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Warp and Weft in Policy Analysis:

Australian Distance Education Policy
Formation, Formulation and Implementation 1901-1989

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Mary Jane Mahony

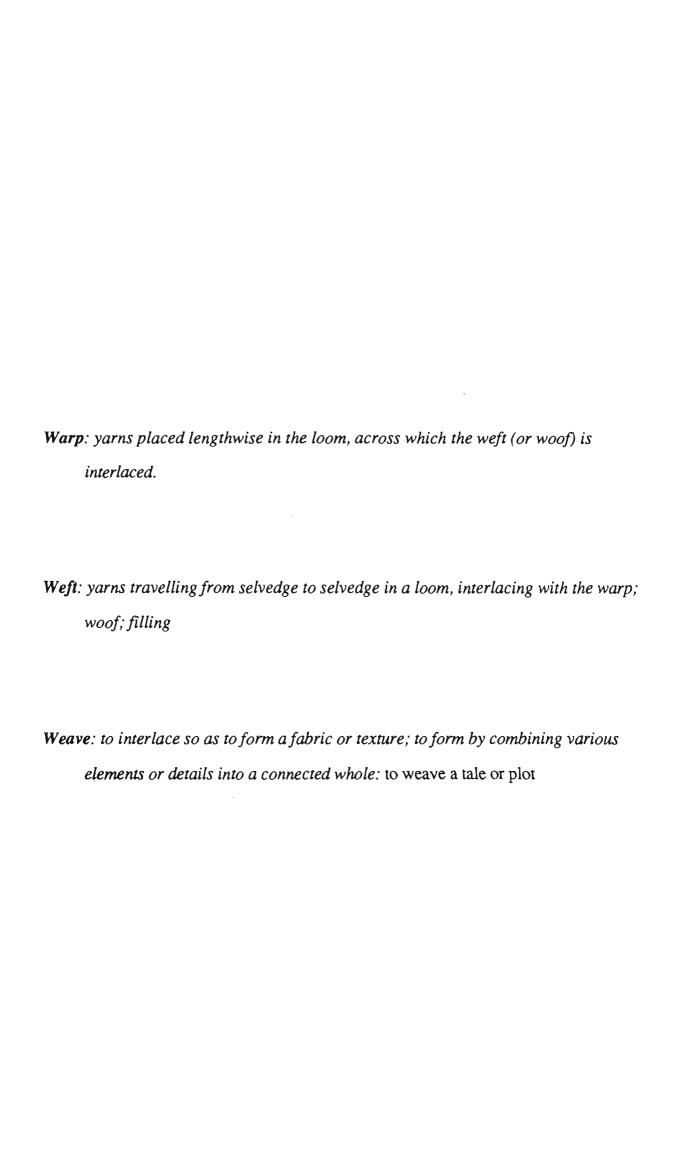
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ABSTRACT

Mahony, Mary Jane. 1994. Warp and Weft in Policy Analysis: Australian Distance Education Policy Formation, Formulation and Implementation 1901-1989. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree, Doctor of Philosophy (Policy Studies in Education), at the University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia.

Descriptors: policy research, organisational studies, higher education, distance education, discontinuity, change, institutional isomorphism, systems, Australia

Why do distance education and conventional education continue as separate entities in Australian higher education? One answer to this question is the role which distance education has played as an instrument of public policy.

The research design used a grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Saran 1985) in association with the policy space heuristic (Fasano 1993) in a post hoc longitudinal study of distance education policy development and implementation in Australian higher education from its first introduction at the University of Queensland in 1911 to implementation of the Australian federal government's White Paper on Higher Education (released in 1988). An interpretative metaphor of woven cloth is also used as an explanatory tool.

A change-centred policy process analysis model is presented with the roles of discontinuity, key agents, and the bridging mechanisms of an open systems perspective, particularly institutional isomorphism, emphasised. Suggestions for futher research and possible change strategies in Australian distance education policy making are made, as well as some further recommendations for research within the general field of policy studies.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father,

Kenneth Paul Mahony (1905-1978)

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This study would not have been completed without the belief and support offered to me by my mother, Mary Kathleen Mahony and my father, Kenneth Paul Mahony; without the enduring example of my mother's persistent and wide-ranging interests; without the support of Christopher K. Morgan during an important part of my professional development; and, most particularly, without the intense intellectual stimulation and demands together with the generous guidance and support of my supervisor, Professor Carla Fasano.

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Finally, I thank Penny Marr for her very useful comments on an early draft as an intelligent reader from outside the field.

Acronyms

ACDP Australian Committee of Directors and Principals in Advanced Education

ACT Australian Capital Territory

ASPESA Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association

AVCC Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee

CAE College of Advanced Education

CTEC Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission - advisory body to the

Commonwealth Government prior to NBEET

DE Distance Education

DEC Distance Education Centre

DEET Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training

EFTSU Equivalent full-time student unit

HEC Higher Education Council - one of three councils of NBEET

IAE Institute of Advanced Education (the same as a CAE)

NBEET National Board of Employment, Education and Training - an advisory body

to the Commonwealth Minister of Employment, Education and Training

NIOTE National Institute of Open Tertiary Education

NSW New South Wales

OAC Orange Agricultural College

ODLAA Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia

OU British Open University

SA South Australia

TEC Tertiary Education Commission - predecessor to CTEC

UNE University of New England

UNS Unified National System

UQ University of Queensland

UWA University of Western Australia

WA Western Australia