



# Fostering Student Success through Planning in ODL

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## Abstract

Increased enrolments and opening opportunities for access met with the requisite success outcomes have presented challenges in higher education. Such challenges are established in the quality and standards of teaching, learning, and student assessments. Institutional effectiveness in the delivery of programmes facilitated by planners need an optimal academic balance in the varied functions of any higher education institution not only for the day-to-day functioning of the university but assure the quality of provision, quality services and support to students. Institutional academic plans must foreground future developments and orientations to teaching and learning strategies for the survival of universities.

Planning is an ongoing challenge that needs to be responded to at multiple levels locally within the institution and nationally to align and address higher education pressures. At the core of any institutional plan, it's the academic provision informed by the academic disciplines and central to any academic plan is the curriculum, continuous reflections, and academic optimization of resources to improve student learning experiences.

A sequential exploratory mixed method design was employed to investigate the research questions to examine the multi-dimensionality of open education (openness) and planning systems within the context of comprehensive university.

The emergent discoveries from the three phases of the study highlighted topical issues relating to teacher and student relations in open education. The results identify an incoherent understanding of openness and fragmentation in university planning systems. Improvements needing considerations are identi-

fied as workload of lecturers, institutional resource allocation models, technology support and effective regional models.

**Keywords:** Planning, Openness, Access, Quality, ODL, Student success

## 1 Introduction

Student access and success in universities is complex and multi-dimensional, South Africa's low student success rates have been widely documented as caused by systemic challenges rooted in the primary and secondary schooling system which universities have little control over.

Badat [1] and Lewin & Moyo [2] note that no single solution to the challenges of poor university student success rates exists, but that solutions must be understood as multi-dimensional. Several dimensions are acknowledged in institutional imperatives and goals [1, 2]. However, a holistic approach is necessary to addressing student success outcomes.

To understand this holistic view, contextual considerations are important and must align to university missions and delivery modes.

This paper intends to identify and link issues planning to access with success in ODL and explore the impact of the planning imperatives and resourcing on the outcomes of student success. The paper argues that increasing participation rates without the provision of support mechanisms to marginalised student population in ODL has not yet addressed the relevant challenges experienced by this student group. Challenges in ODL planning as resulting from the failure to ensure that all the different systems for ODL delivery are in place and functioning [3]. From this orientation a meaningful and holistic understanding of the institutional landscape and the student profiles will permeate through all planning systems, particularly in financial considerations students are confronted with. Dimensions of openness are considered with related factors impacting open distance education and planning. The study aimed to critically evaluate openness and its implementation as a vehicle for student access and success in higher

education, with reference to a comprehensive open and distance learning institution in South Africa.

The study considered whether comprehensive openness as espoused by the institution existed, as well as whether it remained an ambition of its planning and operations. The study offers a critical exploration of the concept of openness in higher education in the context of ODL, while focusing on the study pathways of previously disadvantaged or marginalised university students. The purpose was to further identify and describe the range of institutional, learner and teacher-related factors that contribute to openness and planning considerations that would support students in their learning journey. The study objectives involved a situational analysis of access and success patterns secondly at the chosen research site, to identify and describe the range of institutional, learner and teacher-related factors that contribute to openness during the student study pathways. Finally, to evaluate current performance in the planning and implementation of the principles of openness across the chosen study site.

## **2 Literature Review**

The South African higher education is characterised by increased enrolments of many disadvantaged learners who pass through a poor or sub-standard schooling system, are challenged in obtaining the necessary financial resources and requisite academic skills to succeed at university [4]. Of the recorded successes, there are however growing concerns with respect to the efficacy of the higher education system. Ramrathan, & Pillay posit that the system experiences a combination of high attrition or dropout rates, low throughput, low success rates, and increased time-to-completion in particular three year and four-year degree programmes [5]. The existence of these challenges are acknowledged by DHET and they highlight various interventions by the government have largely focused on opening and widening access to institutions offering contact and distance education, especially for students previously excluded. However, there is rarely evidence to suggest that improved access has resulted in comparable success rates, for open and distance learning (ODL) [6].

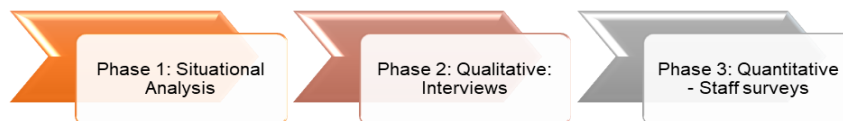
Disparities in income levels and inequalities are significant in higher education and manifest in academic performance and success of students. The disproportionate im-

balance requires wide-ranging interventions on the interface of institution and state to drive improved efficacy of the system and outcomes [1].

The challenges associated with ODL are varied, and central to these challenges is that the concept of openness is not well understood, that is, its true impact and application in practice are not fully understood; and this picture of uncertainty about its contribution is a long-standing challenge. The lack of understanding renders the uptake of ODL a serious challenge that requires urgent attention, and it is this grounding that guided this study. Nicholas, Cullen & Koski argue that institutions structural alignment to its mission is important and to assist in gathering research, the Institutional Research (IR) departments whose focus predominantly is on institutional reporting and statistics as their primary scope should be expanded to include specialties in accreditation, assessment, analytics, other data services, and strategic planning to optimise the imperatives of full Institutional Effectiveness (IE) [7].

### 3 Research Methodology

The study employed a sequential, exploratory mixed method design to address the research objectives and questions. The first phase of the empirical aspect of the study was based on the situational analysis followed by the qualitative and quantitative phases as two and three, respectively.



**Figure 1.** Three phases of the sequential exploratory data collection method

The situational analysis involved reviewing a wide range of information types that included the review of both quantitative and qualitative data, specifically secondary data sources from institutional records, DHET published statistics, and CHE statistics for the period 2012-2019. Data was collected through desktop research and identification of sources through publicly available and institutional based management infor-

mation systems, such as the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) of the Ministry of Higher Education, the CHE Vital Statistics publications and the institutional Higher Education Data Analytics (HEDA) platforms.

The second phase explored the influence factors on the identified dimensions of openness delivery strategies, planning, teaching, learning student support. The researcher selected the phenomenological approach as it allows an exploration of the influence of the factors and the impact of these on the openness dimensions based on the lived experiences of the study participants. Data was gathered from the academic, administrative staff professional staff and university management, who had experience and expertise in the management of open and distance learning and the research site of a comprehensive university, with the aim of preparing complete descriptions of how openness dimensions and associated factors interface with the institutional planning imperatives. The detailed descriptions from the qualitative phase of the study added meaning to the data collected during the situational analysis [8]. To ensure that all the different stakeholder groups were included within the respondent groups, purposive sampling was selected as the specific sampling approach. The data collection processes within the study involved a combination of document reviews, interviews and a self-complete questionnaire. The individual interviews of phase two resulted in nineteen (19) interviewees for the individual interview discussions. The respondents were classified into three categories, namely institutional and academic management, academic staff, administrative, and middle management. From this group of interviewed individuals, six (6) respondents were from the category institutional and academic management.

A notable proportion of participants nine (47%) fell within the category of academic staff management followed by six (32%), Management and only four (21%) represented the Administrative Middle Management category which also include staff in the professional designations such as quality assurance practitioners and educational technologists.

An interview protocol was developed and utilised during the qualitative phase; open-ended questions were used in the interview scheduled. The questions required respondents to elaborate without limitation on certain aspects of openness in higher education, factions and dimensions of openness, policy, planning and student support

systems. In open-ended questions, the respondents could give any response they wished to give to the questions asked. These questions were streamlined in accordance with the objectives of the study and openness dimensions, but the quality of the content depended on the respondent’s articulation response to the questions.

Thematic and content analysis were applied as the bases for analysing the data collected from the study participants in both the individual and group interviews. Combining both thematic and content analysis approaches was informed by methodological guidance from some, including [9,10] who concur that, the use of multiple data analysis approaches enhances the scope of interpretation for the researcher. Critically, they identify that the most important, is for the researcher to have key foundational competencies that include:

- i. Pattern Recognition
- ii. Openness and flexibility to be able to recognise “codable moments”.

Phase two thematic analysis was applied for the individual respondents’ feedback.

The third phase, i.e., the quantitative phase of the study was concerned with identifying the facts about different social phenomena. The use of statistical data to reflect numerical comparisons and statistical inferences was made to verify or refute the hypothesis of the study. The correlational design was used to address the study objectives.

On applying the above stated inclusion and exclusion criteria the following sample size formula was used to calculate the sample size. This calculator uses the following formula for the sample size n and margin of error E are given by:

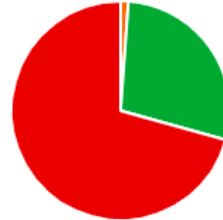
$$\begin{aligned}
 x &= Z(c/100)^2 r(100-r) \\
 n &= N \times /((N-1)E^2 + x) \\
 E &= \text{Sqrt}[(N - n)x/n(N-1)]
 \end{aligned}$$

where N is the population size, r is the fraction of responses that you are interested in, and Z(c/100) is the critical value for the confidence level c.

Teaching staff/academics sample was determined to be 236 teaching staff (assuming 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, with a response distribution of 25%). This takes accounts of the potential that only 25% of the identified sample may respond. For staff in managerial positions, the sample was determined to be 70 (assuming 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, with a response distribution of 25%). This takes account of the possibility that only 25% of the identified sample may respond. The quantitative phase involved data collection using a survey, a self-complete questionnaire was developed as a data collection tool. The self-complete questionnaire drew from the themes analysed from the qualitative phase. The questionnaires were emailed to randomly identified staff members of a population sample of 1981. The demographic distribution of the staff respondents focused specifically on their level of education and the NQF level of the module being taught together with the specific college.

Figure 2 below is a graphical illustration of the distribution of the sample with respect to the staff level of education.

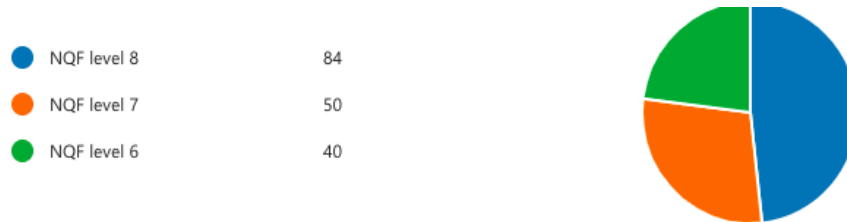
● Bachelor's Degree	0
● Bachelors' Honour Degree	2
● Master's Degree	49
● Doctorate Degree	123



**Figure 2** Staff Qualification distributions

71% (n=123) of the study respondents held a doctorate degree at the time the survey was done. There were no respondents who had less than a Bachelors' Honour degree. The entire sample consisted of 174 participants.

Figure 3 below illustrates the NQF levels of the modules being taught by the study respondents.



**Figure 3** Module distribution

48% (n=84) of the study respondents were lecturing modules that were at NQF level 8. The other study respondents were evenly distributed between lecturing NQF level 7 and level 6 with a slight variation between the 2 of 10 study respondents.

### 3 Results

A multi-approach exploratory mixed-method design served as the primary research template for obtaining data. The results of the study are reported according to the three phases with the emergent themes from the data.

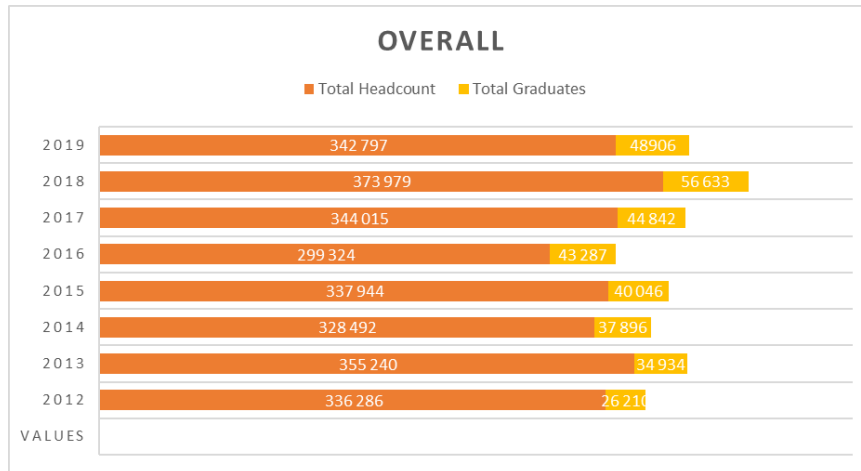
#### *3.1 Phase one - discoveries from the situational analysis*

The situational analysis provided an opportunity to retrieve and analyse institutional data, this included reviewing important access and student success quantitative data over an eight-year period (2012 – 2019) held by the institution. Further analysis with a critical appraisal of institutional qualitative decision documents from the governance structures and policy documents. Regarding the former, key data on important access and success indicators was collected for the index ODL institution over a five-year period covering 2014 - 2018, both years inclusive.

##### *Cohort Enrolment and graduate patterns (institutional versus college level enrolments)*

A key access measure relates to the number of registrants as a comparison to the headcount of those students that graduate. This is an often-quoted proxy measure of student success and broadly illustrates the level of success of any institution in terms of the rates of admission to graduation conversions that it can achieve. Figure 4 below provides a year-on-year comparison from 2012 to 2019.





**Figure 4.** Year on year comparison of Total Headcount and Graduate output

the above-noted statistics, year on year registrations to the university showed an upward trajectory which appears to be matched by similar proportional rates of graduation. The impact of increasing admissions is best understood by assessing the date of graduation i.e., the extent to which access performance is matched by success outcomes. In this regard, the substantial increases in student enrolments were undermined by an institutional baseline rate of graduation rate of only 7.8%. This is an extremely low rate of conversion from registration to graduation. More detailed insights into this were elicited via a more specific consideration of year-on-year graduation rates. Table 1 below provides a synoptic overview of the graduation rates per college within the university.

Within the colleges the headcount of registered students in comparison to the number of students that graduated was extremely low, ranging from a low of 3,8% to an upper rate of graduation of 30,3%.

**Table 1.** College graduation rate breakdown

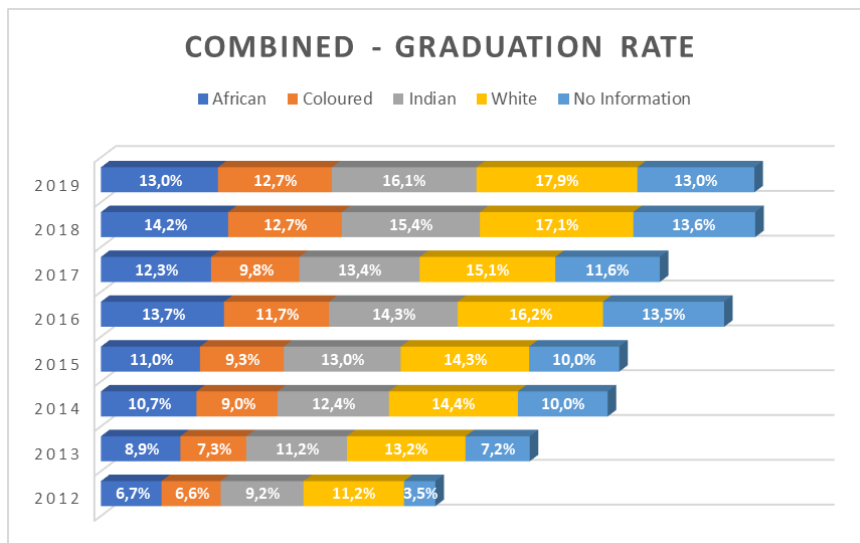
College Name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
College of Accounting Sciences	8,0%	9,9%	12,2%	13,6%	12,9%	11,2%	13,5%	12,8%	11,8%
College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences	6,3%	9,8%	11,2%	12,0%	15,3%	13,6%	15,3%	15,3%	12,3%
College of Economic and Management Sciences	6,0%	8,2%	9,4%	11,1%	15,1%	11,2%	12,0%	11,6%	10,6%
College of Education Sciences	14,2%	16,8%	18,7%	17,4%	20,0%	19,7%	22,9%	20,9%	18,9%
College of Graduate Studies					0,0%	6,3%	3,2%	5,6%	3,8%
College of Human Sciences	7,2%	9,6%	12,4%	11,6%	15,6%	14,2%	14,9%	14,6%	12,5%
College of Law Sciences	4,9%	5,2%	6,3%	6,0%	8,3%	7,9%	9,8%	8,6%	7,2%
College of Sciences, Engineering and Technology	4,5%	5,8%	7,2%	7,5%	8,1%	7,6%	8,4%	8,5%	7,2%
Graduate School of Business Leadership	24,8%	19,6%	22,8%	26,7%	29,9%	37,0%	42,2%	39,1%	30,3%

The lowest graduate rate reported was from the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) whose data only starts from 2016 to 2019. All the colleges included the data which

provides for both undergraduate and postgraduate graduation output, the GGS and SBL do not provision undergraduate programmes.

#### *Combined graduation rates*

The retrospective review of data facilitated the identification and reporting on combined graduations for the institution over the index study period, particularly across the different ethnic and racial groups that were represented within the university. Figure 5 below provides a summative of combined graduation rates by ethnic/ racial category.

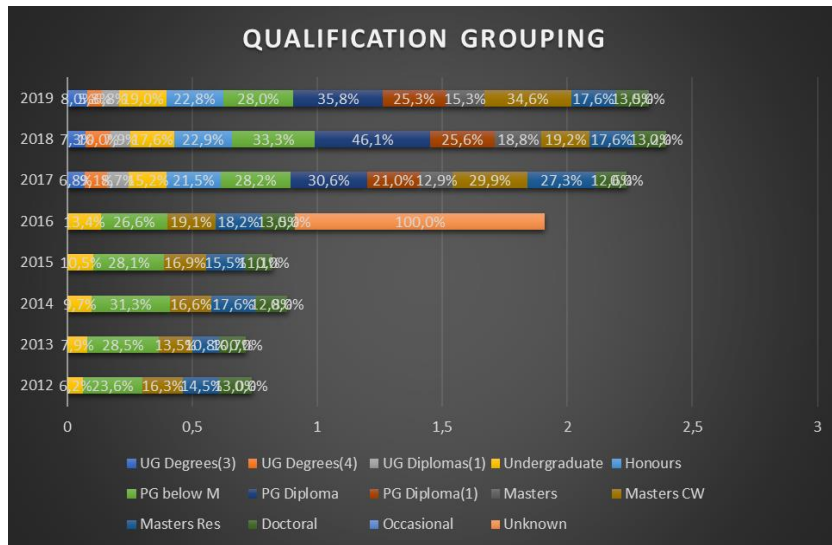


**Figure 5.** Race distribution of graduation rates

Proportional graduation rates across race and ethnic groups appear to have remained static from 2012 to 2019. By proportion, white students headed the highest proportional rates of graduation ranging from 11.2% and 17.9%, which represent nearly one third more the rates of graduations that can be found in coloured and black-African students. This important observation highlights the fact that minimal corrective outcomes were evident over the eight-year index. Despite the university and country initiating a plethora of transformation and funding interventions to address this intractable challenge.

**Qualification Type enrolments**

Domain related data shows that different types of qualifications have historically had differing access levels for the varied student groups. This observation is at the core of long-held contentions about how some professions appear to have disproportionate levels of gender or race representations when compared to others.



**Figure 6.** Total enrolments per qualification type

Figure 6 above depicts the university’s total enrolments in terms of the qualification level. With the 14 different qualification groupings, the above graph shows the graduation rate per grouping over the 8-year period between 2012 to 2019. The data depicted above, undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate diplomas appear to have the most consistent rates of graduation by comparison to the other qualification groupings. Of note is the fact that, the records did not have data from 2012 to 2016 for UG Degrees (3), UG Degrees (4), UG Diplomas (1), Honours, PG Diploma, PG Diploma (1), and Masters. PG Diplomas in 2017 and 2018 show a graduation rate of 30,6% and 46,1% respectively which are the highest graduation rates recorded throughout the index period.

### *Institutional planning and policy considerations*

The documentary evidence reviewed provides a sufficient overview of the key directions of the institution including its focus and influence on the access and success discourse.

The review of the policy and strategic documents demonstrates a balanced approach by the institution to align its policies national policy frameworks and imperatives taking into consideration the positioning of open distance education in the South African higher education landscape. There is however the challenge in understanding how access in admissions is balanced with the eligible students who are not admitted in terms of the Admission Policy (2021) due the enrolment planning and qualification target setting instrument, compounded by the government's inability to fund qualifying students as a result to fiscal constraints. The issue of enrolment numbers and ability of the institution to provide support to students is further established in the Senate report from Council on SRC Submissions to Council (2017) and the Task Team Report on the Academic Calendar and Student Registrations (2018).

In terms of the ODeL Task Team (2020) there seems to be a fragmented understanding of ODeL and what exactly it implies, as presented in The Deans' report of 2015 description of ODeL tuition, the Senate task team of 2018, and the ODeL Master Plan (2019) all contribute to some form of understanding in terms of their contextual environments. A coherent institutional understanding of ODeL is a requisite to give expression to openness and the ODeL policy provisions must permeate across all institutional spheres and interfaces in the operational frameworks balanced with appropriate human resource allocation models that can improve the success outcomes.

### *3.2 Phase two - Qualitative results from the individual interviews*

The themes that emerged from the data are identified and interpreted to draw the findings and the conclusion of qualitative phase. The themes that emerged during the interviews demonstrate student support and the relational nexus with access is crucial in ensuring success.

### **Understanding of openness**

The respondents gave different views on the concept of openness. The varied responses overall demonstrated an incoherent view on the understanding of open education and its associated systems for provision. Most participants limited the concept of openness to access and entry to learning opportunities.

### ***Policy awareness***

All nineteen (N=19) respondents were asked a question on their awareness of policies and legislative instruments internal to the institution and in the South African higher education that drive the openness discourse. Only five (N=5) identified being aware of some policies and expressed a need for a policy shift in formulation and implementation.

### ***Student readiness for ODeL***

Nine respondents (N=9) identified the readiness to study in open distance and e-learning systems as a driver for success in openness. These participants articulated this driver from a collaborative learning system in that students should be co-creators of knowledge and that learning systems should promote flexible, open, collaborative learning beyond time, personality, and place constraints.

Student readiness as a driver for success in open education was also premised on the challenges of under preparedness of learners from foundational learning in primary and secondary schooling systems.

### ***Technology support***

All nineteen respondents (N=19) interviewed identified the centrality of optimal technology platforms to drive open and e-learning. All participants agreed that the institution was challenged with technology provision. The challenges with technology expanded to the provision of devices, data and support for students. Technology provision and support was highlighted as being disproportional in that students in the urban centres benefited more as the institution provides more investments to urban areas as opposed to its rural regional centres.

### ***Lecturer workload and support***

From the qualitative phase, respondents expressed views that the workload of lecturers compromises the quality of work and outputs. The workload of both students and the lecturers resulted in an inadequate student-lecturer relationship.

As an essential contributory factor of openness, lecturer workloads reverberated with most of the respondents. The workload factor was compounded with issues associated with teaching skills and competencies required in ODL. The linkage of lecturer teaching ability, competencies and workload demonstrates a considerable demand that impacts directly on the students. The study's respondents had an average rating of 4.20 and 77% (N=134) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the university staff Strongly Agree that the workload of lecturers compromised the quality of work and outputs

Further, the study respondents had an average rating of 3.25 and 50% (N=87) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they were indecisive as to whether the university had good relations with students and were engaged adequately in decision making on matters that impacted them or not.

#### *Teaching content and delivery*

A view was expressed by the researcher as informed the documentary evidence analysed above, the institution seemed it had not adequately articulated a clear and unambiguous distinction between, on the one hand, blended learning being provision of education from a distance and minimal online provision and on the other hand, 'e-learning' and it is necessary given that the two are not the same thing argues Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka [12]. Such a distinction is necessary to inform the appropriation of content delivery for learning and setting of standards to better deliver pedagogy and understanding of the views on teaching and learning. Openness requires this requisite understanding to ensure the appropriate adoption of strategies for design and delivery of content as this sets how lecturers can operationalize those principles in practice.

#### *University regional model*

The respondents highlighted that the institution needed to reimagine its role for regional education provision in support and student learning needs. All participants

agreed that the current regional model was incoherent, working to the disadvantage of Unisa students, and these were the very marginalised students and institution should prioritise them in planning and strategy.

### ***3.3 Phase three – Quantitative phase: Staff Survey***

Phase three applied statistical data to reflect numerical comparisons to draw correlational inferences to verify or refute the hypothesis of the study. The correlational design was used to reflect the findings of phase two and this design utilised a simple approach to identify patterns and correlations within the numbers from the survey instrument. The overarching themes were obtained by grouping the results from phase two into related questions in the questionnaire and synthesizing the results. The phase involved data collection through the use of a survey and the self-complete questionnaire drew from the themes analysed from qualitative phase. The self-complete questionnaire was emailed to randomly identified staff population sample of 1981. The results provide responses to each section that elicited the most agreement or disagreement.

Table 2 below shows the Likert-Scale Interval Limits that were utilised in measuring the themes.

The themes that were considered in this phase were Institutional culture, policy and governance, access and admissions, technology and support and lastly pedagogy, and student engagement.

**Table 2.** Likert-Scale Interval Limits

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>SCALE</b>	<b>INTERVAL LENGTH</b>	<b>LOWER LIMIT</b>	<b>UPPER LIMIT</b>
Strongly Disagree	1	0,8	1	1,8
Somewhat Disagree	2	0,8	1,81	2,6
Neutral	3	0,8	2,61	3,4



Somewhat Agree	4	0,8	3,41	4,2
Strongly Agree	5	0,8	4,21	5

#### *Institutional culture, Policy and Governance*

The study respondents had an average rating of 3.75 and 67% (N=116) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the study's participants Somewhat Agree that the university took cognizance of its social justice mandate and mission.

Furthermore, the researcher assessed if the respondent Staff had a adequate understanding of the open education (Openness) discourse and the principles of openness. The researcher sort to establish if the principles of openness were adequately reflected in all operations and services of the university.

The study's respondents had an average rating of 3.37 and 52% (N=90) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the study participants were indecisive as to whether the principles of openness were adequately reflected in all operations and services of the university or not.

The study's respondents had an average rating of 3.22 and 49% (N=86) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they were indecisive as to whether the university should run an open system that should not be limiting students with completion time for qualifications.

#### *Access and Admissions*

The selected respondents had an average rating of 3.90 and 72% (N=125) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they Somewhat Agree that the university provided meaningful access into higher education as an institution. The study's respondents had an average rating of 3.10 and 43% (N=75) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they were indecisive as to whether access at the institution remained a challenge from an open education context, in that it was limited to the traditional ways of admitting students and prescribed enrolment numbers or not.

The respondents had an average rating of 3.51 and 55% (N=95) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they Somewhat Agree that access did not yield the high levels of quality in students admitted, especially younger students who had come directly from a classroom background, adapting to self-directed learning with no bridging mechanism available to manage their transition.

#### *Technological support*

Technology planning and implementation is fundamental to advance open education for optimal teaching and learning.

The selected respondents had an average rating of 4.59 and 90% (N=157) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the staff Strongly Agree that technology planning and implementation was fundamental to advance open education for optimal teaching and learning. The implementation and how technology is introduced remains challenging, the reliability and accessibility of the technology platforms is a challenge.

#### *Pedagogy, quality and student engagement*

Openness deals with pedagogy, social issues, cultural issues, political and technological issues, which cut across governance, university operations, systems and practices. This comprehensive picture ought to be realised first for the university to effectively operationalize open education systems. This was a topical issue where the respondents expressed their opinions.

The study's respondents had an average rating of 4.33 and 88% (N=153) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the staff Strongly Agree that openness dealt with pedagogy, social issues, cultural issues, political and technological issues, which cut across governance, university operations, systems and practices. Such a comprehensive picture ought to be realised first to effectively operationalize open education.

The respondents had an average rating of 3.40 and 56% (N=98) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they were neutral to the fact that the programme delivery model of the university adhered to the principles of openness but had a dimension of time which should not be a limitation imposed on students.

#### *Staff workloads and the student-teacher relationship*

The study's respondents had an average rating of 4.20 and 77% (N=134) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the staff Strongly Agree that the workload of lecturers compromised the quality of work and outputs. The workload of both students and the lecturers resulted in an inadequate student-lecturer relationship.

The respondents had an average rating of 3.98 and 74% (N=129) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, the staff Somewhat Agree that Teaching staff competency and a conducive environment were critical drivers of openness.

#### *Effective Regional model*

Coupled to the ineffective regional services and support, the research respondents identified during the qualitative phase the issue of the institutional approach in centralising support services. The respondents had an average rating of 3.24 and 41% (N=72) of them gave a rating of either 4 or 5 which suggests that on average, they were indecisive as to whether the university regional model was ineffective, and the university's increased investments in its urban centres was to the detriment of support to students in the regions or not.

## **4 Discussion**

The presentation of the results was multi-fold, the quantitative results provide a confirmatory lens to the qualitative phase of the individual interviews. From the situational analysis the findings demonstrate that opening of access has not yielded the requisite success outcomes. The individual staff interviews identify strong views on the inadequate management of staff workloads, inappropriate provision of the technology platforms and its planned implementations. Alignment of policy principles and how they were operationalized in practice was expressed during the staff interviews. These themes were expected to emerge during the staff surveys as topical issues found in the institutional and student-teacher relational factors. The findings of the

staff survey strongly demonstrate a concurrence that openness discourse at the institution was incoherently understood. The respondents were in rapport with the challenges of staff workloads and that the workload of lecturers compromised the quality of work and outputs, resulting in an inadequate student-lecturer relationships.

From these findings inference can be drawn that an institutional planning framework should consider the openness dimensions coherently in all its planning approaches. Results of the study identified that some participants reported to have received limited orientation to planning on the implementation and induction to new technology platforms at the university. As such, comprehensive views on the planning instruments of the institution that directly impact the colleges of the university were identified as needing foregrounding.

To conclude, in promoting an institution-wide understanding of openness in its planning, the university must engage in intentional promotion and knowledge of the openness discourse throughout the institution through training, support, and research in open educational practices, as well as in building relationships for such practices institutionally to cohere its operations across all spheres and students as affirmed by Ives & Pringle [11].

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