Chapter 5:   Conclusions and recommendations

The Schoolboy

I love to rise in a summer morn

When the birds sing on every tree;

The distant huntsman winds his horn,

And the skylark sings with me.

O! What sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,

O! It drives all joy away;

Under a cruel eye outworn,

The little ones spend the day

In sighing and dismay.

Ah! Then at times I drooping sit,

And spend many an anxious hour,

Nor in my book can I take delight,

Nor sit in learning's bower,

Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy

Sit in a cage and sing?

How can a child, when fears annoy,

But droop his tender wing,

And forget his youthful spring?

William Blake (1759 - 1827)

This evaluation of the Unisa NPDE set out to answer four key questions.

1.   *Is the programme conceptualized and designed in such a way that it addresses the real needs of the intended beneficiaries (the target group)?*

2.   *Has the programme been properly (well) implemented (and managed)?*

3.   *Have the intended outcomes of the programme materialized?*

4.   *Were the programme outcomes obtained in the most cost-efficient manner?*

On the basis of the evidence provided in the preceding chapters, this final chapter will attempt to give answers to these questions. The chapter will then conclude with some recommendations for the way forward.

5.1   Is the programme conceptualized and designed in such a way that it addresses the real needs of the intended beneficiaries (the target group)?

On the basis of the response from students cited in Chapter 4, and the way that this has been partially verified by triangulating with assessed work and direct observation, the answer to this question would seem to be yes for the majority of teacher-learners on the NPDE programme. Clearly some students feel that their needs have not been met, as witnessed by several of the quotations from students' evaluation forms but most students indicate a high rate of satisfaction with the course content, the contact-supported way in which it has been delivered and the way in which achievement has been assessed.

Informal feedback from the Department of Education at National and Provincial level suggests that a higher throughput rate was expected, but there have been no queries about whether or not the

intended purposes of the qualification have been served.

Clearly a tension continues to exist between individual learner needs and the requirements for efficient systems, but there seem to be sufficient checks and balances in place to guard against any gross unfairness.

5.2   Has the programme been properly (well) implemented (and managed)?

Most of the problems that have arisen have come about through a mismatch between Unisa's general systems which are based on highly self-motivated, self-financed individuals studying primarily through a correspondence model and the needs of the NPDE programme for tracking of performance and reporting on groups of sponsored students.

Other problems have arisen due to delays in the bursary allocation processes which have resulted in delays in finalising registration and despatching materials.

There are problems with the management of centres and tutors, and particularly with the monitoring of the quality of performance of the latter.

5.3   Have the intended outcomes of the programme materialized?

The published intended outcomes of the NPDE are as follows:

Component 1: Competences relating to fundamental learning

Exit level outcome 1.1
Candidates demonstrate competence in reading, writing and speaking the language/s of instruction in

ways that facilitate their own academic learning and their ability to facilitate learning in the classroom.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:

- use their main language of instruction to explain, describe and discuss key concepts in their area of specialisation;

- use a second language to explain, describe and discuss key concepts in a conversational style;

- read and interpret with understanding written and graphic materials relating to their area of specialisation;

- read academic and professional texts critically, in order to integrate and use the knowledge in their own studies and in their teaching;

- convey the content of their area of specialisation in written, graphic and other forms which are appropriate to the development level/s and language ability of the learners in their care;

- use basic information and communication technology to further their own learning and facilitate the learning of others;

- select and use study methods appropriate to their own needs as well as the demands of the specialisation.

Exit level outcome 1.2

Candidates demonstrate competence in interpreting and using numerical and elementary statistical information to facilitate their own academic learning and their ability to administer teaching, learning and assessment.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:

- apply their understanding of numerical and statistical information to educational issues, cross-curricular activities and their own learning

- apply their understanding of numeracy and statistics to manage classroom resources and monitor learner attendance;

- apply their understanding of numeracy and statistics to record, interpret and report on the

academic progress and achievement of their learners.

Component 2: Competences relating to subject and content of teaching

The focus of this component is on the role of interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, the role of learning mediation as well as on the specialist role.

Exit level outcome 2.1
In their area/s of specialisation (phase and subject/learning area), candidates demonstrate competence in planning, designing, and reflecting on learning programmes appropriate for their learners and learning context.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:
- evaluate, select and adapt learning programmes appropriate for the learners, context and specialisation;
- select and use appropriate materials and resources in the design of learning programmes and lessons;
- plan lessons within teaching programmes, selecting appropriate teaching and learning strategies;
- justify selection and design in ways which show knowledge and understanding of the specialisation, teaching and learning strategies, child development and curriculum design.

Component 3: Competences relating to teaching and learning processes

The focus in this component is on the roles of the specialist, the learning mediator, assessor, manager/administrator/leader, interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, as well as on the pastoral role.

Exit level outcome 3.1

In their area of specialisation, candidates demonstrate competence in selecting, using and adjusting teaching and learning strategies in ways which meet the needs of the learners and the context.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:

- select and use teaching and learning strategies which motivate learners and encourage them to take initiative;
- in the planning and use of teaching and learning strategies, accommodate differences in learning style, pace and ability;
- identify and assist learners with special needs and barriers to learning and development;
- facilitate occasions where learners are taught in groups, pairs and as individuals;
- make judgements on the effect that language has on learning and make the necessary adjustments to the teaching and learning strategies;
- use teaching and learning support materials to facilitate learner progress and development;
- assess the teaching and learning strategies used in a particular context in the light of the extent to which the objectives of the learning experience have been achieved;
- explain the success or otherwise of teaching and learning strategies with reference to key educational concepts, the needs and abilities of the learners and demands of the specialisation.

Exit level outcome 3.2

Candidates demonstrate competence in managing and administrating their learning environments and learners in ways that are sensitive, stimulating, democratic and well-organized.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:

- create and maintain learning environments which are safe as well as conducive to learning;
- manage learning environments democratically and in ways that foster creative and critical thinking;
- discipline learners in ways that are firm, growth-promoting but fair;
- create a learning environment that is sensitive to cultural, linguistic and gender differences;
- resolve conflict situations within classrooms in an ethical and sensitive way;

- perform administrative duties required for the effective management of the learning environment;
- assist learners to manage themselves, their time, physical space and resources;
- take appropriate action to assist learners in the solution of personal or social problems;
- evaluate and, where necessary, adjust their own actions in ways that show knowledge and understanding of management and administration.

Exit level outcome 3.3

Candidates demonstrate competence in monitoring and assessing learner progress and achievement in their specialisation.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:
- select, adapt and/or design assessment tasks and strategies appropriate to the specialisation and learning context;
- explain the link between the method of assessment, the overall assessment purpose and the outcomes being assessed;
- use a range of assessment strategies to accommodate differences in learning style, pace and context;
- justify choice and design of assessment strategies, methods and procedures in ways which show knowledge and understanding of valid, reliable and fair assessment practice;
- use assessment results to provide feedback on learner progress and achievement;
- use assessment results to inform teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

Component 4: Competences relating to the school and profession

The focus in this component is on the role of manager/administrator/leader as well as on the community, citizenship and pastoral role.

Exit level outcome 4.1

Candidates demonstrate that they can function responsibly within the education system, the institution where they are working, and the community in which the institution is located.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:

- engage critically with policies, procedures, systems which impact on their institution or classroom;
- communicate with and involve parents, guardians and other members of the community in school affairs;
- work with colleagues to organize curricular cross curricular and extra curricular activities.

Exit level outcome 4.2

Candidates demonstrate a respect for and commitment to the educator profession.

Competence is evident when candidates are able to:

- critically engage with professional codes of conduct as well as with statements of their contractual, legal and administrative responsibilities;
- behave in ways that enhance the status of professional educators and ensure a responsible culture of teaching and learning;
- promote the values and principles of the constitution, particularly those related to human rights and the environment.

It is not really possible to evaluate whether all these outcomes have been met by considering them one at a time. However, an evaluation of the materials used to reach these ends and, in particular the assessment strategy employed in the programme set against the results analysis and student feedback and reflection suggests that progress has been made towards meeting the intended learning outcomes in all four components of the Unisa NPDE programme. The fact that so many NPDE students have indicated that they plan to register for an ACE is indicative of the fact that teacher-learners have felt empowered by their NPDE experience.

5.4   Were the programme outcomes obtained in the most cost-efficient

manner?

Very little information has been made available on the finances of the NPDE programme but it does seem that it is managing to pay its own way. Clearly the programme would be most cost-efficient if the Senior Phase option were removed because this option requires maintenance of 36 modules for only 20% of the student body. However, as the only NPDE provider offering a full curriculum, it could be argued that Unisa has a responsibility to maintain the full programme. It will be necessary to track Senior Phase registration carefully over the next 2-3 years to ensure that module registrations meet the targets set within the institution as a whole.

5.5 Observations and recommendations

The National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) offers underqualified classroom-based educators at REQV11 or 12, the opportunity to upgrade to qualified teacher status (REQV13).

After completing the NPDE, students should be able to move into the second part of a BEd or enter directly into an ACE.

The NPDE is unlike traditional Unisa programmes in that it requires at least 10% of notional learning time to be offered as direct face-to-face contact in decentralised centres. In 2002, 60 tutors offered decentralised support. In 2003, 97 tutors were initially involved in offering decentralised support in 33 venues in 5 RSA provinces and in Botswana. Some centres were subsequently rationalised due to insufficient student numbers. There is a particular challenge with regard to the viability of offering contact support for second year senior phase students.

There are at least 29 000 underqualified educators still in need of the NPDE programme in RSA, and significant numbers also in neighbouring states: Botswana (est. 10 000), Namibia (est. 8 000), Swaziland (est. 2 000). So Unisa will need to direct its attentions towards the remaining key areas of need in South Africa – Limpopo, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape – and seek to reach out into neighbouring countries. The draft budgets (see Appendix E for an example) required for the proposed action plans outlined below indicate that with such a broad curriculum, the programme needs to register at least 2000 students a year to remain viable.

The fact that Unisa offers the most comprehensive NPDE programme which, from 2004 covers all eight learning areas in all three GET phases: Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase should be seen as a major selling point.

Although there have been problems, often due to a mismatch between Unisa systems premised on individual self-financed students studying by correspondence and the needs of the NPDE for group reporting and tracking of bursary students, the problems are slowly being overcome and strengths and opportunities far outweigh weaknesses and threats.

An analysis of student results indicates throughput rates that are comparable to full-time provision and exceptional for distance education and would seem to strengthen the argument for the importance of contact support.

The following table outlines the actual and proposed development of the NPDE programme in the period 2001 to 2006.

Table 20: Suggested key objectives for the Unisa NPDE

Year	Registration		Key objectives
	Planned	*Actual*	
2001		0	Finalise curriculum and approval from Senate and CHE
2002		2 252	Implement programme for first cohort
2003		2 318	1. Implement programme for new 1st year cohort 2. Implement programme for new 2nd year cohort 3. Start pilot project in Botswana 4. Market programme to all nine provinces and other SADC countries 5. Finalise curriculum and update materials 6. Create an access route to NPDE at Certificate level 7. Complete evaluation of programme and recommend improvements 8. Publish lessons of experience from Unisa NPDE: at least 2 articles
2004	2 000	±2150	1. Implement programme for 1500 1st year and 500 second year students 2. Take programme to scale in Botswana 3. Start pilot projects in: Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho or as needed 4. Market/follow-up programme to all nine provinces and other SADC countries 5. Supplement core materials with tutorial letters 102s 6. Graduate first cohort 7. Quality assure decentralised support systems 8. Publish lessons of experience from Unisa NPDE: at least 10 articles
2005	3 500		1. Implement programme for 2000 1st year and 1500 second year students 2. Take programme to scale in Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho or as needed 3. Start pilot projects in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi if required 4. Graduate second cohort 5. Quality assure decentralised support systems and collaboration arrangements 6. Publish lessons of experience from Unisa NPDE: at least 10 articles
2006	4 000		1. Implement programme for 2000 1st year and 2000 second year students 2. Take programme to scale in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi if required 3. Graduate third cohort 4. Quality assure decentralised support systems and collaboration arrangements 5. Publish lessons of experience from Unisa NPDE: at least 10 articles 6. Review curriculum and submit business plan for closure or continuation of programme

Central to achievement of these objectives is a focussed marketing and advertising drive in the period June to November 2003 and again in 2004. It will also be necessary to review access policies and opportunities.

It is believed that the programme requires the following full-time staff:

- 1 Programme manager
- 1 Academic Programme administrator (senior and mobile)
- 1 Programme administrator (office-based)
- 10 academic co-ordinators

and that the contracts of the incumbent staff should be renewed for at least the projected lifetime of the programme.

In addition, the programme will require part-time tutors to offer decentralised contact support proportionate to the number of students registered. For 2004, it is believed that the Academic Co-ordinators will offer direct tuition to about 500 learners and that 50 part-time tutors will be needed to offer support to the other 1500 anticipated learners. These tutors need more careful training and monitoring particularly in the areas of portfolio development and administration of assessment marks.

There should be more rigorous on-going monitoring and management of student drop-out rates – especially among self-financed teacher-learners and those in more rural areas.

It is believed that the direct operating costs of the programme can be met from student fee income over the course of the three-year cycle 2004 - 6, as indicated in the proposed sample budget in Appendix E.

The following changes are suggested to the curriculum for 2004 and beyond:

1. Replace the first year modules NPD043-F, NPD047-K and NPD048-L with material that is more practical and where the linkages are more coherent so that one module reinforces the other.
2. Replace NPD012-8 with material more relevant to the Intermediate Phase.

3. Replace the Senior Phase maths modules with material that is more engaging and offers depth of understanding.

4. Replace the module NPD036-G with material that is more contemporary and more interactive.

5. Review the material for Technology and make NPD034-E the option module for a minor specialisation as it is the most general of all the Technology specialist modules.

6. Reformulate the NPD052-G module in particular, and assessment tasks in general, to take cognisance of the fact that the Unisa NPDE is likely to attract a growing number of enrolments from outside of the RSA. The emphasis should be on identifying key transferrable principles that can then be applied in a variety of contexts. Assessment in particular needs to be open enough to allow for a wide variety of contextual responses.

7. Strengthen the notion of the NPDE as a complete programme by creating more explicit cross-referencing and linking outcomes statements in the supporting tutorial letters.

8. Provide more guidance to tutors and teacher-learners on portfolio development.

Finally, although Unisa works on a three-year cycle of materials development, full opportunity should be made of tutorial letters for curriculum updates as a cyclical, continuous, iterative process.

It was noted in Chapter 1, and reflected in the title of the dissertation, that a social critical perspective had been taken in pursing the evaluation. It seems appropriate in concluding to reflect on what this meant in practice during the evaluation exercise:

- a belief that human beings are active shapers of their environment and not simply passive reactors to their environment
  engagement with programme stakeholders was from the perspective that the researcher would highlight issues for debate and discussion which might well result in changes in approach and practice; problems were seen as challenges that would call for adaptation rather than as obstacles to be seen as insurmountable;

- a belief that political and ideological viewpoints, power relationships and inter-relationships affect behaviour and decisions
  a number of instances are reported on the preceding pages in which it was necessary to engage with issues such as whose interests were best served by existing approaches and practices, for

example in the implementation of a policy for RPL;

- a belief that it is necessary to be critical of assumptions, existing systems and taken for granted ways of doing things in a search for continuous improvement

  the NPDE is designed and delivered in ways that challenge existing approaches and systems within Unisa mainstream programmes and, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3, the NPDE programme design at national level has challenged the discipline-based approaches of many previous educator development programmes in which theory and practice had somehow become divorced;

- a belief in a transformative agenda – that the Unisa NPDE programme could and should bring about positive change not only among the educators taking the programme but within Unisa as a provider of the programme

  Chapter 3 incorporates feedback from learners on the ways in which they feel that the Unisa NPDE programme has transformed their approach and practice (it is interesting to note that of the 886 educators who graduated from the Unisa NPDE in 2004, 426 went on immediately to study further at a higher level at Unisa); it is also to interesting to note that over the lifespan of the programme to date, the NPDE has moved from being a project running parallel to and largely independently from the School of Education's mainstream activities to being seen as a core product of the school offering lessons for the mainstream programmes in terms of RPL practice, programme management, Africanisation, course design and learner support (NPDE staff members are active participants in School of Education initiatives in all these areas);

- a belief in an emancipatory agenda – giving a voice not only to those educators taking the programme and who come from the disempowering and authoritarian systems of the past

  as indicated in the preceding pages, the researcher has been at pains to offer a voice to stakeholders of the programme during the evaluation process – the fact that so many educators on the programme chose to complete the evaluation form is taken as at least partial demonstration of this;

- a belief in the efficacy of an action research model in which the cumulative findings of the research process feed back into the actual design and delivery of the programme in a continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting together with the programme stakeholders

  as noted previously, most of the recommendations made here have been or are in the process of

being implemented through a negotiated process of action-based research and reflection;

- use of a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain insight into the ways in which the programme is designed and delivered and the ways in which it is experienced

the preceding chapters report findings using a wide variety of approaches and methods.

As intimated at the end of Chapter 1, much of the discussion presented here originated in first person narratives ("Tell me the story of your experience of the programme, module, assessment ...", "Here is the story of my experience and what I think I have learned from it. How does my experience compare with yours and how together might we address the issues raised?"). This approach accorded well with the overall evaluation design. Overall, a "fourth generation evaluation" approach, as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989:252-264) was followed in undertaking the evaluation documented here. This involved the author in an ongoing and iterative engagement with the programme stakeholders including the teacher-learners in individual conversations, at large group contact sessions and by mail and telephone; the NPDE programme team and other stakeholders representing support departments such as registration, finance, assignments, examinations, despatch and production as well as Department of Education and Education Labour Relations Council officials.

 The findings and proposals summarised here resulted from these discussions and represent, in most cases, a combined vision of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and the interventions necessary to maintain or improve quality. Having acknowledged the involvement of other stakeholders in the process and while recognising that several of the recommendations made here have already been implemented arising from the discussions sparked by this evaluation exercise, the overwhelming conclusion is that the kinds of processes documented here need to be integrated into the management of the programme in an ongoing way. This evaluation exercise has highlighted the need for further research, for example a more detailed enquiry into the impact of the NPDE on actual classroom practice and the ways in which different interpretations of the national qualification have affected take-up of and improvement on the kind of issues and concerns that led to the qualification being proposed in the first place.

The engagement also highlighted the contribution that each member of the NPDE team has made to

the overall learning experience and the need to document, share and debate the lessons of experience emerging. In many ways, and as expected, the process of undertaking this evaluation exercise has forced those involved to return to the underpinning assumptions that informed the original design of the programme and to question whether or not the original vision and intentions remain valid and, where this is the case, the extent to which the vision has been materialised. Again and again, the author and those who have engaged with the process have been forced to ask 'What is it that we want to achieve and to find out and how can we be reasonably sure that the evidence we are collecting and the processes we are implementing are achieving the goals we have set ourselves?' There would appear to be no clear answers to such questions: simply informed suggestions of pathways that might be followed ...

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older

The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated

Of dead and living. Not the intense moment

Isolated, with no before and after,

But a lifetime burning in every moment

And not the lifetime of one man only

But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

There is a time for the evening under starlight,

A time for the evening under lamplight

(The evening with the photograph album).

Love is most nearly itself

When here and now cease to matter.

Old men ought to be explorers

Here or there does not matter

We must be still and still moving

Into another intensity

For a further union, a deeper communion

Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,

The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters

Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.

T S Eliot (East Coker V from *Four Quartets*, 1944)