach the course?
15. Please give a reason for your choice of delivery modes.
16. Online courses require students to be more independent learners than taking courses face-to-face.
17. A wider variety of resources is provided to students in an online course than in a face-to-face course in the same subject.
18. Online courses do not increase access to tertiary education in the Caribbean.

Support

19. How many hours of training on the course management system did you receive?
20. Which mode was used to provide the training on the course management system?
21. I returned student grades in a timely manner.
22. I responded to student questions within 48 hours.
23. The Open Campus helpdesk staff provided support in a timely manner.
24. How often do you use the Helpdesk in an average week?
25. Please choose one of the words in the brackets to complete the statement: Online courses at the Open Campus are of (higher/equal/lower) quality than the face-to-face courses at the Open Campus.

26. The following paragraph is an excerpt from the Guiding Principles of the Open Campus: The Open Campus will adopt quality teaching and learning experiences, innovative pedagogic design, relevant research and community partnerships to deliver face-to-face, blended and online learning to all of its communities. Please comment on the extent to which you feel that the Open Campus is achieving these goals.

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Demographics

31. Please indicate your gender:
32. Please indicate your age range:
33. Please indicate the island where you live:
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES UWI OPEN CAMPUS POLICY SERVICE CHARTER WITH OUR STUDENTS

OUR PROMISE

The UWI Open Campus promises to provide our students with a quality educational experience which promotes their academic and professional success, now and in the future.

OUR GUARANTEE

UWI Open Campus guarantees to respond to our students’ requests, questions, online postings, assignments and examinations in a timely and professional manner and in a way that ensures we are able to meet our promise to you, our students.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

To support our promise and guarantee, UWI Open Campus will ensure our staff and academic staff strive to meet the following commitments to each of you.

UWI Open Campus will ensure:

Commitment 1: That you are provided with academically qualified and dedicated academic staff members who are committed to your success and who will help us achieve “Our Promise” to you.

Commitment 2: That you have received or have access to all required course materials produced by UWI Open and needed to begin your studies on or before the first day of the semester.

Commitment 3: That course academic staff and UWI Open Campus respond to your email messages or online queries within 48 hours of being sent.

Commitment 4: Receive constructive feedback and input to your online course discussions or other interactive online exercises within 48 hours of being posted or sent.

Commitment 5: Your course assignments and other graded activities will be marked by our academic staff and returned to you within 14 calendar days after the deadline for submission.

Commitment 6: That your final course grades are posted and available for your review within 21 calendar days after the semester has ended.

YOUR COMMITMENT TO US

To achieve “Our Promise” we need the cooperation and commitment of our students. Students
engaged in our UWI Open Campus courses and programmes you must commit to the following.

As a student in UWI Open Campus I promise to:

**Student Commitment 1:** Take the ultimate responsibility for my own learning and my own eventual academic success.

**Student Commitment 2:** Commit the time, effort and energy required to succeed in my academic studies.

**Student Commitment 3:** Attend classes regularly, complete all readings, activities and assignments, participate in all forms of instruction provided by UWI Open, and meet all course deadlines and schedules.

**Student Commitment 4:** Communicate with my peers and course academic staff members in a professional, non-threatening and constructive manner.

**COMMITMENT MONITORING**

To ensure that we are moving towards and exercising these commitments appropriately, UWI OpenCampus will create a support and feedback system that allows students, academic staff and staff to observe and provide feedback about how we are succeeding in exercising our responsibilities in achieving “Our Promise” and “Our Guarantee”.