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## Warp and weft in policy analysis: Australian distance education policy : formation, formulation and implementation, 1901-1989

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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

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Bachelor of Science (University of California, Davis) 1969

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**Warp:** *yarns placed lengthwise in the loom, across which the weft (or woof) is interlaced.*

**Weft:** *yarns travelling from selvedge to selvedge in a loom, interlacing with the warp; woof; filling*

**Weave:** *to interlace so as to form a fabric or texture; to form by combining various elements or details into a connected whole: to weave a tale or plot*

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## ABSTRACT

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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 further 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)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## 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