



Realising the potential of ODL

NADEOSA Conference 2011
Abstracts Booklet and Links to Presentation and Papers

Background to the 2011 Nadeosa conference

The National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA) takes pleasure in providing academics and education practitioners from different academic institutions involved in open learning and distance education an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas on various aspects regarding distance learning.

The title of this conference is: ***Realising the potential of ODL***.

It is the objective of this conference to serve as a forum for practitioners to discuss their experiences and identify future research directions in relation to the facts outlined below derived from the HEMIS.

Distance education programmes enrolled 316 349 students in 2009, which was 37,8% of all higher education students. Unisa's headcount enrolment in that year was 279 744 which amounts to 88% of all distance education enrolments. Ten out of a total of 22 predominantly contact institutions enrolled the balance.

Since most distance education students study part-time and do not carry a full course load, enrolment in distance programmes accounted for 28% of the total number of full-time equivalent students (FTEs) in 2009 whereas headcount distance enrolments were 37% of the total. The new Unisa's contribution was 81% of the total distance education FTEs. The relative contributions of the predominantly contact institutions in that year varied considerably. In one contact institution distance FTEs accounted for more nearly half of all FTEs (NWU), in others the proportions were a significant 10-20% (NMMU, UKZN, UP) and in others less than one percent.

In 2009, the distribution of distance vs contact FTE enrolments by field of study was as follows:

- Science engineering and technology 14%/86%
- Business/management 46%/54%
- Education 63%/37%
- Other humanities 39%/61%.

The enrolment in Science and Technology programmes overall was in line with the Department of Education's target ratio (30%) for higher education institutions but as noted skewed towards the contact institutions.

A high proportion of all Education FTE students were in contact institutions' distance programmes.

More than half of all distance students were women and three-quarters were African. Most distance students were mature adults, though the proportion of younger distance students is growing. The age profile indicates the role distance education plays in providing second-chance access to higher education and learning opportunities including professional upgrading for working adults. A noticeable trend in recent years has been a decline in the average age of students enrolling at Unisa, with many first-time-entry school-leavers opting for distance higher education as an alternative to contact institutions. These students bring with them expectations for facilities and support services similar to those offered by contact institutions, which is placing pressure on Unisa.

Distance programmes were offered primarily at undergraduate level and graduations followed suit. Students were more likely to pursue post-graduate courses through distance education at the initial level rather than at the advanced level with distance students contributing to 53% of headcount enrolments at the levels prior to Masters, 10,7% at Masters level and 7% at Doctoral level in 2009.

Success rates of distance education students were substantially lower than those of contact institution students, and fell well below the Department of Education's norms. Distance students had low graduate throughput rates overall but performance varies widely across the sector. In 2009, 25% of diplomates and graduates were distance students in comparison with a FTE enrolment ratio of 28%, with 62% being Unisa graduates in comparison with Unisa's enrolment share of 88% of distance headcount and 81% FTE students. It is noted that many Unisa students enrol for discrete courses which indicates the need for the ability to track separately enrolment and graduations for both programme and modular/unit standards purposes at both institutional and HEMIS level. It is also noted that many distance students take a long time to complete, and many others drop out or fail and do not re-register.

In 2009, the higher education enrolment ratio for South Africa stood at 17% in contrast with an official goal of 20%; an estimated 2 million young South Africans in the age-range 20-24 were/are not involved in post-school education.

Depending on how the analysis is done, there are between 2 and 7 million young people who are not involved in either formal education and training or formal work.

Sub-topics include:

- * Building a robust post-schooling ODL sector
- * Improving pass rates and throughput in undergraduate ODL programmes
- * Improving ODL's contribution to the supply of graduates with scarce skills
- * Making ODL a more attractive option for post-graduate study.

Key note address 1

This session will take the form of a [video address by Prof Asha Kanwar](#), VP of COL with responses from representatives of the three largest public providers of distance education in South Africa, followed by a plenary discussion.

The topic of the discussion is OER: Lessons of experience

The respondents are:

Prof LJ Van Niekerk, Unisa, Nadeosa President 2010-2012

Mr Bertus le Roux, North West University

Dr J Hendrikz, University of Pretoria, Nadeosa Executive Committee Member

Biography of Prof Asha Kanwar

Professor Asha Singh Kanwar became Vice President of the Commonwealth of Learning on 1 April 2006 and assumed additional responsibility as Programme Director in April 2007. She is specifically responsible for stakeholder engagement and programme direction.

Professor Kanwar joined COL as Education Specialist, Higher Education, on 1 March 2003 with the major responsibility of working with Commonwealth governments and organisations in policy and systems development, within the context of open and distance learning (ODL).

Before joining COL, Professor Kanwar was a consultant in open and distance learning at UNESCO's Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA) in Dakar, Senegal. During this assignment, her task was to promote and co-ordinate open and distance learning (ODL) in Sub-Saharan Africa and she was instrumental in placing ODL at the centre of ministerial deliberations and the agenda for the development of education in Africa. The West African initiative led to the establishment of an ODL Resource Centre at BREDA and later to the development of a regional Centre of Expertise at the National Open University of Nigeria.

Dr. Kanwar's engagement with distance education began when she joined Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as a Reader in 1988. In 1992 she was appointed Professor and 1996 was designated Director of the School of Humanities. In 1999, she became Pro-Vice Chancellor of IGNOU. Professor Kanwar has over 30 years of experience in teaching, research and administration. In addition to the several books, research papers and articles to her credit, she has made significant contributions to gender studies, especially the impact of distance education on the lives of Asian women. These studies have established that better educational opportunities and access to new technologies have made substantial differences to the attitudes, values and concerns of Asian women.

A recipient of several awards and fellowships, Professor Kanwar brings with her the experience of having studied and worked in different contexts, both developing and developed. She received her undergraduate, master's and MPhil degrees from the Panjab University in India. She was awarded a scholarship for a DPhil programme at the University of Sussex, which she completed in 1986. She was also a Fulbright Fellow for post-doctoral research at Iowa State University, where she was later invited to teach, and was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Leiden, the University of Toronto and the Open University of Hong Kong.

Key note address 2

Predictive Analytics and the Future of Distance Education

Dr Phil Ice

VP Research & development

American Public University System

Paper [Powerpoint](#)

As the growth of online programs continues to rapidly accelerate, concern over retention of online learners is increasing and administrators at institutions offering online courses are eager to promote student achievement. Retention is critically important, not just for student success, but also for the success of these institutions of higher education. Models for understanding student persistence and success in the face-to-face environment are well established; however, many of the variables in these constructs are not present in the online environment or they manifest in significantly different ways. With attrition rates higher than in face-to-face programs, the development of models to explain online retention and success are considered imperative.

This keynote address will examine the emerging field of learning analytics and the impact on distance learning. The discussion will include a recent initiative in which the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided a \$1 million grant to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to work with six institutions to develop a predictive analytics framework. The goal of this project is to develop an understanding of the patterns and trends that most impact at-risk populations engaged in distance learning. Methods, applications, initial outcomes and directions for US and international expansion will be addressed.

Using the predictive analytics framework as a basis, the discussion will be expanded to the field of new technologies that promise to leverage learning analytics to provide customized learning experiences in a variety of distance learning environments. Throughout the address societal change, via data driven educational advancement, will be a central theme and examined as an impetus for this promising new field.

Biography of Dr Ice

Phil Ice is the VP of Research and Development at American Public University System (APUS) and Vice President of Research & Development for Sage Road Analytics, LLC. His research is focused on the impact of new and emerging technologies on cognition in online learning environments. Work in this area has brought him international recognition in the form of three Sloan-C Effective Practice of the Year Awards (2007, 2009 and 2010) and the AliveTek/DLA Innovation on Online Distance Learning Administration Award. Sloan-C has also recognized Phil through awarding a team he lead at APUS with the Gomory Award for Data Driven Quality Improvement in 2009. He has been recognized by industry through membership in Adobe's Education Leaders Group and Adobe's Higher Education Advisory Board, as well as a recipient of the Adobe Higher Education Leaders Impact Award, 2010. Phil's vision for the future of technology in higher education is also demonstrated by his inclusion on the advisory council for the 2011 NMC / ELI Horizon Report and his role as Principal Investigator on a \$1.05 million WICHE/WCET grant to explore online retention patterns across six institutions. His work has covered the use of technology mediated feedback, which has been adopted at over 50 institutions of higher education in five countries, multi-level institutional assessment techniques and application of semantic analysis for mapping institutional learning assets. Phil has conducted over 100 peer reviewed and invited presentations and workshops, as well as authoring more than 20 articles, book chapters and white papers related to the integration of emerging technologies in eLearning. Other examples of his research include the use of embedded asynchronous audio feedback mechanisms, using web 2.0 tools for collaborative construction of knowledge through integration of RIA's and remote observation of student teaching experiences using asynchronous, flash-based environments. Phil is also involved with seven other researchers in the United States and Canada in numerous other research initiatives related to the Community of Inquiry Framework. This research has resulted in the development of a validated instrument that captures the intersection of Teaching, Social and Cognitive presence in online learning environments.

Presenters and abstracts

Presenters' Names	Institution	Abstract
Aluko, FR; Mhlanga, E	University of Pretoria Saide	<p>Embedding quality in student assessment in ODL: The case of the University of Pretoria</p> <p>Many stakeholders in education seem to have come to accept that distance education is a major means of opening up access to higher education. This is in view of the fact that the conventional mode of education can no longer cope with the number of prospective students for higher education.</p> <p>However, the challenge of distance education is to continually boost public confidence with regard to providing good quality service and value for money. One of the NADEOSA criteria with regard to providing quality distance education which distance education providers in the country have agreed on is student assessment.</p> <p>In this study, the researchers through qualitative research design investigate the University of Pretoria's assessment practices as related to its distance education programs. Findings reveal that the Unit for Distance Education has aligned its distance education policy with the NADEOSA quality criteria. It has as much as possible adhered to the quality standards it has set for itself in the area of student assessment, which is the focus of this study. For instance, students are exposed to diverse forms of assessment and the University ensures the integrity of the assessment process, and maintains and implements appropriate grievance procedures. However, some challenges it is still striving to improve on include (sometimes) delays in postage delivery of assignment scripts to students, and the continual need to re-train and monitor the quality of the services provided by markers, who are mostly in the employ of the University on a contract basis due to the number of students involved in the distance education programs.</p> <p>The researchers are of the opinion that there is the need for distance education providers to focus on this aspect of NADEOSA quality criteria if it wants its distance education programs to be taken seriously. We conclude that quality is the process of critical dialogue within an institution where there is culture of continuous care for the students' quality experience.</p> <p>Key Words: <i>distance education, quality criteria, student assessment, assessment process.</i></p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Baloyi, GP	Unisa	<p>Comparisons Of Tutoring Teacher Education Distance Students Between University Of South Africa, North West University And University Of Pretoria In Limpopo Province.</p> <p>There is substantial evidence student support can be an effective tool in supporting teaching and learning at a distance. The study is carried out to determine the mode of tutoring in supporting students between the University of South Africa (UNISA), North West University (NWU) and University of Pretoria (UP) in order to find out if students help each other, that is, to check if there is a cross-pollination in terms of their study activities and student to student support, or group discussions etc. amongst themselves. The study will also inform support mechanisms in terms of student to student support in the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in the Limpopo Province students. The students are teacher education distance learners teaching in the schools of the province. It will also inform policies and practices of the learner support in terms of tutoring in ODL. The paper will use qualitative research approach to explore some of the challenges faced by these ODL students. A sample of 30 distance education students and tutors in the rural areas of Limpopo will be randomly selected to participate in this study. The paper will propose some ways and means of assisting and supporting the students to support each other in their studies.</p>

Presenters' Names	Institution	Abstract
		<p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Boitshwarelo, B.	University of Botswana	<p>Promoting ODL through eLearning: a reflection on the role of eLearning policies and strategies</p> <p>This paper proceeds from the assumption that e-Learning promotes ODL by way of increasing access, enhancing flexibility, improving quality of learning materials/environments. Therefore the paper looks at the role of eLearning policies and/or strategies in increasing the effectiveness of e-Learning particularly for ODL purposes. The author who is currently a member of an eLearning Strategy Development Taskforce at the University of Botswana reflects on the process of developing an e-Learning strategy particularly the benchmarking aspect where a number of strategies and policies of other universities, both globally and regionally, were analysed. The paper focuses specifically on statements in the policies and strategies that commit, or are directly relevant, to ODL. A key finding is that most of the policies and/or strategies mention, in explicit terms, goals, objectives and/or principles that relate to access, flexibility, support and quality in ODL processes. In the light of this, a gap identified at the University of Botswana is that the minimal use of e-Learning in ODL has been arbitrary and rather random therefore lacking in effectively playing the four roles mentioned above. The implications of this for the university are that the imminent strategy needs to explicate how the institution commits to harnessing the potential of e-Learning for ODL purposes. The paper concludes by affirming that e-Learning policies and/or strategies are important in spelling out the role of e-Learning in an institution and guiding its use towards effectiveness. Therefore, ODL practice needs to leverage on these policies/strategies to maximise its effectiveness and efficiency.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Bulman, F and McMaster, S	African Centre for Childhood	<p>Building ODL Capacity through a Participatory Institutional Assessment Tool</p> <p>The African Centre for Childhood (ACC) successfully ran a pilot of the ODL Certificate Programme, “Community Based Work with Children and Youth” across eight African countries in 2009. The intention was to reach as many community based volunteers and workers across the continent and begin professionalizing and mainstreaming Psychosocial care and support. To reach the scale desired the programme initiators identified the need to partner with country based Institutions to accredit the Programme and run it to scale. In the second cycle of delivery the ACC worked with five accredited institutions in five of the initial 8 pilot countries to begin transitioning the programme to local ownership. In this transition phase the emphasis was on gaining accreditation and providing support to each institution to ensure that the quality of delivery, both academic and administrative, was maintained. Each institution had a variety of experiences and exposure to delivering distance learning programmes, from no experience through to specialized distance delivery institutions. However none had experience with what the ACC has coined, “situated, supported distance learning” (SSDL) methodology.</p> <p>The Certificate Programme implementation in the pilot phase was guided by the NADEOSA quality criteria, “Designing and Delivering Distance Education: Quality Criteria and Case Studies from South Africa.” Using the pilot as a benchmark it was the goal to maintain the same focus on quality in the transition phase with its partner institutions. Working with multiple partners, with varying levels of experience in distance delivery across borders it soon became evident that some institutions were adopting the programme methodology more successfully than others.</p> <p>The “Institutional Review and Development Tool” was developed to be used with each institution to assess readiness, assist with identifying specific areas which required targeted support from the ACC and for mid-programme review purposes. The tool also allows for qualitative data to be captured assisting with identifying ‘best-practice’ processes in institutions who have contextualized the</p>

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		<p>Programme for specific contexts.</p> <p>This paper describes the “Institutional Review and Development Tool” Developed by the ACC for use with country and institutional partners. In it the authors outline how it has been used to assess institutional suitability and readiness, plan for transition, build capacity and review progress. Thus contributing to the development of locally owned and delivered quality distance learning in the resource based and infrastructural challenges of African contexts.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Butale, C; Nyoni, J	University of Botswana/Unisa	<p>Enabling quality spatial and social presences in ODL Education: Exploiting video conferencing (VC)</p> <p>Videoconferencing (VC) technology plays an increasingly important role as it provides a rich communication environment in which a wide range of remote collaboration tasks can be successfully accomplished. The quality and the reliability of web based video conferencing tools has improved over recent years, aided by the growing availability of the internet and advances in modern network technology (Hauber et al: 2005)</p> <p>Changing the misconception that correspondence education was associated with non-formal adult education and also characterized with failure to meet minimum set quality standards for achievement in formal education systems is a constant battle for open and distance (ODL) learning institutions. Education in all forms is never static in transitional societies particularly so when impacted upon by access to a plethora of internet and communication technologies (ICT). Formal education systems provide abundant affordances for both spatial and social presences that ODL battle to achieve.</p> <p>The paper reports on the experiences of students who use VC link between Unisa and Ethiopia. Findings indicate that students appreciate spatial and social presences afforded by VC connectivities. Students get more engaged when they begin to interact with their peers and the lecturers particularly so when the distance between the students and the institute is bridged. We argue that the effective use of VC can serve as a magnet to attract more youth into viewing ODL as an alternative option to quality education. We used the qualitative interpretive phenomenological case study to record experiences of (10) Unisa postgraduate students who used video conferencing links between Unisa (South Africa) and Ethiopia.</p> <p>Key words: <i>Spatial presence, social presence, video conferencing (VC), Unisa, indigenous language (IL)</i></p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Chakanyka, S; Vilakati, N; Ferreira-Meyers, K	Institute of Distance Education, University of Swaziland	<p>The extent to which the Certificate in Psychosocial Support contributes towards the development of human resources among marginalised groups in Swaziland</p> <p><i>Theme: Improving ODL's contribution to the supply of graduates with scarce resources.</i></p> <p>The University of Swaziland in conjunction with the University of KwaZulu Natal is offering a Certificate in Psychosocial Support programme to people working with children and youth in Swaziland. The programme is offered through supported distance learning to people working with children and youth who have not had opportunities for tertiary education. These people have worked as caregivers in their communities without any formal training. The programme had one cohort of graduates in its pilot phase and has recruited a second cohort which is more than half way through its training. The Certificate programme has been welcomed by the Swaziland government as an initiative that will professionalise the whole arena of psychosocial support.</p> <p>This paper evaluates the certificate programme to determine the extent to which it contributes towards community development. According to Cornwall & Brock (2005) the core interrelated elements that underpin community development include genuine</p>

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		<p>participation, empowerment and competence. The study will probe how far the programme is able to impart requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for psychosocial support. It will also assess the performance of the graduates particularly their ability to engage in reflective practice with the aim of enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the sparsely resourced area of psychosocial support in Swaziland. The study uses a combination of research methods such as questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions to capture the attitudes and perspectives of current students and graduates on the effectiveness of the programme.</p> <p>Reference Cornwall, A. & Brock, K. (2005). Beyond Buzzwords. Poverty Reduction, Participation and Empowerment in Development Policy. Retrieved on 10 June 2011 at: www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/.../\$file/cornwall.pdf</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Davey, Colyn	Alfaisal University; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	<p>Looking anew at in-service development of English as Foreign Language teachers: An ODeL model</p> <p>Using his experience of teacher education in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) sector in Saudi Arabia, the presenter points to the fact that there is a <i>pressing</i> global need for internationally accredited master's and doctoral programs in teaching English as a Foreign Language; matched by a <i>depressing</i> absence of Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) opportunities to do so.</p> <p>The presenter maintains that, in the development of EFL practitioners, teacher educators need urgently to re-evaluate what constitutes in-service training in environments where the teachers themselves are not mother-tongue speakers. He maintains that higher education degrees in EFL need to be re-thought and re-formulated; and, more importantly, taught differently from what has pertained in the past.</p> <p>The presenter tries to shows how ODeL is uniquely disposed to maximising the learning of new skills, values and norms in in-service development; and, as such, is probably far superior to the contact education model. He advocates that in-service EFL teacher educators need to come together to re-evaluate their experiences, share expertise, identify areas of future research and develop a non-parochial program that is open to global access and scrutiny. If an accountable model can be developed, exciting potential exists for the development of other postgraduate professional development programmes with an almost unlimited international market.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Goodwin-Davey, Alice	Unisa	<p>Designing for e-learning: helping academics to 'wysiwyg' their way through the many dimensions of online learning environments</p> <p>Since 2000, the University of South Africa has incorporated online learning tools to support a 60+ year tradition of print-based delivery and has been exploring different approaches to online support and blended learning. Now, Unisa is jumping onto the online learning bandwagon for core teaching and learning functions, especially for postgraduates and classes with smaller student numbers. There is a mandate from Management to implement online courses for postgraduate modules within the next few years.</p> <p>This decision brings with it many obstacles to overcome. With all the complexity possible in online learning, many educators don't know how to get started. Some resort to the familiar process of print- or face-to-face 'lecturing' through text, while others may fall by the wayside, afraid of the technological challenges.</p> <p>Yet, we know that there is great potential in online learning. But the possibilities for interactivity, communication, collaborative work and media integration are largely ignored. So, how do we, as learning designers, help academics to design and develop courses for online delivery?</p> <p>One of the most creative tools is the storyboard, which has long been used to help design media, such as animation with narration. A</p>

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		<p>storyboard helps one because of the concept of 'wysiwyg' – “what you see is what you get.” With online learning design, a multi-dimensional approach to the use of the storyboard can assist educators to take full advantage of the potential virtual learning environment.</p> <p>At Unisa, we have initiated a programme of helping academics design for online. Part of the process involves using a multi-dimensional storyboard approach to help lecturers to make the most of the tools in our online learning environment. This paper will briefly outline the use of the approach and draw upon case studies from the first pilot groups to illustrate the process and the lessons we have learned. We will show how this approach can help the academics to plan and implement effective online learning by creating a multi-dimensional wysiwyg storyboard!</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Gumede, D; Mzizi, L; Bansilal, S	UKZN	<p>An exploration of the feasibility of using computer-based learning with rural ODL students at a KZN University</p> <p>With the increasing reliance on technology in all aspects of our lives, the use of computers for improving learning and teaching has become a driving need for most programmes. Most universities have support sites and platforms which enable their students to access e-based learning and to communicate electronically. However these additional student support systems mainly benefit full-time pre-service students who attend classes at the central campuses which have sufficient computer support availability. The situation for the rural ODL student who attends classes in off campus sites is a different matter. In our university, some programmes that are run in an ODL mode, have e-learning components, but have been constrained in the implementation of such components across all centres. Some programme coordinators have inquired about the feasibility of introducing computer based or computer-aided instructions into their delivery methods. As Open Learning Centre managers we were asked to assess the student's readiness to engage in such instructions. Accordingly, the objectives of the study reported in this paper, were to evaluate the computer readiness of 737 students attending ODL classes at 13 learning centres throughout KwaZulu-Natal as well as looking at the issue of access to computers in rural settings. Data was generated from the responses of the students and local centre agents to questionnaires which had both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The findings revealed that even though almost half of the students considered themselves to be computer literate, only 10% indicated that they owned a computer. Responses varied across the programmes, with the Nursing Management students being the most likely (44%) and the ACE (School Library) students the least likely (3 %) to own a computer. The rate of computer literacy also varied with certain centres having higher rates than others. Although most learning centres have computer laboratories and are willing to give ODL students access to computers, infrastructure constraints and skills impede the integration of technology into ODL programmes. Some challenges include the lack of IT support, inadequate bandwidth, lack of internet coverage and unreliable electricity supply. These findings illustrate the challenges involved in trying to provide progressive, relevant and high quality curricula to students from rural areas. Some programmes coordinators have had to find innovative ways to compensate for the limited accessibility of students to computer facilities, some of which will be discussed in the paper.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Harker, WD; Brown, PDW; Mrara, WL; Japhta, D; Tini, MB	Zion Christian University	The Need for a Christian University in South Africa No abstract.
Igbafe, Eucharia C	University of Pretoria	Grounded, Connectivism and Constructivism Theories: Collaboration Appropriate for Building ODEL Potentialities

Presenters' Names	Institution	Abstract
		<p>This paper reports a study on building learners potentialities through using principles of grounded, connectivism and constructivism learning theories in a collaborative context. The study was carried out in yenagoa, Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Nine participants were purposively selected from three villages. Criteria for selection were based on ODEL Learners faced with challenges in socio-cultural, economic, and psycho-emotional challenges that will make it difficult to persist and graduate. Cell model was adopted and used in grouping, with a leader for each group. The principles of grounded, connectivism and constructivism were applied to build a collaborative community of learning and formal module was used in teaching and learning process. The findings showed positive turnout, although the class was rigorous, time consuming more than the ODEL formal contact sessions, the sessions was interactive, interesting and orderly. Learners who were not involved in the pilot study expressed interest to join the study. The author therefore concludes that for ODEL to build the potentialities of the learners, they need to adopt approaches that will attract, interest, motivate learners to go beyond their normal limits to persist and graduate on time. Recommendations and suggestions were made.</p> <p>Keyword: <i>Grounded, Connectivism, constructivism, theory, collaboration, Open and Distance</i></p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Kamanja, LG	Unisa	<p>Using CDs and DVD's to Create Rich Learning Environments for Students in Distance Learning</p> <p>Developments in technologies have always influenced what people know and how they learn for a long time. In distance learning, communication technologies bridge the gap between the students with their peers, their lecturers, and with their institution. The technologies also bridge conceptual gaps that arise out of learning in secluded environment. The main purpose of these technologies whether they be mass radio broadcasts or television programs has always explored how to utilise available media to ensure that the learner gets the necessary support for learning.</p> <p>The challenges for using multi-media in education range from cost and accessibility, to determining the pedagogy and design for appropriately structured presentations and interactions. Much effort is needed in identifying appropriate content for each medium, the level of instruction, and the autonomy the learner can exercise in each case.</p> <p>This paper investigates the use of CDs and DVD's were used in five courses to facilitate and enhance learning in the University of South Africa (UNISA). The media items were randomly selected and supplement different modules offered at the university. Two of the modules support languages, one Italian and the other an African language. For the other three one is in Microbiology. One in Psychology and one in Ethics and Life. The lecturers teaching the modules were also interviewed to find out what prompted them to use the media selected and what successes they have achieved through use of the media. The paper discusses how each of the audio or video item has been utilized to supplement the printed materials by providing active learner engagement. It investigates whether the media items met the criteria that would assist the student in accessing and utilizing the media.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Le Roux, A and Mitchell, J	Unisa	<p>Peer Review in ODL Publishing</p> <p>In journal publishing, peer review is a process of subjecting an author's academic articles to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the field. It is used primarily by journal editors to select and to screen submitted articles. The peer review process aims to make authors meet the standard of their discipline and of academia in general. Articles that have not undergone peer review are likely to be regarded with suspicion by academics and professionals in many fields. A rationale for peer review is that it is rare for an individual author to spot every mistake or flaw in a particular article. Therefore, showing articles to specialists increases the probability that</p>

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		<p>weaknesses will be identified, and with advice and encouragement, fixed. Since reviewers are normally selected from experts in the fields discussed in the article, the process of peer review is considered critical to establishing a reliable body of research and knowledge. Reviewer's evaluations usually include recommendations of what to do with the article, often chosen from a list provided by the journal. This paper reports on the reasons for using peer review and of the instrument used by <i>Progressio: South African journal for open and distance learning practice</i>.</p> <p>Poster</p>
Mafenya, NP	Unisa	<p>Increasing Undergraduate Throughput and Success Rates in Open and Distance Learning Using Information Communication Technology: A Case Study</p> <p>The objectives of this article are firstly, to analyse institutional data at the University of South Africa (Unisa) on pass, throughput and success rates across a variety of programmes. Secondly, the article wants to find out and suggest effective mechanisms or strategies to increase or improve throughput and success rates at Unisa through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Literature on throughput and success rates in distance education institutions suggests a mismatch between registration, throughput and success rates among students who are studying through distance education. The article has settled for document analysis and survey of institutional data as research methodology. The population and sample used in the study came from institutional studies and selected programmes such as those from the College of Science Engineering and Technology and the College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies. Data analysis and results were done by using institutional data and statistics collected from the survey. Student support programmes therefore have become critical to all distance education institutions since they are expected to increase student participation and graduate output. It is against this backdrop that the author argues that there are a variety of reasons for departure some of which distance education institutions cannot control because, the many factors that influence students' decision to continue or dropout for a given period of time are only known to them. The study found out that effective student support through the use of ICT is likely to lower the dropout rate and increase the throughput and pass rate the very issue that South African distance education institutions struggle with.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Throughput rate, pass rate, success rate, dropout rate, information communication technology (ICT), open distance learning (ODL).</i></p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Makoe, Mpine	Unisa	<p>A student-centred approach: Incorporating UNISA's students experiences in the development of the student support system</p> <p>Various higher education documents reveal a policy commitment to the adoption of ODL as the main mode of widening participation and addressing wider educational problems in general. The Council for Higher Education Report (1996) proposes that ODL institutions increase the number of students and accommodate students with varied levels of competencies at reduced costs. Through distance education, disadvantaged students can also have access to higher education. However, increasing access to higher education can only be successful if distance education providers understand the varying contexts and experiences of their students in order to develop support mechanisms that are responsive to students' needs. What a student needs even in distance study is someone who can help him or her organise learning opportunities, who learns together with and who explores and examines study material with him or her. For many years, <i>student</i> support has been viewed by the distance education providers as a facility that provided support for those who are at risk of dropping out or struggling to make it, rather than the process that enhances the quality</p>

Presenters' Names	Institution	Abstract
		<p>of the student's experience. The purpose of providing student support is to ensure that students derive maximum benefit from the courses and the whole experience of being a student. This paper focuses on UNISA students' who by virtue of studying at a distance share their educational experiences. It is through these narratives that I shall seek to clarify what constitutes student support as perceived by students and the role of student support in an ODL context.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Mays, Tony J	SAIDE/Nadeosa	<p>Programme modelling: a Nadeosa investigation into the cost and human resource implications for different models of ODL provision</p> <p>The South African Higher Education Act of 1997 established academic programmes as the cost unit for Higher Education. In response to the advent of a National Qualifications Framework in South Africa, Higher Education Institutions opted to focus on whole qualifications rather than on unit standards as the basis of their academic programmes in order to ensure coherence (Luckett 2003). However, subsequent investigations by the CHE (CHE 2004, 2007, 2010) have indicated that not only are many programmes not coherently designed but also that in many cases they are under-resourced in terms of staffing, which militates against the quality not only of design, but also of development and 'delivery'.</p> <p>Building on the base of costing studies in ODL by Rumble, Perraton and Sparks, as well as costing studies undertaken by Saide in south and southern Africa in 2003 and 2004 (CHE 2004, ADEA 2004, Mays 2005), and with Namcol in 2010 (Saide 2010), as well as the thinking that underpins the University of South Africa's Academic Human Resource Allocation Model, the author developed three indicative models which seek to establish the link between income, costs and human resources in order to provide a tool for informed decision-making at the programme level. The assumptions underpinning these models were interrogated and refined in consultation with programme managers of the College of Human Sciences at Unisa. It is planned that the resulting models will be refined again after consultation with colleagues at the Nadeosa conference in 2011 and then in in follow-up visits with interested HEIs. The research process underpinning this investigation comprises a mixed-method approach involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a hermeneutic enquiry spiral.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>ODL, costing, human resources, programme modeling</i></p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Nage-Sibande, B	BOCODOL	<p>Building a Robust Post-schooling ODL Sector in Botswana</p> <p>Enhanced participation and attainment of higher order skills through higher education has been found to be crucial for the economic advancement and improved competitiveness of developing countries in the world economy (Young, 2006; World Bank, 2002; World Bank, 2008a). However, there has been indication that SADC countries have challenges increasing their higher education participation ratios in order for them to catch up with the other more advanced regions. Consequently, the region seems comparatively far behind in terms of both participation in higher education and economic development. Average participation for the region still appears to be below 10% of the 18 – 24 age group or Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER), as can be deduced from (SADC, 2006; UNESCO, 2007; Daniel, 2007; World Bank, 2008a). This situation therefore seems to call for urgent and increased efforts to enhance regional participation at higher education level. Botswana has acknowledged that the on-campus face-to-face mode of delivery alone is unlikely to have the capacity to handle the country's higher education needs for the foreseeable future up to 2026 (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2008; Dodds et al, 2008). ODL has therefore been identified at national level, as another strategy through which to</p>

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		<p>increase access to post-secondary education.</p> <p>However, expansion of ODL to cope with the ever increasing and diverse demands for entry into higher education programmes has been found to be very slow compared to the expansion of face-to-face provision. This paper's focus is to share some of the contributing factors to the slow growth of ODL in the Botswana higher education sector, having scanned the environment under which the sector is growing. The researcher shares findings regarding some policies and practices which might enhance or impede the expansion of ODL at higher education level in Botswana. The paper also brings to the fore inherent equivalency issues between the ODL and face-to-face modes in Botswana's higher education sector.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Ojorah, V, Avinash	Mauritius Institute of Education	<p>Sustaining Technology in classrooms under the Sankoré Project: A case study of a multi-pronged approach</p> <p>Applying technology in classrooms with the aim to enhance teaching and learning is not as straightforward as it might seem. Several projects with the above-mentioned aim have been initiated with more or less mitigated effects in the Mauritian context. Failure to sustain technology in education is not only demotivating key stakeholders, but also depriving twenty first century learners of key technologies that can have a real impact on teaching and learning practices. This state of affairs has motivated the Mauritius Institute of Education [MIE] to adopt a careful strategy in the case of the Sankoré project to avoid common pitfalls in the implementation of technology in classroom teaching and learning. The paper elaborates on the various aspects of this strategy. These aspects cover the people involved in the project, the resource development aspect as well as the hardware component. Research initiatives carried under the project are also discussed. As a matter of fact, the case study describes the package being offered to the educational community by the MIE under this project. Feedback on the strategy has been obtained through questionnaires and interviews with different stakeholders. The paper also explains the choices [technological and pedagogical] made under the project. The project is still at the implementation phase. This paper is an interim study of the implementation so far.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Prinsloo, P and Subotzky, GI	Unisa	<p>Enhancing Student Success in ODL: Unisa's Integrated Student Success & Support Frameworks and Strategies</p> <p>Enhancing student success is particularly challenge in the ODL context of Unisa, with its approximately 300,000 mainly non-traditional and underprepared students. To address this challenge, integrated frameworks for student support and success have been developed. This paper presents the conceptual foundation and implementation strategy of these frameworks which constitute central components of Unisa's ODL Implementation Plan.</p> <p>The frameworks assume that systematically gathering and disseminating relevant actionable intelligence on the academic, non-academic and institutional risks facing ODL students will generate more informed and effective support interventions. In ODL, non-academic risks – related to past and current socio-economic status, life circumstances, work and domestic responsibilities, financial pressures, psychological attributes and metacognitive skills – impact strongly on success.</p> <p>The <i>Student Success Framework</i> (Unisa, 2011) defines success broadly to include formative/summative assessment, retention/persistence, graduation within reasonable timeframes, appropriate graduate attributes for the workplace and society, and student satisfaction. The framework comprises five incrementally implemented components. The first involved conceptually modelling all student and institutional factors impacting on student success in the Unisa context, drawing from a comprehensive literature review (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). Next, a predictive model based on relevant, actionable information related to student and institutional</p>

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		<p>risk was derived from the conceptual model. This information is gathered and disseminated by through a comprehensive tracking system, drawing from various student, academic and administrative information sources. Third, this information is analysed to assess, profile and predict student and institutional risks identified in the predictive model. Fourth, various support interventions constitute the <i>Student Support Framework</i> which is informed by the previous three steps. Finally, impact is monitored and evaluated.</p> <p>The <i>Student Support Framework</i> (Unisa, 2010) entails: a) increasing the effectiveness & quality of current support initiatives; b) profiling at-risk students and modules and providing appropriate support including e-tutoring/mentoring; c) implementing interactive computer-marked self-assessment; d) using appropriate technologies effectively to communicate with at-risk students. Support is envisaged as being: student-centred, efficient, affordable, formal and informal, integrated into teaching and learning, and where possible, customized. Implementation involves role-based responsibilities for face-to-face and E-tutors, lecturers, supervisors, online mentors, counsellors and academic support coordinators. Relevant information and alerts related to academic, non-academic and administrative risks are distributed by the tracking system. The framework is being piloted through an E-tutor scheme in a large Accounting module in the second semester, 2011.</p> <p>Unisa's emerging student success and support frameworks represent an important initiative to enhance success and therefore to realise the potential of ODL.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Romiszowski, AJ; Tenorio, L; Amaral, RM; Mangueleze, EP	Syracuse University, New York	<p>A Competency-based approach to training of Online Tutors for e-Learning courses in Mozambique's Banking Sector</p> <p>The Banking Training Institute of Mozambique (IFBM) provides training to banking sector aspirants and employees. Since its creation, IFBM has contributed to the professional development of hundreds of banking employees and has enabled even more school leavers to prepare for and find jobs in banks and other financial institutions. Although most training is delivered by means of conventional classroom-based methods, IFBM also uses self-study and distance-learning methods to deliver training to all parts of the nation. Online learning activities commenced in 2008 with the implementation of a purpose-built e-learning platform based on Moodle. Online courses currently offered include: introduction to banking products and services; applied business / banking mathematics; business credit; personal credit; negotiation and sales skills; telephone skills. In addition, IFBM offers training which targets a wider general audience, for example a basic course on "how to start a business".</p> <p>The increasing use of e-learning has led to an increased need for online tutoring support. This led to the implementation in 2010 of competency-based training for online tutors. This was designed on the basis of two existing models of online-teaching-competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IBSTPI (International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction); - SEBRAE (Brazil's national agency that supports small and medium enterprises). <p>The combined use of these models created a curriculum of 80 online tutor competencies.</p> <p>The training was delivered in three phases: (a) a 2-week workshop which introduced, explained and demonstrated the competencies; (b) a 4-month "internship" (monitored at a distance by the trainer) during which each participant acted as tutor of a group of learners studying "how to start a business"; (c) a final workshop during which the internship experience was evaluated by both trainer and trainees and a continuing professional development system (including an online learning community for tutors) was planned.</p> <p>The prime focus of this presentation is on the analysis and evaluation of how the competency based approach was used to design, develop, deliver and evaluate the training system, the tutors' performance change, and how the tutors' self-perceptions of their roles and responsibilities changed as a result of the experience. A secondary focus is to discuss the challenges faced by an institution such as IFBM in its use e-learning as a means of professional development for a clientele distributed across a country that has only recently</p>

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		<p>started to implement the necessary national ICT policies and infrastructure.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Romiszowski, AJ; Otamere, E; Obayemi, O	Syracuse University, New York	<p>Incremental Implementation of e-Learning at the National Open University of Nigeria</p> <p>The technology resources needed for implementation of e-learning environments are still rare in many parts of Africa. Therefore, many African ODL institutions still rely on print materials as the main medium of instruction. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is no exception.</p> <p>NOUN began full-scale operations in 2001. Since then, it has become Nigeria's leading provider of ODL at tertiary level and also the largest tertiary institution in terms of student numbers. It operates from headquarters in Lagos, with other campus locations in Abuja and Kaduna and some 40 learning centres distributed throughout the country. Though it employs a range of course delivery media, most courses are distributed in the form of printed modules.</p> <p>Technology-based enhancements are being planned and implemented incrementally, starting with the exam system. For the last few years, e-exams have been held to simplify and speed up the examination process. In early 2011, over a 35-day period, some forty thousand students took their exams online, gathering at 41 examination centres across the country. This is almost double the number who took their exams online in 2010. Another innovation is the use of "e-TMAs". Each unit of each module of learning materials includes a Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA). The TMAs are now available online as well as in printed form so that students may respond and receive tutor support much more quickly and effectively. The university has developed its own learning management system (LMS) to support these and other innovations yet in the planning stages. Among these plans is the move from printed modules towards fully online courses enhanced with the full potential of interactive multimedia and simulations.</p> <p>The focus of this presentation is on the challenges NOUN is facing in this process of planned incremental innovation. Some of these challenges are external to the institution: deficiencies in the national infrastructure required to provide reliable and affordable access to broadband Internet across a country as large as Nigeria; unreliability of the power supply, even in large urban centres such as Lagos. Other challenges are internal. These include the university's own infrastructure upgrading in order to maintain all learning centres functional and in contact with headquarters and (last but not least) significant needs for capacity building of its staff. Participants in this session will be invited to evaluate the alternative strategies that NOUN and other similar ODL institutions across Africa may employ to deal with such challenges.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Smit, JM; Moolman, B	Southern Business School	<p>Creating High Performance Educational Institutions: The Managerial Task</p> <p>1. RESEARCH PROBLEM</p> <p>Higher educational institutions in South Africa experience huge problems in improving the past rate and throughput in undergraduate ODL programmes. According to Strydom and Mentz (2010), student engagement can be defined by two key components: first, what students do (the time and energy they devote to educationally purposive activities), and second, what institutions do (the extent to which institutions employ effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things).</p> <p>2. RESEARCH METHOD</p> <p>The research is based on case study (De Vos, 2011:320) at Southern Business School, a private higher distance learning educational</p>

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		<p>institution in Gauteng. The most important findings will be reflected in the profile of the students in the different programmes offered, access to and usage of technology by students, an evaluation of current practices and the subsequent development of a value chain to ensure success and throughput.</p> <p>Special emphasis will be on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The typical business processes/value chains in higher educational institutions. • The crucial role of resources and capabilities in improving the structured and customer driven execution of business processes – (pass rate and throughput) • The crucial alignment with students in creating performance driven education <p>3. FINDINGS Higher educational institutions need to apply fundamental principles applicable in the business world - resources and capabilities being the principal basis for corporate strategy. This implies bringing about the required changes/integration in value chains stretching from institution until customer in establishing resources and capabilities as competitive advantage.</p> <p>4. REFERENCES De Vos, A.S, Strydom, H, Fouche, C.B & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. Research at Grassroots. For the social sciences and human service professions. Third Edition. Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria. Porter, M. 1984. Competitive Advantage. Free Press: New York. Strydom, J.F. & Mentz, M. 2010. South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) - Focusing the Student Experience on Success through Student Engagement. CHE Publication. Pretoria.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Subotzky,GI; Archer, E; Sondlo, M	Unisa	<p>The blurring boundaries of blended learning: Who is doing, and planning to do what in Distance Education in South Africa?</p> <p>One of the many impacts of new ICTs on higher education has been the blurring of boundaries between contact and distance education. From the traditional extremes of exclusively face-to-face and distance forms of contact, new technologies have generated blended learning modalities, which combine face-to-face and technology-enhanced forms of contact (Bersin, 2004)</p> <p>Contact institutions are increasingly utilising new technologies in academic and administrative processes, through which interactive online, digital and podcasted study materials are disseminated and academic and administrative interactions and communications are electronically conducted (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). However, this has sometimes led to reduced face-to-face contact time, without reduction in subsidy. Traditional face-to-face contact is thus increasingly being replaced by new forms of technology-enhanced blended modalities of interaction.</p> <p>On the other hand, distance institutions have increasingly utilised new technologies to narrow the various kinds of distance between student and institution (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). This has led to new generations of ODL utilising innovative forms of technology-based contact and interaction, ranging from online and digital provision of study materials, satellite and podcast transmission of lectures, electronic tutoring to the electronic submission and marking of assignments. With certain elements of face-to-face contact retained, such as tutorials, distance institutions have thus moved towards blended learning.</p> <p>In this context, the distinction between contact and distance modes of delivery are becoming increasingly blurred and blended. As this</p>

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		<p>distinction is fundamental in the current high education policy, regulatory, planning and funding framework in South Africa, it is important to track trends in this regard.</p> <p>This paper addresses this issue, drawing primarily from HEMIS institutional information from 2000 to 2009 and projections to 2013, submitted to DHET as part of enrolment planning requirements. This information provides a profile of contact and distance enrolments, success and graduation rates by race, gender, CESH categories and qualification levels. This profile, supplemented by additional analyses and research conducted at Unisa allows us to interrogate certain erroneous commonly held beliefs about distance education which still misinform research and policy. For example, while a common assumption is that distance education success rates are poor, Unisa's 2010 course success rate exceeded 60%, surpassing the 56% ministerial target. Likewise, Unisa's average student age has remained constant at 31, despite common assumptions that this is declining steadily. The paper also draws from empirical research into various offerings at contact and distance education institutions in order to track the degree of "contact" and "distance" involved.</p> <p>References Bersin, J. (2004). <i>The blended learning book: best practices, proven methodologies and lessons learned</i>. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2008). <i>Blended learning in higher education: framework, principles and guidelines</i>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Subotzky, GI; Liebenberg, H, Van Zyl, DJ	Unisa	<p>Enhancing ODL Students' Success through Risk Profiling and Prediction: The Case of Unisa</p> <p>To enhance student success at Unisa, integrated student support and success frameworks have been developed (Unisa, 2010, 2011). The <i>Student Success Framework</i> comprises five components: a) conceptually modelling factors impacting on Unisa students' success, informed by a literature review; b) distilling a predictive model based on relevant, actionable risk-related information gathered and disseminated by a tracking system; c) analysing this information to assess, profile and predict risks; d) informed by all this, implementing support interventions as part of the <i>Student Support Framework</i>; and e) evaluating impact over time.</p> <p>This paper presents the challenges of deriving the predictive model from the conceptual model and of developing a segmentation methodology for risk-profiling Unisa's diverse students. This involved translating theoretical constructs of the high-level conceptual model into a practical predictive model and profile.</p> <p>Modelling factors explaining and predicting success is complex. Success is the outcome of dynamic individual, institutional and contextual processes. The challenge is to retain sufficient complexity in modelling the relationships between contextually-relevant predictor variables to inform practical interventions. Relatively low proportions of success variation are explained by traditional modeling techniques which focus on comparatively few contextually-relevant variables. They therefore fail to capture the dynamic, complex underlying multivariate process, thereby limiting their explanatory and predictive value and, in turn, possibilities for action.</p> <p>Deriving the predictive model involved: identifying academic and non-academic variables required for valid and reliable construct measurement, profiling and prediction; utilising data-gathering methods that yield consistent, complete and unbiased data; and applying appropriate advanced statistical analysis and data-mining techniques to identify the multivariate relationships between variables and constructs.</p> <p>The high-level constructs distilled into the predictive model include: a) <i>interpersonal elements</i>: past/current socio-economic status and life circumstances (family/educational background, and sufficient stability, support, time and opportunity for study; b) <i>intrapersonal</i></p>

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		<p><i>elements</i>: academic ability, psychological attributes and metacognitive skills; c) the quality of academic and administrative institutional services/processes; and d) meaningful mutual engagement between student and institution.</p> <p>Segmenting the student profile was approached by distilling three primary constructs: academic ability, psychological attributes/metacognitive skills and life circumstances. A five-point scale was applied to each which generated 125 permutations. From these, five risk categories were scored: from very high to very low. The validity of these categories and the predictor variables and demographics embedded in the predictive model will be tested against the data.</p> <p>This paper highlights Unisa's efforts to profile, predict and effectively address student and institutional risk in the ODL context.</p> <p>References</p> <p>Unisa. 2010. <i>Implementing the Conceptual Framework for Student Support at Unisa: A Proposal for 2011-2013</i>. Final report of ODL Task Team 4, submitted to Senate. Pretoria: Unisa.</p> <p>Unisa. 2011. <i>A Framework and Strategy for Enhancing Student Success at Unisa</i>. Final report of ODL Task Team 6, submitted to Senate. Pretoria: Unisa.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>
Subotzky, G; Visser, H; Tladi, LS	Unisa	<p>Appropriately Measuring, Benchmarking & Improving Retention and Graduation in ODL: Work in Progress at Unisa</p> <p>Enhancing student success, retention and graduation in ODL is a top priority at Unisa. In South Africa, contact norms and standards related to this goal are often uncritically applied to ODL. Consequently, Unisa's performance in this regard is often unfairly comparatively judged. Establishing appropriate methods for measuring and benchmarking retention and graduation for ODL is therefore vital. This paper presents proposals and key findings regarding the core challenge, drawing from Unisa and other research.</p> <p>Measuring and benchmarking success involves two interrelated aspects: attrition/graduation rates and time-to-attrition/graduation. Cohort studies provide the most reliable method for this. By this method, graduation rates are calculated as graduates over entering students in a cohort. Cohorts are defined variously: first-time entering, returning or transfer students entering a specific qualification or an institution. Time-to-attrition/graduation is calculated as the average time to either of these outcomes within a defined cohort. In the absence of cohort studies, a rough 'proxy' graduation rate was utilized by the DoE and institutions, calculated as graduates over enrolments in a particular year. This method has major limitations, particularly for Unisa, where recent rapid enrolment increases and considerable occasional enrolments downwardly distort the proxy graduation rate.</p> <p>Graduation targets for contact and distance qualifications were first established in the 2001 National Plan. A subsequent discussion document (Ministry of Education, 2001) explained the method underlying the targets, based on the analysis of "typical patterns". However, clear inconsistencies are evident in the contact and distance targets. Likewise, the first national cohort study (Scott et al, 2007) utilised the conventional international contact time-to-completion benchmark of five years (representing time-and-a-half for a three-year undergraduate degree).</p> <p>These measures and benchmarks are not appropriate in ODL, particularly in South Africa where most students are part-time and many are underprepared. They face formidable academic and non-academic (work, domestic, financial and motivational) risks to success. These impact on persistence, graduation and time-to-completion rates, which should therefore be measured and benchmarked appropriately. An appropriate ODL time-to-completion benchmark is the <i>expected minimum time-to-completion</i>, based on course load. Students carrying half a full-time load in a three-year qualification, for example, can expect to complete in a minimum of six years.</p>

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		<p>Further, as a ODL students stop out, this time should be deducted when calculating time-to-completion. Cohort case studies (Unisa, 2008) and analyses conducted at Unisa indicate that time-to-completion and course success rates are satisfactory. Consequently, reducing the persistently high attrition rates constitutes the major challenge.</p> <p>References Ministry of Education. 2001. <i>Higher Education Graduation Rates: Benchmarks in the National plan for high education</i>. Pretoria: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Scott, I, Yeld, N & Hendry, J. 2007. <i>Higher Education Monitor No. 6: A case for improving teaching and learning in South African high education</i>. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.</p> <p>Unisa. 2008. <i>Improving Throughput at Unisa: A report on three cohort case studies</i>. Addendum to the Self-evaluation Portfolio prepared for the Institutional Audit of the Higher Education Quality Committee. Pretoria: Unisa.</p> <p>Paper Powerpoint Presentation</p>