CHAPTER 4

INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTORS IMPACTING ON THE PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

4.1   Research approach

The study requires specific and well-organised research methods for it to produce a credible outcome that may lead to better understanding of the phenomenon.   I purposefully adapted a phenomenological approach and focussed on identifying and describing the meanings that all the selected participants bring to the phenomenon of providing and managing student development and support. The study reports a purposeful attempt to make sense out of the various interpretations, experiences, meanings and contexts. The next section elucidates the methodology.

4.1.1   Research design

To achieve the stated purpose of understanding the phenomena of provision and management of student development and support, I undertook a qualitative study.   The study interprets perspectives, views, priorities, interpretations and agendas of persons and institutions involved. It required sampling various persons and sites so as to be as representative as possible of the broader South African higher education sector.   A multi-method approach was selected to obtain an understanding of this most complex and evolving phenomenon, not only in terms of its measurable items, but also in terms of the meanings and interpretations that impact on the provision and management of student development and support.   The approach is primarily qualitative in nature, with a small component of quantification of the initial data (pre-interview questionnaires) and triangulation of literature findings, interview data and questionnaires.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:395) describe qualitative research as follows: Interactive qualitative research is inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings (field research). Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. I interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative studies are important for theory generation, policy development, educational practice improvement, illumination of social issues and action stimulus. This is a fitting description of the strategy, method and purpose followed for this study.

Table 4.1 gives an interpretation of the application of this definition to the methodology planned for this study.

Table 4.1: Systematic analysis of the Macmillan-Schumacher definition of qualitative research and the applicability to this study

MCMILLAN AND SCHUMACHER ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	HOW DID I APPLY THE PRINCIPLE?
Interactive qualitative research is inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings (field research).	Intensive interviewing and interview questionnaires with a range of selected individuals in the fields of student development and support; education; labour; and management.
Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. The researcher interprets phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.	I describe, interpret and analyse existing practices and policies, but also the thoughts, beliefs and perspectives the participants have of them.
Qualitative studies are important for theory generation, policy development, educational practice improvement, illumination of social issues and action stimulus.	I endeavoured to: - generate improved theory on student development and support in higher education; - contribute an understanding of policy development and decision-making; and - increase understanding of the student development and support phenomenon.

The nature of the phenomenon (strategically relevant student development and support) is complex and multi-layered. To achieve my goals, as the researcher, I needed to construct a framework of understanding in order to make sense of the collective perspective and shared experiences as expressed by participants.

Data collection strategies were two-fold, and multiple-methods were used. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:376-377) regard a study of this kind as suitable for the investigation of policy issues and for describing and analysing the phenomenon. The intention of the study, namely to "provide detailed description of the case, an analysis of the themes or issues uncovered and the researcher's interpretations or assertions about the case" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:37), were central to the selection of methods of data-collection. By nature of the research aim the design is based on a naturalistic-phenomenological view of qualitative research as the realities are multi-layered, interactive, and at present, exist as a shared social and educational experience. The sampling of universities and critical stakeholders allowed for the accommodation of a spectrum of personal views, experiences and perceptions.

4.2   Social network system, sampling and data collection strategy

The nature of the study requires extensive networking to firstly identify key individuals to be targeted for interviews and to secondly access those identified. The sector is also very large with many stakeholders and it is essential to identify specific institutions, stakeholders and individuals that may speak to the topic and contribute towards greater understanding.

4.2.1   Selecting research venues

As is evident from the above the research required a multi-site investigation with a range of stakeholders or representatives of stakeholders. To ensure a research outcome that will contribute towards generating a better understanding of the factors impacting on the

effective delivery of student development and support a sampling of research sites was done.

4.2.2 Sampling and participant selection

The strategy for sampling was mostly convenient and purposeful, as selected sites or participants had to be accessible while remaining representative of the constituencies. Further interviewees were identified as the data collection process progressed and I identified sources that could lead to further information.

Government departments and institutions of higher education were targeted for the investigation. For the purpose of the sampled stakeholder studies, both an interactive data collection strategy and an inductive data collection strategy were followed. The two-pronged approach facilitated the desired extended understanding of the educational phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:375). Interactive data collection was an essential component, as the outcome of the study is based on an analysis and integration of the subjective views and specific expertise of critical stakeholders in the management of student development and support services.

Table 4.2: Method of investigation and sampling

Method of investigation (ratio %) Research aim	Artifacts, policies, strategic plans, policy documents, legislation, budgeting records, funding frameworks, etc.	Literature review	Pre-interview questionnaires	Personal interviews
1. Tracing the existing range and scope of student development and support activity in higher education.	60%	20%	-	20%

2. Determining how policy and legislation impact on the provision and management of student development and support services in higher education.	50%	20%	15%	15%
3. Investigating the impact of institutional policies and strategic plans on student development and support services in higher education.	20%	10%	20%	50%
4. Exploring existing national and international benchmarks and frameworks to indicate good practice for the provision and management of student development and support.	60%	25%	-	15%
5. Identifying key factors for the provision and management of strategically relevant student development and support in higher education.	10%	10%	50%	30%

Critical stakeholders were identified as stakeholder areas for research and the targeted participants included:

- Senior managers of higher education institutions.
- Government officials.
- Student development and support practitioners.
- Department of Education.
- Council for Higher Education.
- Higher Education Quality Committee.
- Higher Education South Africa.

The criteria for selection of specific sites or target groups and individuals, were:

- Reputational: based on official classifications.
- Decision-making impact on higher education.
- Critical case factors: practitioners at higher education institutions in the midst of reform and transformation of higher education in South Africa.

In order to ensure the relevance and predictive validity of the findings, the categories for sampling will be stratified according to the classification of the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (Council for Higher Education, 2003), namely as:

- Representation of institutions formally categorised as historically advantaged higher education institutions (also known as historically white institutions); and
- representation of institutions formally categorised as historically disadvantaged higher education institutions (also known as historically black institutions).

Such an approach required networking and interaction with a variety of participants in the policy-making sectors, support service practitioners and the managers of student support services at the targeted institutions. The approach also further required interaction with officials in policy-making, financial and other strategic decision-making positions that impact directly on the effective management of student support services in higher education.

The student affairs and related sections in the selected institutions were considered critical participants and particularly the line managers for these functions within the specific institutions. Focus group sessions with practitioners within the unit(s) providing student development and support were done to accommodate more views and also ascertain collective views. Participants were provided with interview questionnaires to further identify areas of discussion and exploration implementing a strategy as proposed by Krueger, Casey, Donner, Kirsch and Maack, (2001:24-39) and Kreuger and Casey et al (2001).

The following table illustrates the steps, research questions, sampling and specific methods of enquiry that had been implemented.

Table 4.3: Summary of research aims and enquiry strategies

Method of investigation (% ratio) Research aim	Artefacts, policies, strategic plans, policy documents, legislation, budgeting records, funding frameworks, etc.	Literature review	Pre-interview questionnaires	Personal interviews
1. Tracing the existing range and scope of student development and support activity in higher education.	40%	30%	-	30%
2. Determining how policy and legislation impact on the provision and management of student development and support services in higher education.	20%	20%	20%	40%
3. Investigating the impact of institutional policies and strategic plans on student development and support services in higher education.	20%	10%	20%	50%
4. Exploring existing national and international benchmarks and frameworks to indicate good practice for the provision and management of student development and support.	50%	25%	-	25%
5. Identifying key factors for the provision and management of strategically relevant student development and support in higher education.	10%	5%	40%	45%

4.3 Report on qualitative data collection

This section provides a systematic report on the utilisation of the main data collection strategies, the analysis of the data collected and the specific findings per data-set.

The methods applied accommodated the limited number of participants and a qualitative data analysis approach was followed. Donner (2001) states that when a researcher tackles a complex, multidimensional development challenge, there can be as many perspectives as there are stakeholders. Such a phenomenon needs to be investigated in its complexity and should not be simplified for the sake of scientific study. Alerted to this I made a purposeful attempt to not overly-categorise and simplify information from participants and duly recorded all discussions. During the analysis phase the sensitivity regarding stereotyped clustering enabled me to very carefully identify sub-categories of responses as suggested by the qualitative data. Such categories of data were codes and could be evaluated in terms of prominence and relationships to other categories or codes.

4.3.1 Utilisation and outcomes of interview questionnaires

A basic questionnaire to verify (triangulate) discussion outcomes were completed by the interviewees.

4.3.1.1 Application of interview questionnaires

Although the initial planning for the research did not include any quantitative techniques it became clear during the detailed planning of the qualitative data collection that an element of verification would be useful in the context of this particular study. A questionnaire was then developed with the intention to use it as part of a triangulating strategy. The topic is specialised but many disciplines speak to it, namely higher education, psychology, sociology and management. The use of the

questionnaire with the specific items selected and listed was intended to verify the observations and deductions from the interview and transcripts.

The items for the questionnaire were selected based on the literature review and the specific research questions. In order to keep the items relatively neutral and not to suggest any responses, the items were kept similar in style as short statements and participants indicated a response according to a closed form Likert-scale (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:262). The instruction to participants was to give personal and subjective responses. The inclusion of the middle (neutral) category in this case was considered functional as a neutral response would also be indicative of the view of the participant.

The biographical detail collected from participants proved helpful as it was not necessary to repeat this exercise during the valuable interview or discussion time. The final version contained three core biographical data items selected to provide a biographical profile without compromising the anonymity of participants and 33 items or questions pertaining to the topic. Items for the questionnaire addressed the following broad categories:

- Financial support as a determinant for student support, as determined by the funding framework for higher education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001).
- Financial support as determined by the internal organisational budgeting processes.
- Organisational policy on student development and support within the specific organisation.
- Government policy on the role and function of student support services.
- Strategic planning and alignment by student development and support sections or units.

- The importance of measurable performance and impact of student support services.

- The importance of perceived performance and impact of student support services by decision-makers in the government and institutions.

- Implementation of managerial models of business operation on student development and support units.

- The positioning of student support services within organisational structures.

4.3.1.2 Analysis of interview questionnaire data

Data from the questionnaires initially provided a framework and after the transcript analysis also confirmed the factors raised by participants. Table 4.4 provides a response frequency account of the information provided through questionnaires. Because of the nature of the study and the number of participants no further analysis of the questionnaire data was attempted as the only important goal was to determine response-frequency on the factors included in the questionnaire in order to compare this to the information constructed from the interview texts.

Table 4.4: Frequency table of the responses of participants to the specific items listed in the questionnaire

Item legend:
1. Institutional strategic priorities
2. National strategic priorities
3. Priorities determined by DoE
4. Institutional organisational structure
5. Line function/s of SDS
6. Internal structuring of SDS
7. Institutional financial priorities
8. Allocation of financial resources in the institution
9. Institutional standing on national forums
10. Personal influence of individual managers
11. Perspective and agendas of institutional managers
12. Skills needs as formulated by Labour and Industry
13. National strategies for socio-economic development
14. National education strategies
15. Provincial education strategies
16. National economy
17. Local economy
18. Effect of globalisation
19. Student learning needs
20. Academic skills of entering students
21. quality assurance approaches in HE
22. Student activism
23. National politics
24. Restructuring of the HE landscape
25. Implementation of outcomes based education in Primary
26. Implementation of outcomes based education in Secondary
27. Emphasis on cooperative education
28. Implementation of educational technologies
29. Changing role of the lecturer
30. Application of business management principles
31. Emphasis on entrepreneurship
32. Preparedness of learners entering the system
33. Preparedness of institutions to accommodate learning demands

ID	Respondent Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
1	1	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	2	2	4	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	3
2	1	4	5	4	3	2	2	4	4	5	3	3	4	5	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3
3	1	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	0	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	5	0	5	0	3	5	5	5	5	5	5
8	2	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	2	3	2	4	2	4	1	5	4	4	3	4	5
4	2	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	2	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	2	3	1	4	4	2	3	3	4	2	5	4
11	2	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	4
12	2	5	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	5	5	3	4	4	3	3	5	4	4
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9	3	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	5	3	5	3	4	3	5	3	4	3	5	3	5	5	5
10	3	5	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	5
17	3	5	3	4	5	4	5	5	4	3	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	5					3	3	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
21	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5
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6	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	3	3	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	5
7	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	2	2	4	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	5	5	5	5
8	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	4
9	4	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	4	2	2	2	4	5	3	5	2	4	2	5	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	5	5	5
10	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
11	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	3	2	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	3	5	5	4	3	3	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5
13	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	4	5	2	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	5
14	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	2		3	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
15	4	2	3	4	2	1	3	5	5	3	3	5	5	3	3	3	1	1	2		3	3	5	4	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	5	5	5
16	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	3	4	2	5	3	5	4	4	3	4	5	5	5	4	3	2	3	5	5	5	4	5	3	3	5	5	5
18	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
19	4	5	4	4	5	5	2	5	5	4	5	4	3	4	5	5	3	5	5	3	2	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
20	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5
		4.29	4.29	4.36	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.64	4.57	3.64	4.07	4.14	4.29	3.71	4.21	3.79	3.86	4.07	3.71	4.86	4.79	4.4	3.5	3.36	4.23	3.86	4.36	4.29	4.07	4.14	3.93	3.5	4.93	4.93

The data in Table 4.4 indicates a wide spread of factors that were indicated by respondents to be relevant to the management and provision of student development and support. Figure 4.1 provides a graphic depiction of the rating of factors in the questionnaire.
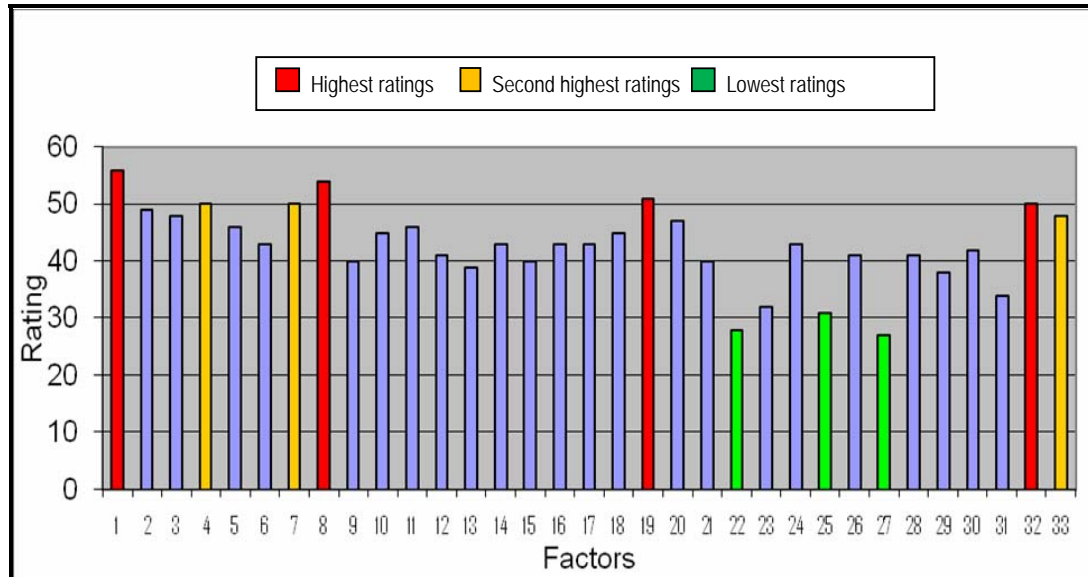

Figure 4.1 Collective participant-rating of factors impacting on student development and support

The figure indicates that in the collective responses of all the participants.

The following factors were rated to be of primary importance (50+):

Item1   Institutional strategic priorities

Item 4   Institutional organisational structure

Item 7   Institutional financial priorities

Item 8   Allocation of financial resources within the institution

Item 19   Student learning needs

Item 32   Preparedness of learners entering the system

Item 33   Preparedness of institutions to accommodate learning needs

Factors indicated as of least importance were the following

Item 22   Student activism

Item 25   Outcomes-based education in primary and secondary education

Item 27   Emphasis on cooperative education

It is however, important to note that even the lowest three factors were still regarded as having some impact or importance. This may be ascribed to the participants not distinguishing clearly between factors relating to student development and support or it may be an indication that participants regard all factors as being of some degree of importance. When the data was further clustered into the specific groups of participants, namely policy makers; institutional managers; student development and support managers and student development and support practitioners the following results were achieved:
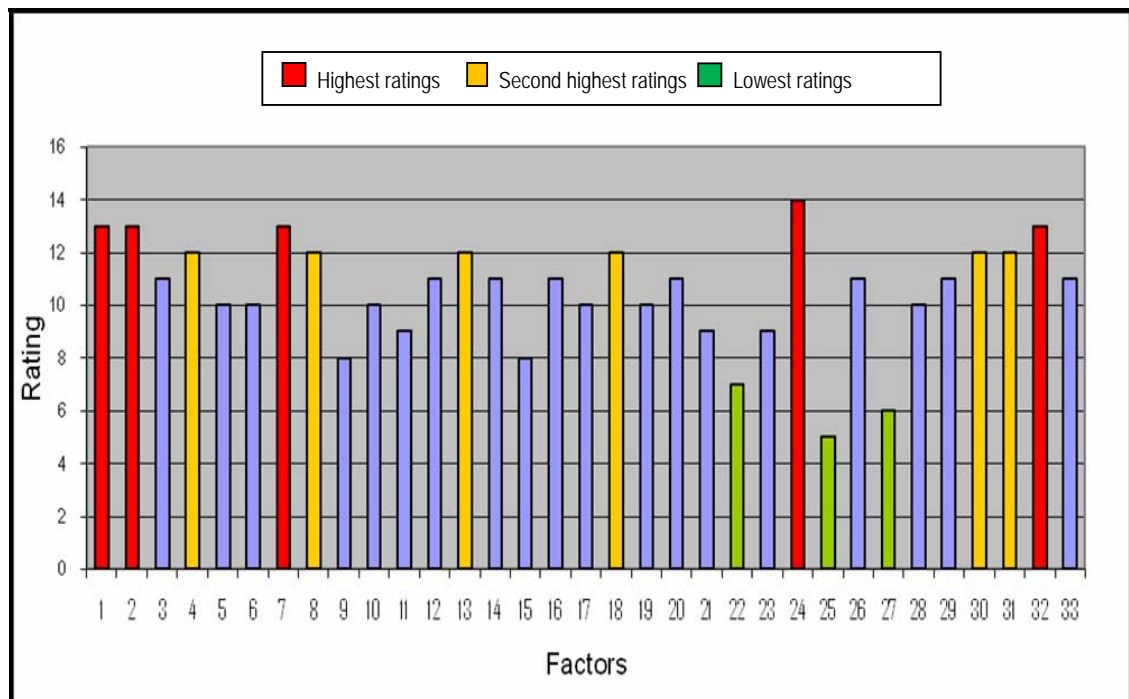
Figure 4.2: Rating of factors by participants in the category: policy-makers

Figure 4.2 indicates that in the responses of participants in the category of policy-makers.

The following factors were rated to be of primary importance (50+):

Item1   Institutional strategic priorities

Item 2   National strategic priorities

Item 4   Institutional organisational structure

Item 7   Institutional financial priorities

Item 8   Allocation of financial resources within the institution

Item 13   National strategies and socio-economic development

Item 18   Effect of globalisation

Item 24   Restructuring of the HE landscape

Item 30   Application of business management principles in institutions

Item 31   Emphasis on entrepreneurship

Item 32   Preparedness of learners entering the system

Item 33   Preparedness of institutions to accommodate learning needs

Factors indicated as of lesser importance (-49) were the following

Item 22   Student activism

Item 25   Outcomes-based education in primary and secondary education

Item 27   Emphasis on cooperative education

The above results indicate that the policy-making sector, i.e. national government and national coordinating bodies indicated many of the same factors and also added – as can be expected – a more macro view by including national and international factors (national strategies; entrepreneurship; globalisation; management approached; restructuring of the HE landscape). The policy-making group also indicated the same three factors of lesser importance.

The following figure indicates the rating of factors as indicated by the participants in the category institutional managers.
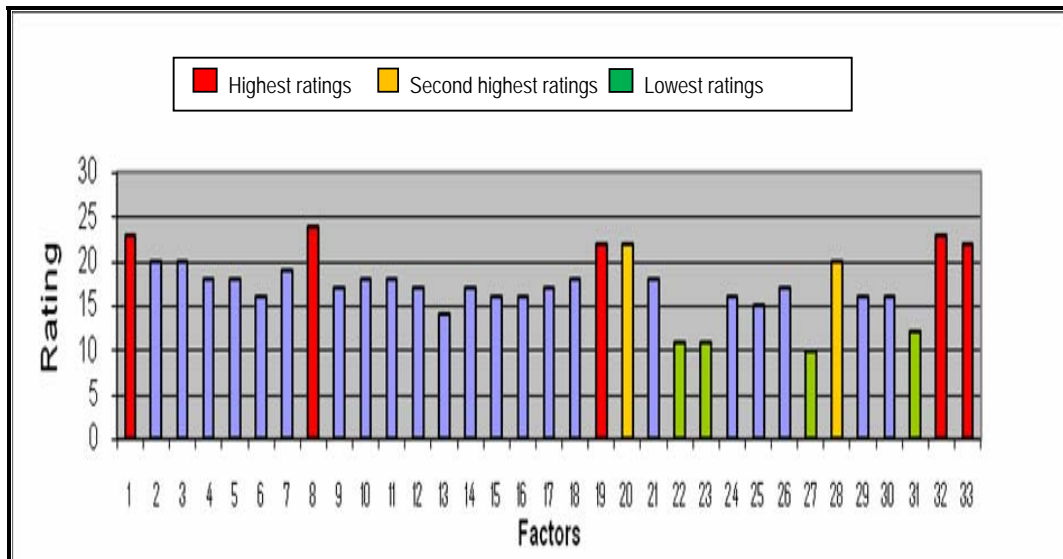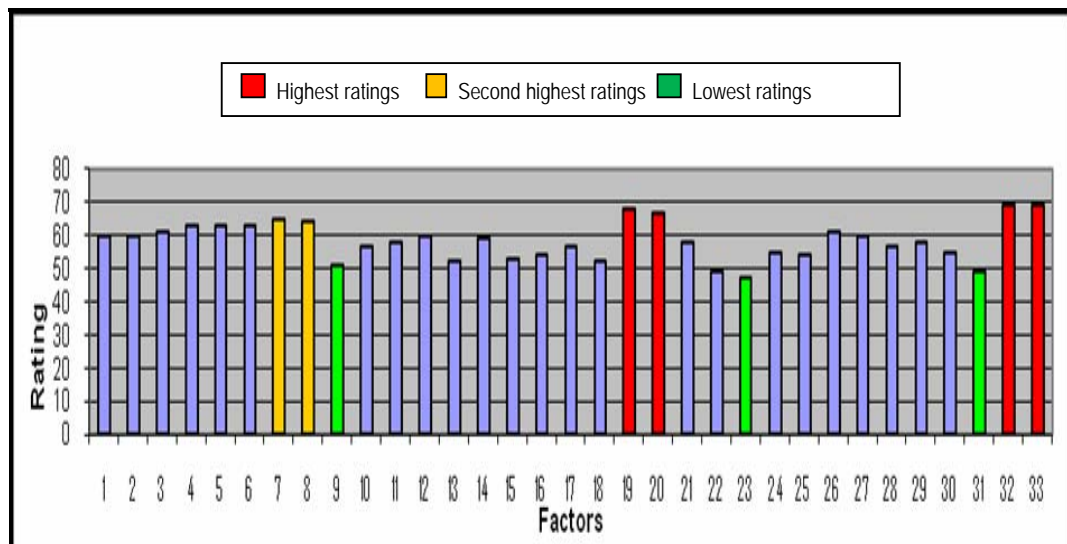
Figure 4.3: Rating of factors by participants in the category: institutional managers

Figure 4.3 indicates that in the responses of participants in the category of institutional managers.

The following factors were rated to be of primary importance (50+):

Item1   Institutional strategic priorities

Item 8   Allocation of financial resources within the institution

Item 19   Student learning needs

Item 20   Academic skills of entering students

Item 28   Implementation of educational technologies

Item 32   Preparedness of learners entering the system

Item 33   Preparedness of institutions to accommodate learning needs

Factors indicated as of lesser importance (-49) were the following

Item 22   Student activism

Item 23   National politics

Item 27   Emphasis on cooperative education

Item 31   Emphasis on entrepreneurship

The above results indicate that the institutional managers broadly indicated institutional management factors as well as learner profiles and

preparedness as being most important to the management and provision of student development and support.

The institutional management group indicated similar factors that are rated as being of lesser importance.

The following figure (Figure 4.4) indicates the rating of factors as indicated by the participants in the category of student development and support managers.
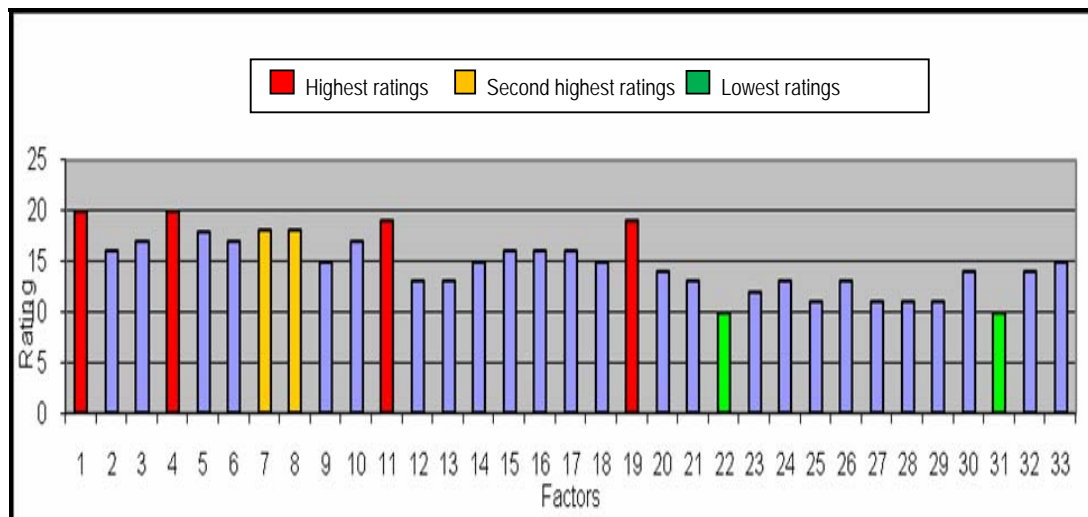
Figure 4.4: Rating of factors by participants in the category: student development and support managers

Figure 4.4 indicates that in the responses of participants in the category of student development and support managers.

The following factors were rated to be of primary importance (50+):

Item1   Institutional strategic priorities

Item 5   Line function of sds units

Item 7   Institutional financial priorities

Item 8   Allocation of financial resources in the institution

Item 11   Perspectives and agendas of institutional managers

Item 19   Student learning needs

Factors indicated as of lesser importance (-49) were the following

Item 22   Student activism

Item 31   Emphasis on entrepreneurship

The above results indicate that the student development and support managers broadly indicated institutional management factors (line functions, strategic priorities and funding) as well as learner profiles and preparedness as being most important to the management and provision of student development and support. There is a trend that unit managers have a more localised and institution-based focus in their assessment.

The student development and support managers indicated similar factors than the other groups as being of lesser importance. The following figure indicates the rating of factors as indicated by the participants in the category student development and support practitioners.

Figure 4.5: Rating of factors by participants in the category: student development and support practitioners

Figure 4.5 indicates that in the responses of participants in the category of student development and support practitioners.

The following factors were rated to be of primary importance (50+):

Item 7   Institutional financial priorities

Item 8   Allocation of financial and other resources

Item 19   Student learning needs

Item 20   Academic skills of student entering the system

Item 32   Preparedness of learners

Item 33   Preparedness of institutions to accommodate the learning needs

Factors indicated as of lesser importance (-49) were the following

Item 9   Institutional standing on national forums

Item 23   National politics

Item 31   Emphasis on entrepreneurship

The above results indicate that the student development and support practitioners expressed a focussed view related to operational and service demand factors (student needs and preparedness). This group put less emphasis on the national and international issues and were more concerned about the service related issues.

The questionnaire gave a limited view but provided additional information for me to review and reflect on the perspectives expressed verbally by the same participants.

4.3.1.3 Knowledge constructed from interview questionnaires

Interview questionnaires were applied with good effect in this study, as it provided an additional means of construction and verification of data collected from personal interviews and focus group discussions.

The items of the questionnaire relate directly to the phenomena discussed in personal interviews and groups, namely the factors impacting on the provision and management of student development and support. The quantified data from the questionnaire, though limited, provided opportunity for a degree of

verification and careful reflection of the data collected from the interviews and groups. As I am involved in the field and therefore have my own views and perspectives, the questionnaire was a good mechanism to monitor my own objectivity in listening and interpreting the interviews.

The approach was devised and implemented to contribute to proper structuring of data while specifically allowing the participants to use their own subjective criteria to evaluate the relative attractiveness/relevance of each element (Donner, 2001:26-28). Donner argues that in this type of investigation the researcher should plan to "allow the participants' logic/perspective to be their own". The application of short questionnaires to complement the interview enabled my early quantification of the results and the option to identify possible consensus items, contention items, and distinct sub-groups within the set of participants. This information constantly enriched further interviews.

4.3.2 Utilisation and outcomes of group discussions

The umbrella question for both the interview questionnaires, interviews and group discussions refers to the identification of key factors in the provision and management of student development and support services.

4.3.2.1 Application of group discussions

Focus group discussions were primarily focussed on engaging larger numbers of the specific target group (practitioners in the field of student development and support) with the topic and then determining the knowledge and meanings they have of this phenomenon and how these impact on the management and provision of student development and support.

During the course of the group discussions a number of issues were raised by the specialists in the field that caused me as the researcher to refocus and investigate further in order to ensure a richer and more

deeply informed set of data. In retrospect the recursive nature of the research process and continuous reflection on findings constituted a richer outcome.

■ **A practical approach for the preparation and facilitation of the group discussions** (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Chenail, 1997)**:**

The challenge for me was to facilitate focussed discussions, with some consistency, without influencing or directing the content of discussion.

The following framework was adhered to:

o **Preparation and orientation**

- Group discussions were started with an introduction to the topic, the research question and the aims of the research.
- Participants were reassured and ethics of the project confirmed.
- The use of audio-recording equipment was cleared with participants.

o **Contextualising**

- Posing the research question as the main discussion point.
- To stimulate the discussion a list of words were read suggesting areas of discussion.
- Allow free discussion of the topic and extended topics.
- Further questions to prompt opinion on specific issues.
- Further questions for clarity, e.g. asking for practical examples or probing for evidence of the facts stated.

o **Closing**

- The closing phase of the discussion consisted of a short

affirmation/interpretation of opinions expressed.

- Request to participants to engage in further discussion if, during the analysis of the transcripts, it may be required to seek clarity.
- Confirmation of ethics.

4.3.2.2 Analysis of group discussion data

The supportive tool for data analysis for data collected from the groups and interviews was the *ATLAS.ti software*. This tool is specifically suited for narrative analysis and was used to systematically analyse the field-transcripts. For the purpose of this study, the identification and grouping of similar responses were critical in the analysis in order to identify patterns emerging from the understanding, meanings, perceptions and opinions and then also the extent or strength of such a pattern.

The systematic analysis allowed me to do the following with group discussion data:

- Qualitative correlations between the perspectives of the different groups and participants;
- positive and negative correlations could be made to indicate items on which there may be consensus, and, at the other extreme, items of contention.

The verification of data collected from individual interviews could also be correlated and verified with the data gathered from groups.

As with groups the process of thematic analysis similar to what was described by Aronson (1994) ensued:

- Collecting of data;
- recording of data;
- relating new data to already identified patterns as was found in the

literature survey;

- combining evolving patterns into sub-themes;
- motivating and developing arguments for choosing the specific themes.

4.3.2.3 Knowledge constructed from group discussion data

To access more practitioners at the various sites, a group interviewing strategy was implemented. The identified sites had established service units, and, in order to reach as many of the practitioners and managers at the sites as possible group discussions were done. The data secured from the group interviews were similar and combined with the outcomes of the individual interviews

4.3.3 Utilisation and outcomes of individual interviews

Individual interviews formed the mainstay of the study. The following section is an exposition of the application of the interviews as a data collection strategy.

4.3.3.1 Application of individual interviews

Individual interviews were primarily focussed on engaging the target groups ranging from policy-makers to practitioners with the topic and then determining the meanings, insight and perspectives they have of this phenomenon and how these impact on the management and provision of student development and support.

Perspectives were gained from:
- Policy and strategy drivers on the national level;
- policy and strategy drivers in sample institutions of higher education;
- practitioners of student development and support services and programmes.

■ **Practical approach and preparation for the interviews (**McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Chenail, 1997)**:**

The challenge for me was to conduct focussed interviews with consistency and without influencing or directing the content of discussion:

o **Preparation and orientation:**

- Interviews were started with an introduction to the topic, the research question and the aims of the research.
- Participant was reassured and ethics of the project confirmed.
- The use of audio-recording equipment was cleared with participant.

o **Contextualising:**

- Posing the research question as the main interview question.
- Allow free discussion of the topic.
- Further questions to prompt opinion on specific issues.
- Further questions for clarity, e.g. asking for practical examples or probing for evidence of the facts stated.

o **Closing:**

- The closing phase of the interview consisted of a short affirmation/ interpretation of opinions expressed.
- Request to participant to engage in further discussion if the study would require.
- Confirmation of agreement on ethics of the study.
- Expressing thanks to the participants.

4.3.3.2 Analysis of individual interview data

As with group interviews the process of thematic analysis similar to what was described by Aronson (1994) ensued:

- Collecting of data;
- recording of data;
- relating new data to already identified patterns as was found in the literature survey;
- combining evolving patterns into sub-themes;
- motivating and developing arguments for choosing the specific themes.

The supportive tool for data analysis for data collected from interviews, was the *ATLAS.ti software* (Friese, 2004) after attending individual training on the specific application. The tool was used to systematically analyse field transcripts. For the purpose of this study, the identification and grouping (also called coding) of similar responses were critical in the analysis in order to identify patterns emerging from the understanding, meanings, perceptions and opinions and then also the extent or strength of such a pattern.

The systematic analysis allowed me to do the following:

- Identify codes or themes recurring in discussions.
- Determine the relationships between the various themes or codes in the transcripts.
- Relate the codes to specific interviewee groups.

During the course of the interviews a number of issues were raised by the specialists in the field that caused me to continuously refocus and investigate in order to ensure a richer and more deeply informed set of

data. In retrospect the recursive nature of the research process and continuous reflection on findings constituted a richer outcome.

The analysis of interview data also took cognisance of the use of metaphors (Schmitt, 2000). The individual participants expressed many perspectives and opinions by means of metaphors such as:
big task, encompassing, deep rooted, pressure/pressurised; burden; load; agenda. It was critically important for me to be alert in terms of these patterns of speech but also to explore the meanings behind them. These metaphors are not merely used by chance but express patterns of thought, perception, mood, motivation, mode of action that are relevant towards understanding the current state and future expectations for student development and support in higher education.

4.3.3.3 Knowledge constructed from individual interviews

The nature of the study required thorough analysis of the patterns of understanding that emerged from the data. In developing this understanding it was most critical to be aware of the specific contexts of the participants. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:46) state that in this type of analysis the researcher has to invoke context, both distal (referring to the social, political, ethnical and institutional context and other settings of the phenomenon) and proximate (immediate setting, financial and organisational strategies and other factors).

Interpreting Henning et al. 2004:161 for the purpose of this study the analysis meant that I had to discover or understand how student development and support in higher education came about, why it has a particular meaning or meanings today, how it is constructed from various texts and how it draws from and influences other discourses. These discourses are reported on in detail in Chapter 2.

4.4 Integration of knowledge constructed from the study: relating the findings from the three sources of knowledge

The various sources of information had to be integrated to construct a knowledge base as an outcome to this study. The following section is an exposition of the process of integration of the knowledge gained.

4.4.1 Data processing

Although ethical clearance was given I did not make use of an assistant for transcribing and data processing. After every interview (individual or group) the electronically recorded interview was transcribed. This was essential in order to generate a written record of the interview and specifically the views, opinions and meanings expressed by the interviewee(s).

Immediately after the interview notes were made of my observation as the interviewer and it constituted a quick reflection on what was experienced, observed and heard. At this time I already gained some insight as to the themes coming to the fore in the interviews.

The difficulty in avoiding personal opinions about the issues that interviewees raised became less problematic as the process of data collection proceeded.

Transcriptions were time consuming but it was a worthwhile effort to transcribe them myself. A final portfolio of nineteen transcripts was compiled to be used as primary documents for data analysis.

4.4.2 Data analysis (coding and memos)

Transcripts were prepared in electronic format to be compatible and finally drawn into the *ATLAS.ti software*. The software creates a platform

for the analysis of qualitative data and for the purpose of mining the data for knowledge, opinions, perspectives and meaning expressed by the participants it was a suitable tool.

The first phase of analysis was the creation of codes. Codes for this analysis were derived from factors that were postulated before data collection and that arose during the interviews.

For the purpose of the analysis the following codes were formulated as the framework for the text analysis. Codes are listed in alphabetical order with number of quotations linked to code and a definition to every code:

- Code: Curriculum

  Nr of quotations: 34

  Defined: Curriculum refers to all aspects relating to the composition, strategy and design of a learning programme with special focus on the university curriculum and the accommodation of student development and support outcomes.

- Code: Economic factors

  Nr of quotations: 6

  Defined: Economic factors relate to all aspects of the impact of the national economy, references to the impact, the impact of poverty and national economic strategies.

- Code: Education funding framework and strategy

  Nr of quotations: 18

  Defined: Funding framework and funding strategy refer to all matters of state subsidy, state funding strategy and resourcing priorities for higher education and the effect of such systems.

■ Code: Globalisation

Nr of quotations: 6

Defined: Globalisation refers to the phenomenon of internationalisation within the country and particularly in higher education and particularly the impact of this trend on the student development and support function.

■ Code: Institutional structure

Nr of quotations: 26

Defined: Institutional structure refers to all aspects of university/ institutional structure, line function of the student development and support unit(s) and positioning of the function within the university.

■ Code: Labour and skills development priorities

Nr of quotations: 16

Defined: Labour and skills development priorities refers to the national skills development initiatives and labour driven priorities impacting on higher education and the role of other stakeholders affecting the sector and particularly implications for the student development and support function.

■ Code: Managerialism

Nr of quotations: 41

Defined: Managerialism refers to the phenomenon of implementing management models and approaches (quality assurance, performance management, auditing, input-output equations) in the context of higher education and the consequences or impact of this approach for the institutions and particularly for student development and support.

■ Code: National education strategy and policy

Nr of quotations: 41

Defined: National education strategy and policy refers to all aspects of national planning and approach to higher education and the impact on higher education in general and also specifically the student development and support function in the institutions.

- Code: Outcomes-based education

  Nr of quotations: 18

  Defined: Outcomes-based education refers to the implementation of the approach and impact of the learning programmes constructed around specific outcomes to be achieved at specific designated phases and at the final outcome of a learning programme.

- Code: Primary and secondary education

  Nr of quotations: 15

  Defined: Primary and secondary education refers to factors relating to the system of education at the primary and secondary school level –the quality of education and the impact of these phases of education.

- Code: Role of the lecturer in higher education

  Nr of quotations: 37

  Defined: Role of the lecturer refers to all matters relating to the expectations and performance areas of lecturers and with specific attention to the changing role of the lecturer and the potential impact of this trend on the student development and support function.

- Code: Socio-political

  Nr of quotations: 17

  Defined: Socio-political refers to all factors of social or political nature that impact on higher education and the student development and support function in institutions.

- Code: Strategic planning and management of the university

  Nr of quotations: 36

Defined: Strategic planning and management of the institution refers to those aspects of the institutions strategic approach and planning that impacts on or has relevance for the student development and support function.

■ Code: Student attitude and behaviour

Nr of quotations: 12

Defined: Student attitude and behaviour refers to aspects of student emotion and observable reaction that may have impact on the university and or have implication for the student development and support function.

■ Code: Student preparedness

Nr of quotations: 35

Defined: Student preparedness refers to aspects of student potential, knowledge and abilities at the time of entering the higher education institution. This includes issues of academic literacy, language proficiency, social adjustment and all other aspects that may affect preparedness for higher education.

■ Code: Student profile

Nr of quotations: 40

Defined: Student profile refers to biographical information, characteristics, needs and nature of the student coming into the university and particularly the implications for the student development and support function.

■ Code: Teaching strategies

Nr of quotations: 12

Defined: Teaching strategies refers to ways of facilitating learning in higher education which may have direct or indirect implication for student development and support.

- Code: Technology in education

  Nr of quotations: 2

  Defined: Technology in education refers to the potential impact of technological development and the implementation of educational technologies during facilitating of learning.

- Code: Unit management approach and priorities

  Nr of quotations: 36

  Defined: Unit management approach and priorities relate to the manager and management style of the unit, including perspectives and approaches that are being followed.

- Code: Unit planning

  Nr of quotations: 9

  Defined: Unit planning refers to specific aspects of strategic and operation planning and approach in the organisational unit(s)/divisions of student development and support.

- Code: Unit responsiveness

  Nr of quotations: 21

  Defined: Responsiveness of the unit refers to all factors and aspects of response to trends pertaining to student development and support and needs on student, institutional and national levels.

- Code: Unit service portfolio

  Nr of quotations: 16

  Defined: Unit service portfolio refers to the specific services and focus areas attended to by the student development and support function and includes trends and new demands for services.

- ■ Code: University access and accessibility

  Nr of quotations: 26

  Defined: University access refers to all aspects, factors, trends or implications relating to the national and institutional approach to access and accessibility.

- ■ Code: University funding and budget

  Nr of quotations: 21

  Defined: University funding and budget refers to all aspects of the university budget and financial strategies and particularly the funding of student development and support functions.

- ■ Code: University resources

  Nr of quotations: 9

  Defined: Unit (service division) resources refer to the allocation and utilisation of resources towards the attainment of student development and support goals.

The above codes provided a framework from where the texts were analysed. Manual coding followed and every text was analysed in terms of matching the codes with text references (quotations).

The outcome of the process was a comprehensive list of codes with related quotations and original text/transcript references that provided a structured database for the study (the full text per code is available on the compact disc included with this manuscript).

The following table is a cryptic summary of the text references per code as reflected in the original data:

Table 4.5: **Summary of text/ transcript key words and concepts related to codes**

Code	Key phrases or concepts mentioned by participants
Curriculum	- Interventions curriculum-grounded. - Credit bearing. - Concept and language development best done within the discipline. - Advisory boards – referring to teaching; expressing the needs for skills development in the curriculum. - Critical cross-field outcomes increasingly important. - Student development incorporated into the curriculum will impact on the function". - We are under pressure to deliver a graduate. - Integrated approach. - Debate: is this non-academic work? - Credit-bearing vs no credits. - International notions of student development vs what is needed in SA. - Students do not have knowledge about what is important for them. - Students don't want to participate because these things don't appear on official academic schedules. - Responsive to student needs; according to the student profile. - Adjustment of teaching approaches along with content changes. - Gap between secondary and tertiary education - Extended curriculum model. - Add-on vs it needs to be done. - Programme revision required. - Diversity in students impacts through a diversity of needs. - About defining core business. - Mistake to separate from main curriculum. - Impact on unit resources: ratio of practitioners to students. - Curriculum integration is a fundamental issue.

	- University managements have become conscious that there are problems in this regard. - DoE stipulated curriculum integrated via extended programmes. - Go beyond traditional formal education and add development and enrichment of curriculum.

Main theme:
■ Integrated curriculum; extended curriculum and credit bearing development outcomes.
No contradictions to this opinion.

Economic factors	- Financial difficulty amongst students. - Many students are financially needy. - Qualifications are linked to economic growth and it dictates choices. - AD especially in this country emanates from the disadvantaged black students from impoverished backgrounds. - Poor students; greater risk of under-achievement. - Changes in the work place; what employers want.

Main themes:
■ National economic status impacts directly on higher education.
■ Large contingent students from impoverished backgrounds pose specific challenges.
■ Financial difficulty increases academic risk.

Education funding framework and strategy	- Contradiction in national policy and funding approach. - Operating from grants and other external funding resources – unstable situation. - If DVC understands the concept of student development and support the internal

	allocation of resources is better.
	- Funding framework and formula should make specific provision.
	- Institutional interpretation becomes evident if look at differentiated funding.
	- Expensive services by nature of business.
	- Learner profiles enough reason to adjust funding formula.
	- Financial issue mega-mega issue for students.
	- NSFAS not keeping up.
	- Financial managers under pressure to seek resources.
	- Will impact on HEQF and HEQC work.
	- Impact of the massification agenda.
	- If not sufficient operating budget you have a crisis.
	- Holistic development requires funding
	- DoE does not directly fund anything external to the curriculum.
	- Requires partnership between institutions and government.

Main themes:
- Perceives disjuncture between national policy (funding framework) and need.
- Student needs require resource allocation so that development needs can be addressed – also consider impact of massification agenda.
- Ultimate consequences on the level if implementing HEQF and also on quality issues.
- National and institutional strategies needed.

Globalisation	- Global trend to establish corporate universities.
	- Impacts on institutional autonomy and academic freedom.
	- Country has to be responsive to what is happening in the rest of the world.
	- Sectors in economy closely linked to economic development while HE tends to lag behind.
	- Takes decades to adjust to trends.

Main themes:

- Serious impact from the development of corporate universities.
- Globalisation ultimately impacts on academic freedom.
- HE adjusts very slowly.

Institutional structure	- Separate structures for functions. - Consolidated services into one service unit; most successful. - Establish a functional structure within university - Institutions will respond to learner profile and that will determine structure. - Student Affairs: not seen as core business of the university. - Makes a significant difference. - Should not work in isolation. - Report directly to DVC Academic. - Institutional structures, priorities and policies. - Sit together to discuss important matters of mutual concern. - Separation between counselling and academic development dysfunctional and less effective. - Student development and support to be seen as part of the teaching and learning experience. - Positioning means that we have the ear of management. - Would want to see academic development-type functions, counselling and all related functions consolidated into one unit. - Comprehensive unit. - Complete devolution; provision becomes invisible. - All activities geared toward academic success. - Because of line-function we don't have any impact or input into academic decision-making.

Main themes:

- Integrated functions most effective.
- Consolidated units.
- Reporting line most important (line function to DVC Academic).
- No consenting view – even from those interviewees where units are not consolidated there was a strong pro-consolidation

narrative.

Labour and skills development agendas	- Overlap between ministries (Education and Labour). - Higher education provides the trainees/graduates required by Labour. - Employment sector requires specific skills from graduates as captured in life skills programmes. - Advisory boards indicate requirements in terms of skills. - Employer expectations. - Higher education has to respond to national skills development needs. - NQF and specifically HEQF stems from labour agenda and is to be implemented in HE. - Conflict with academic autonomy. - Qualifications linked to economic growth. - Imperative not only form us but from the outside (referring to industry).

Main themes:
- Focus on the integration of education and labour agendas

Managerialism	- DoE influenced by considerations of sustainability. - Instruments like quality assurance, zero-based budgeting and performance management traditionally foreign to higher education. - Tends to become a narrow focus at the cost of teaching and learning. - Measuring success in education is complex and mostly problematic. - Approach not always 100% relevant. - It is needed and has value. - Structured management more effective, e.g. working in programme teams. - Accountability good but incessant number crunching negative. - Measures required to manage and monitor. - Balance between managerialism and collegiality essential. - Could stifle free academic thinking. - Education not a business; very different

dynamic.
- Resistance form academics – impacts on morale.
- Sometimes it effects positive change.
- It forces us to plan and give structure to what we do.
- One has to look if such things are viable and achievable in context, e.g. benchmarking.
- Performativity measures may threaten collegiality.
- Political pressures.
- Keep focussed on core business.
- Decrease in funding causes increase in managerialism.
- Positive effect of the merger.
- In our country we are maybe going to the extreme.
- Part of globalisation effect for institutions to become more business-like.
- Gives what you do validity.

Main themes:
- Mainly two positions argued:
  - Positive about managerialism: provides structure; increases accountability; inevitable consequence if institutions want to be competitive.
  - Negative about managerialism: threatens academic freedom and autonomy; could retract form core business; can become overbearing for academics.

National education strategy	- Institutions concentrated on managing the mergers – impacted on quality of teaching and learning. - National Plan for Higher Education for the first time placed emphasis on services – at a national strategic level. - Government uses steering mechanisms to achieve policy goals for example enrolment planning and funding. - National agenda stipulates access with success.

	- Not only Education strategy but also Labour strategy impacts on higher education. - National strategies sift through to our environments for example greater accessibility. - Foundation funding initiative. - Changing school curriculum and certification system impacts on us. - National agenda for quality (through HEQC) impacts directly. - Being a developing country government steers development. - Political transformation is real. - Because of national policies learner profiles have changed dramatically. - Implementation of outcomes-based education - Enrolment capping and ASGISA and JIPSA initiatives impacts directly. - Government driven transformation since early 1990s. - Implementation of the national body called Trade and Occupation Quality Council impacts heavily. - Schooling system changed. - Student profile has changed and higher education has become more accessible. - National policy filters into institutional strategy and finally into unit-strategy.

Main themes:
- National strategies have direct impact on the environment (new schooling curriculum; Trades and Occupations Quality Council).
- Labour agenda on targeted skills development is also impacting.
- Implementation of national policies on HEQF provides opportunity
- Political agenda and transformation.
- National Plan for Higher Education for the first time ever facilitates and position sds activities.

Outcomes-based education	- Integration of a skills development curriculum. - Assumptions about cohort of learners entering HE. Was it bad OBE? - OBE requires a partnership.

- OBE learners come formal curriculum mode that is different than traditional HE.
- Life Orientation is not happening properly.
- Ten years back students came to university prepared; more students come now being totally under-prepared.
- Life skills at first year level try to cover what was neglected at school.
- OBE is only successful if implemented correctly.
- OBE can theoretically lead to more critical learners.
- Educators don't really understand how to put OBE into practice.
- Bad OBE is worse than good rote learning.
- Complete lack of career guidance at school.
- Implementation at HE level requires integration of life skills in curriculum.
- Impact of OBE will only be evident from next year (2009+).
- Lack of mother tongue education and early switch to English doing a lot of harm.
- Gap between secondary and higher education still enormous.
- Lack of specialist knowledge and facilitation at school level.
- It had changed the focus of our outreach projects.
- Definite shift in focus with life skills becoming more central.
- Requires a paradigm shift from learners as they enter higher education.

Main themes:
- There is a lot of concern about the gap and the curriculum.
- Differences between secondary and higher (tertiary) education
- Concerns about the quality of life orientation facilitation at schooling level.
- Anticipation that the implementation of OBE will gradually improve the profile of learner accessing higher education.
- Criticism on OBE mostly centered on the level and quality of facilitation (i.e.. not the concept but how successfully it is implemented).

Role of the lecturer in higher education	- Lecturers have heightened awareness of the need to a partner AD support. - Not too sure lecturers are aware enough. - Academics confronted by new challenges but resistant. - Not only lecturers but also students need to be prepared. - Dependent on willing individuals. - Lecturers need to be student-centered but they do not model enthusiasm and motivation. - Academics tend to want to focus on their subject and not all these other matters. - Curriculum development is such a huge part of the role of the lecturer nowadays as they need to plan and design their teaching – unlike how it was in the past. - These things should be part of staff development. - Managerialism has an enormous impact and it changes the profession. - Lecturer has to work collaboratively and not in isolation anymore. - Academics see it as new terminology instead of new methodology. - Academics should be acutely aware of the differentiated needs of students. - Lecturer has an inherent responsibility to also be a student developer. - School leavers have certain expectations of lecturers. - Job of lecturer is expanding to include many additional functions. - Attitudes of lecturers sometimes reason for concern. - Lecturers are so cornered with "through-rate" that they neglect the larger education task. - Change in the needs of students. - Academic preparedness of students may escalate to crisis proportions. - Lecturers need to stop looking at deficit in students and start to look at deficit in their

	teaching.

Main themes:
- Two broad views:
  - Lecturers have made the shift and are becoming more involved in developmental activity.
  - Lecturers are resistant to change; are stuck on a student deficit perspective instead of a teaching deficit perspective.
- Job profile of lecturer changing rapidly; some resistance.

Socio-political	- Students develop a "need" paradigm and get stuck in it. - Under-preparedness increasing; referring to all aspects academic as well as socio-economic. - Pressure to increase student numbers leads to an increased need for academic development. - Students come from dysfunctional families and therefore lack support systems. - Language of instruction and school experiences play a role. - Democratic dispensation requires new role where students take responsibility. Learning won't just happen. - Adjustment required to function effectively within globalised society. - Students are financially needy. - Residence strategy needs to be reconceptualised to ensure academic success. - Career counselling focussed shifted from prospective students to students to address lack of guidance prior to entering the university. - Academic development stems from the disadvantaged black student era. - Service portfolio influenced by socio-economic background of students. - Being a developing country we tend to be catching up on most things. - All processes politicised.

Main themes:
- Many variables mentioned.

- Politicalisation of academic domain problematic.
- Socio-economic factors of background, poverty, disadvantaged and the paradigms that go with this.
- Context of a developing country.

Strategic planning and management of the university	- Positioned within Student Affairs with academic development elsewhere – problematic. - Reporting to different line functionaries makes it dysfunctional. - Buy in from stakeholders like lecturers and students are difficult to achieve. - Institutional managers don't realize or recognise the importance of our activities. - The lack of policy on national level. - Service portfolio is adjusted as institutional priorities change. - We contribute to the risk-report by making inputs from our perspective. - Organisational structures very important. - Analysis of student profiles essential. - Extended curriculum model as an institutional approach. - University requires strategy to address student under-preparedness. - Buy-in and commitment on institutional level by establishing policy and strategy and then funding it is most critical. - Clear perspective on core business required. - AD takes a new meaning from the programme development to accommodate students. - Transformation culminated in a phase of conflict followed by a phase of transformation. - Prioritisation of strategies. - Academic staff orientation and training should be compulsory. - Management systems are extremely important. - Constant fight to be recognised. - Foundation funding initiative has made a big difference.

Main themes:
- Many diverse views; yet identifiable trends.
- All participants emphasised the importance of correct positioning in the organisational structure and defined this as being within the academic line function.
- Recognition and support from senior management is important.

Student attitude and behaviour	- Not motivated and committed to attend additional skills development events. - Risk that lecturers become so concerned that the responsibility that students should take is shifted to them. - Students have changed. Not all are prepared for university demands. - Students should be made more aware of their own thinking and discourse. - Mass event type offering does not work anymore. - Culture of thinking in a disadvantaged way. - Balancing expectations between resident and non-resident students. - Students could be focussed on immediate needs. - Maturation levels often very low.

Main themes:
- Student preparedness.
- Willingness to take responsibility.
- Under-preparedness and awareness of own needs.

Student preparedness	- Language development needs very prominent. - Computer literacy gap enormous for the under-privileged. - Student profiles increasingly diverse. - Alternative admission project test indicates that those at bottom end of scale

	require intensive academic development. - Unit(s) need/s to constantly adjust to meet the changes in student profile. - Academic preparedness may well rise to crisis proportions. - Need for intensive orientation and induction programmes. - Pro-active identification of needs essential. - Gap between high school and university is enormous. - We cannot just look at student deficit – we need to look at how prepared we are as well. - Demand for services increasing. - Social background an important factor. - Family functioning and lack of support systems.

Main themes:
- Identifying the various aspects of under-preparedness.
- Concept of an under-prepared university.
- Increased demand and imperative for academic development.

Student profile	- Language policy plays a role in student profile. - Not only demographic profile but also the "internal person-profile" has changed. - Mind shift for learners to adjust to higher education. - Family and community support systems are lacking. - Most of our projects a direct result of student needs. - Learner profile is a fact and therefore the funding formula does not make sense. - Increased welfare type problems. - Financially needy students (more). - Impact of the lack of guidance and support at school level. - Diversity of needs. - Changing courses and curricula. - Inclusive education also contributes to a

| | - changed profile.
- Implementation of OBE at school level will produce a changed profile of learner to access HE.
- Problems of teaching and learning and not merely problems of students arising. |

Main themes:
- Critical variance in responses: only one university – with a unique language policy – indicate little change in student profile while all others reported drastic changes in student profile.
- Problems of teaching and learning arising as result of student profile.

| **Teaching strategies** | - Consciousness of teaching and learning rising.
- Assumption that the diversity of students may increase.
- Lecturers must stop looking for student deficit and also look at teaching deficits.
- University not prepared for students with all their disadvantages.
- Not enough reward in system for improving teaching and learning.
- Curriculum development implies staff development.
- To be tackled at all levels.
- Thorough student orientation and induction.
- Teaching in a disconnected manner no longer relevant.
- Skills development not separate form core teaching. |

Main themes:
- New approach to not just look at student deficit but also teaching deficit.
- Integrated approach with skills development as part of teaching approach.

| **Technology in Education** | - Growing trend to provide time and space independent services. |

	- Student development and support needs to also utilise technology.

Main theme:
- Technology a new horizon for SDS.

Unit management and approach	- Management approaches improves innovation, implementation and accountability. - Structure not functional as counselling and learner support is separated. - Positioning must enable partnerships. - We work to enhance the curriculum. - Responding to changed profiles. - Consolidated unit is extremely functional. - Funding and a proper budget essential. - Structured management asserts control and monitoring. - Analysis and research to predict changes. - Management of unit should create an enabling environment. - Huge differences between institutions on how they respond to student needs. - Overlooking the needs of students would constitute under-preparedness on the side of the university. The unit has the role of analysing and alerting senior management.

Main themes:
- Various perspectives on the role of unit management: enabling, visionary, responsive.

Unit planning	- Plan for credit-bearing interventions. - Responsive strategic plan. - Alert to national priorities. - Buy-in from other stakeholders remains a challenge.

	- Networking and joint projects. - Implementing organisational structures after review.

Main themes:
- Responsiveness to institutional and national strategies.
- Networking and establishing an enabling environment.

Unit responsiveness	- Responsibility to alert institution to student needs. - Move towards credit-bearing offerings. - Risk-reporting. - Engage faculty. - Organisational culture. - Have to adjust and constantly respond to change in any form: student profile, strategic priorities, etc. - Growing role in advocacy.

Main theme:
- Needs to be responsive to organisational needs, changing student profile, national needs and priorities.

Unit service portfolio	- Comprehensive portfolio of services required. - Growing demand dictates service portfolio. - Curative and therapeutic along with developmental and pro-active services.

Main theme:
- Portfolio preferably consolidated and include pro-active (development) and reactive services (support)

University access and accessibility	- Access with success starts long before student registers. - Success rate analysis.

	- Formerly students accessing university were better prepared.
	- Post-graduate profiles also changing.
	- Lack of career guidance at school affects preparedness of students.
	- Students blindly enter system.
	- Preparedness of university questioned.
	- Schism: access vs success.
	- Students access higher education without a clear understanding of what is requires of them.
	- Implementing admissions tests.
	- Student application profiles differ between universities.
	- Alternative admissions and extended curricula (foundation) became most important strategy.

Main themes:
- Accessibility versus student preparedness.
- Diversity of student profiles.
- Under-preparedness of students.

University funding and Budget	- Underfunding possibly because of managerialism.
	- Dependant on grants and additional or alternative funding – very unstable situation.
	- Depends on how broader institutional management sees the function.
	- Doesn't make sense that the funding formula does not specifically provide.
	- Input-output thinking does not apply.
	- Structural positioning makes serious difference in funding.
	- Budgetary restrictions sometimes impact on what can be done.
	- If DVC understands the concept of sds funding is better.
	- Strategic planning and alignment important as it motivates funding.
	- Funding cycles (annual) makes it

	difficult to support new initiatives.

Main themes:
- Institutional perspective determines funding levels.
- Line function and support matters.
- National funding formula lacking.

University resources	- University needs to establish capacity to deliver services. - University invested a lot of money in unit. - Broader institutional management needs to buy-in and recognise the contribution.

Main theme:
- University management buy-in determines level of resourcing.

In addition to the transcripts of interviews the notes and data for reflection were also transcribed in a systematic manner. In the following report participants are identified by participant code only based on the ethical considerations of the study:

Participant IM01: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant very confident and comes across very strong. Extremely proud of restructured and consolidated Unit.

Factors emphasised by participant

Preparedness of learners in terms of language proficiency and subject choices.

Line function of the SDS Unit structures.

the clustering of functional areas to ensure greater impact.

National agendas and student politics.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

University structure and line function/ reporting line of function.

Unit structure and clustering of functional areas.

Preparedness of learners entering the University.

Participant IM02 reflex and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant was initially hesitant and required lots of directing questioning. Later on provided information and shared views freely and even shared documents.

Factors emphasised by participant

Curriculum based and credit bearing nature of offering.

Financial factors.

National strategies (e.g. Foundation).

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student profile.

National strategies.

Line function.

Credit bearing (curriculum-based work).

Participant IM03: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Very open and willing to discuss matters; well informed participant and knowledgeable of the SDS field of work.

Factors emphasised by participant

Student preparedness.

Managerialism.

Funding.

National strategies.

Curriculum: Impact of OBE + Implementation of HEQF + preparedness of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student preparedness.

University preparedness.

National strategies (skills development; HEQF; mergers).

Funding.

Participant IM04: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant was very formal but willing to share knowledge and views on the topic.

Factors emphasised by participant

Student politics.

Funding.

Line functions (restructured + academic).

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

University structure and line function.

Student politics.

Educational technology.

Preparedness and student needs.

Participant PM01: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant is comfortable to share knowledge and views. Not particularly informed about sds but has a good grasp of the current challenges facing higher education.

Factors emphasised by participant

Skills development imperatives (national and global)

Preparedness and access with success.

Role of the academic.

Curriculum: core business vs. support.

Funding.

Managerialism: performativity and collegiality issues.

Globalisation.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Skills development.

Student profile.

Changing role of the academic.

Curriculum design.

Funding.

Managerialism and Globalisation.

Participant PM02: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant seemed pre-occupied with office tasks though eager to

discuss the issues. Fidgeted and moved around a lot. Difficult interview.

Very macro and national level perspectives.

Factors emphasised by participant

Curriculum design: core business and notions of skills development

Student monitoring.

National strategies, access with success.

International trends on development.

Preparedness of students.

Preparedness of Universities.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Curriculum design and definition.

National strategies.

International trends.

Preparedness of students.

Preparedness of Universities.

Participant PM03: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant interested in topic and most willing to cooperate and share

knowledge and views.

Factors emphasised by participant

National strategies on skills development.

National politics.

Managerialism.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Institutional strategies.

National politics.

Managerialism.

Participant PM04: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Participant slightly uncertain initially but after clarification was provided

became totally willing to share knowledge and views.

Factors emphasised by participant

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Student needs: reading and writing.

OBE.

Student needs.

Employee expectations.

Utilising educational technology.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Student needs.

OBE.

Student needs.

Employee expectations.

Utilising educational technology.

Managerialism.

Participant SDSM01: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewee willing to share; a lot of impact from the recent merger very

noticeable; high frustration level with institutional structure.

High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Student needs: reading and writing.

Student needs counselling related.

Changing role of lecturers.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Employee expectations.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit

Managerialism.

Participant SDSM02: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewee well aware and very well informed. Strong commitment and opinions on institutional matters, Knowledgeable on sds matters and national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Student needs: reading and writing.

Student needs counseling related.

Changing role of lecturers.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Managerialism.

Participant SDSM03: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewee well aware and very well informed. Strong commitment and opinions on institutional matters, Knowledgeable on sds matters and national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Student needs: academic literacy.

Student needs counseling related.

Changing role of lecturers.

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Managerialism

Participant SDSM04: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewee well aware and very well informed. Macro view of unit approach. Seems secure in current context. Firm opinions about approach and student needs. Very knowledgeable on sds matters and national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Student needs: academic literacy.

Changing role of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Managerialism.

Participant SDSM05: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewee well aware and very well informed. Macro view of unit approach. Seems secure in current context. Firm opinions about approach and student needs. Very knowledgeable on sds matters and national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Student needs: academic literacy.

Changing role of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Managerialism.

Participant SDSP01: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewees well informed with clear strong opinions based on practical experience. Firm opinions about required approach and student needs. Knowledgeable on sds matters and fairly well informed on national developments and policy. Willing to share. Very high awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Student profile and preparedness.

Student needs: counseling.

Student needs: academic literacy .

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Changing role of lecturers.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student profile and preparedness.

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Managerialism.

Participant SDSP02: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewees willing to participate. Heavy impact of the merger still visible. Very focused viewpoints on work and role within institution. Firm opinions about required approach and student needs. Knowledgeable on

sds matters and fairly well informed on national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Student needs: counseling.

Student profile and preparedness.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Student needs: academic literacy.

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Changing role of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student profile and preparedness.

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Participant SDSP03: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewees willing to participate. Heavy impact of the merger still visible. Very focused viewpoints on work and role within institution. Demonstrated awareness of student needs with opinions about required approach. Knowledgeable on sds matters and fairly well informed on national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Planning and resourcing.

Student needs: academic literacy.

Student profile and preparedness.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Student needs: counselling.

National strategies: impact of mergers.

Changing role of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student profile and preparedness.

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Participant SDSP04: Reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewees initially hesitant to participate. Very focused viewpoints on work and role within institution. Demonstrated awareness of student needs with opinions about required approach. Knowledgeable on sds matters. Some awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Planning and resourcing.

Student needs: academic literacy.

Student profile and preparedness.

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Student needs: counseling.

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Changing role of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student profile and preparedness.

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit.

Participant SDSP05: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewees well aware and very well informed. Macro view of unit approach. Seems secure in current context and highly satisfied with institutional structure and management approach. Firm opinions about approach and student needs. Very knowledgeable on both sds matters and national developments and policy. Willing to share. High awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Student needs: counseling and academic literacy.

Institutional structures.

National strategies: Impact of mergers.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Changing role of lecturers.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

National strategies and skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit and Managerialism.

Participants SDSP06: reflection and notes (post-interview)

Observation(s)

Interviewees well informed with clear strong opinions based on practical experience about required approach and student needs. Knowledgeable on sds matters and fairly well informed on national developments and policy. Willing to share with high awareness of challenges.

Factors emphasised by participant

Student profile and preparedness.

Student needs: counseling and academic literacy.

National strategies: Impact of mergers and the changes in curriculum and teaching strategies.

Changing role of lecturers.

Managerialism referring to academic leadership.

Preliminary conclusions on factors impacting

Student profile and preparedness.

National strategies.

Skills needs and labour demands.

Student needs.

Finances and resources.

Institutional curriculum.

Management of the unit and Managerialism.

4.4.3 Outcome of data analysis

The data analysis produced perspectives, trends of conversation, shared views and knowledge about the management and provision of student development and support. The following section will focus these outcomes where the legend applies that:

- A quotation is a text reference to a specific issue raised
- A code is a factor indicated by participants and subsequently utilised for analysis.

4.4.3.1 Frequency of responses on the identified codes

The following table provides a summary of the frequency of responses relating to the specific codes for analysis.

Table 4.6   Response frequency per code and primary document

Codes	Primary documents																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	T
Curriculum	2	3	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	3	2	3	6	0	2	3	1	0	2	34
Economic factors	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
Education funding framework	0	2	3	0	4	0	0	1	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	18
Globalisation	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Institutional structures	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	3	1	0	5	0	0	4	0	26
Labour and skills development	0	0	2	0	1	0	4	2	0	1	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Managerialism	0	2	2	3	6	0	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	4	2	0	4	5	2	41
National education strategy	2	2	5	0	5	1	3	2	0	7	0	2	0	2	1	1	2	3	3	41
Outcomes-based education	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	4	0	0	2	0	2	18
Primary and secondary education	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	2	4	0	0	1	0	2	15
Role of the lecturer	0	0	6	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	6	3	2	0	3	3	3	6	37
Socio-political factors	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	2	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	17
Strategic planning of university	0	2	2	1	2	0	0	1	4	3	0	5	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	36
Student attitude and behaviour	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	12
Student preparedness	3	1	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	4	2	1	3	1	4	2	2	3	35
Student profile	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	3	5	1	1	2	4	3	4	4	1	40
Teaching strategies	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	12
Technology in education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Unit management and approach	6	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	5	3	1	2	1	1	5	3	36
Unit planning	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	9

Unit responsiveness	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	3	3	0	3	1	21
Unit service portfolio	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	16
University access	6	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1	2	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	26
University funding	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	4	2	0	3	0	1	0	0	2	21
University resources	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	9
TOTALS (per document)	31	22	40	16	29	6	14	19	20	38	42	46	36	36	29	25	28	37	37	550

The *Atlas.ti* analysis system allowed a calculation of the number of quotations (Archer, 2008). For the purpose of the study *quotations* refer to the references to factors that may impact on the provision and management of student development and support.

The table demonstrates great variance between the number of responses relevant to the study by participants during the interviews with the lowest at 6 responses and the highest at 38 responses per participant. Relevant responses are determined by the coding of quotations relevant to the analysis codes. Interview transcripts were analysed to identify references or quotations relevant to the codes or factors. A total of 550 relevant responses were registered.

The table further shows an even greater variance in the number of responses per *code* (factor). There are 23 codes for purposes of analysis and the number of relevant responses varied from only two references to the implementation of technology, as the lowest, to 41 references to both managerialism and national education strategy as the highest.

Table 4.7: Response rates for the highest factors:

National education strategy	41
Managerialism	41
Student profile	40
Role of the lecturer	37
Strategic planning of the university	36
Unit management approach	36
Student preparedness	35
Curriculum	34

Participants indicated a number of factors external to the student development and support function as relevant to the management and provision of student development and support: National strategy, the profile of students, the role of the lecturer and strategic planning within the university are factors that are not within the direct control and domain of student development and support but these factors do have high impact on the function within the university.

Table 4.8: Lowest response rates for the factors:

Technology in education	2
Globalisation	6
Economic factors	6
Unit planning	9
University resources	9

Table 4.9: Further factors also indicated as being of importance according to the response rates:

Institutional structures	26
University access	26
University funding	21
Unit responsiveness	21
Outcomes-based education	18
Education funding framework	18
Socio-political factors	17
Labour and skills development needs	16
Unit service portfolio	16
Primary and secondary education	15
Teaching strategies	12
Student attitude and behaviour	12

It is important to note that these factors were all still indicated as being of importance in the management and provision of student development and support and the analysis reported in this section only provides a framework of the number of references to the specific factors. This count may be an indicator of the importance of a specific factor as addressed by the participants.

In addition to analysing the factor or quotation count it is important to critically analyse the content of the quotations and specific references to the factor (code).

4.4.3.2 Analysis of the content of narratives

In order to gain a true and in-depth understanding of the views, knowledge imparted and true perspectives of participants, it was important to, in addition to the number of references made to the codes or factors, also to do a critical analysis of the actual statements made and the type of comments raised regarding a specific factor.

Table 4.10 provides a systematic analysis and comment and/ interpretation of the narratives referring to a specific factor:

Table 4.10: Systematic analysis, comment and/ interpretations of narratives

CODE (alphabetical order with nr of quotations)	COMMENT, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION FOCUSSED ON:
Curriculum (34)	• Curriculum based approach and credit bearing offering; legitimacy. • Commitment of students. • Skills requirements of the employment sector (advisory boards). • Institutional traditions of add-on type of offerings. • Lack of understanding from students about what they need. • Curriculum has to adapt top student needs. • Change in the needs of student impacts on curriculum. • Gap between school and tertiary education. • Diversity of students and academic preparedness. • In defining core business then skills development becomes part of the curriculum.

	• Mistake to separate student development and support and the curriculum. • Extended curricula for access. • Some issues regarded as separate generic skills. DoE stipulated that life skills must be part of the formal curriculum.

Comment and interpretation of the issues on curriculum that was raised:
- Strong arguments for student development and support interventions to be part of a formal, mainstream or core curriculum of the university with credit-bearing status.
- Extended curricula for foundation provisions.
- Student needs and preparedness impacts on the curriculum as they require development and interventions in many areas.

Economic factors (6)	• Financial difficulties of students. • Practitioners faced with cases where students are underprivileged or with serious financial needs. • Relevance of qualifications for the economy. • Historical reasons for academic development. • Challenges and requirements of the workplace and expectations of employers.

Comment and interpretation on the issue of economic factors, raised
- Needs of the country and economy and the relevance of qualifications.
- Expectations of employers in terms of the specific skills of graduates.
- Financial needs and/ impoverished background of students has implications.

Education funding framework (18)	• National policy requires increased throughput rate but funding strategy is not adjusted accordingly. • Student development and support units operating from external funding and third stream income (grants and donations). • Line function within the university. • Institutional priority required for funding of these functions. • Current funding formula not providing. • Mega-issue: subsidy not increased; NSFAS has but need quadrupled. • Larger section of population accessing higher education because of funding options. • Funding formula should align to aspects of the HEQF and quality improvement. • Student profile requires more preparatory work that needs to be funded.

- Leaves you vulnerable.
- Holistic development requires a funding strategy.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding the national funding framework:
- Funding formula does not provide explicitly for student development and support.
- Increased throughput, student need and preparedness require purposeful interventions that should be funded.
- Institutional priorities and management plays a critical role in allocating funding – no national guideline or priority.

Globalisation (6)	- Global university concepts of academic freedom and autonomy. - Corporate universities. - Responsiveness and development of global citizens. - Internationalising the university.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding globalisation:
- University responding to the globalisation effect and demands.
- Greater competition as more providers enter the higher education scene.
- Internationalisation has consequences for the curriculum and institutional priorities.

Institutional structures (26)	- Trends of consolidating functions that belong together for holistic development. - Student profile and size of institution also determine appropriate structure. - Structural positioning and line function is critical. - Line function determines funding and budget. - Core business and academic reporting line. - Positioning determines if seen as core business. - Correct positioning is essential to address.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding institutional structures:
- Institutional structure dictates the functioning student development and support units.
- Increasing trend to cluster related functions in one unit.
- Line-function and alignment with academia is critical.
- Structuring determines if function is seen as core business or not.

Labour and skills development (16)	- More than one primary department concerned with training and skills development. - The need for students to be trained in so called soft skills. - Employment sector expects graduates to have specific skills. - Impact and implication for the curriculum. - National Qualifications Framework consolidates the skills development agenda. - Rise of corporate universities and other competitors for public higher education. - Relates to the purpose of higher education.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding labour and skills development:
- Employment sector expectations
- Additional skills development needs to be accommodated in curriculum

Managerialism (41)	- DoE focussed on sustainability, effectiveness, quality assurance, etc. - Potentially detrimental effect on academic freedom and creativity. - Academic management vs academic leadership. - Creates business like focus at the cost of education. - Performance management and measurables not always relevant. - Principles of adding value. - Positive impact on effectiveness and productivity. - Over emphasis on quantity at the cost of quality. - Increased accountability is good. - Production thinking not relevant. - Requires careful balance. - Resistance from academics because of the changes it effects in the role of the lecturer. - Managerialism vs collegial decision making. - Caused by the political pressure to be accommodating and business imperative to address throughput. - Risk of compliance as opposed to true quality. - Related to issues of funding. - The planning system allows for individuals to understand their specific role. - Causes an exaggerated focus on operational procedures and neglect real academic debate on matters. - Consequence of globalisation.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding managerialism
-   Very acute awareness amongst participants of the issue of managerialism within their respective institutions.
-   Pointed out both positive and negative consequences.
-   Uneasiness with the impact on academic freedom and collegiality.
-   Positive impact in planning and structuring the activities of the university.
-   Negative impact when the focus shifts to the detriment of academic debate and tradition.

National education strategies (41)	• Quality assurance strategy within higher education. • Impact of the transformation of the HE landscape strategy after the merger: mostly negative and serious concerns about institutional functioning and effectivity. • For student development and support the National Plan for Higher Education focussed some attention on these functions within the university. • Government steers the performance and functioning of public higher education through policies on access, enrolment, funding and others. • National agenda of access with success sets enormous challenge for higher education. • Overlap in agendas between Departments of Education, Labour and Science and Technology. • Impact of foundation funding strategy. • Quality agenda has placed renewed focus on the critical contribution of student development and support in the university. • High emphasis on access and participation in higher education causes a lot of pressure for institutions. • The newly promulgated HEQF as a consequence of the NQF has high impact. • Serious gaps between secondary and tertiary education.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding national strategy and policy
-   High impact of the national quality assurance agenda and quality audits.
-   Awareness of government steering through policies in guidelines: policy making participants of the opinion that it is not a state-control approach while practitioners and institutional managers mostly experience the opposite.
-   New qualification structure/framework to be implemented with an OBE approach impacts on the student needs and profile.
-   National policy often impacts heavily on the institutional operations and focus of the

services offered.
- Other national strategies and policies in addition to education also impact directly in the university and ultimately on the student development and support function. Examples mentioned are skills development imperatives and initiatives from various sectors.

Outcomes-based education (18)	• Integration of developmental outcomes into the curriculum is very important. • Educational-diversity of cohorts coming into the institutions poses a challenge. • Higher education not necessarily ready to accommodate learners from an outcomes based learning schooling system. • When certain aspects of the schooling curriculum comes to full fruition it will impact on the types of life orientation and skills development programmes offered at university level. • Universities are currently battling with the under-preparedness of learners entering the system. • Lack of equality in secondary schooling system: many learners never exposed to career guidance or skills development activities. • University programmes are not transformed (sometimes only in name but practices are not transformed to true OBE).

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding outcomes-based education
- Under-preparedness of learners is an increasing problem for the institutions.
- Three main aspects highlighted: firstly the implementation of OBE at secondary school level not very successful yet and secondly the transformation of higher education curricula not achieved and thirdly the skills/preparedness of lecturing staff to facilitate proper outcomes based teaching and learning in higher education are questionable.
- Expected gradual improvement of OBE at schooling level and specifically the effective facilitation of life orientation outcomes will impact directly on the content and approach of the student development and support programmes and services.

Primary and secondary education (15)	• Study guidance and academic literacy content: perception that it is not being implemented or facilitated properly. • Mother tongue education in early primary education phases considered very important. • Perceived and experienced gap between secondary schooling and higher education. • Cohorts entering the higher education institutions are very diverse in terms of preparedness and quality of schooling

- backgrounds.
- Skills levels of educators facilitating the learning field life orientation considered questionable.
- Different schooling curriculum impacts directly on career counselling needs and services.
- Quality of education reflects poorly in the learners entering higher education institutions.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding primary and secondary education
- Again the concerns about the actual implementation of the life orientation learning area content.
- General quality of secondary education questioned.
- Impact of learners coming from an outcomes-based education system into the higher education system that may not be truly outcomes-based yet.
- Serious concerns expressed regarding the ability, skills and preparedness of university educators (lecturers) to facilitate outcomes-based curricula.
- Serious impact for the role and function of the lecturer.

Role of the lecturer (37)	- Lecturers have heightened emphasis on partnering with student development and support practitioners. - New challenges in terms of assessment of outcomes. - Academics resisting the change in their role. - Student centered teaching is not a new concept but lecturers are experiencing overload because of all other demands. - Faced with change upon change (change fatigue). - Now with the HEQF curriculum development became important part of the tasks of a lecturer. - As with all change serious resistance. - Lecturers faced with underprepared students that require extra support and help and turns to student development and support. - Increased referrals. - Faculty staff doing development work outside of their subject expertise. - Pockets of absolute resistance and refusal. - Pressures of success rates and throughput goals. - Changing needs of students is a major factor and poses new challenges and demands for the lecturer. - Employment sector communicates clear demands on what is required of a lecturer and it translates into specific

| | challenges for the curriculum and the lecturer.
• Emphasis shifting from the preparedness of students to preparedness of the lecturer. |

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding the role of the lecturer in higher education
- Shift from being subject specialist to being educator with many roles and demands.
- Changing role relates directly to the increased managerialism in higher education.
- Increased need for partnership between lecturers and student development and support specialists.
- Student preparedness: strong views that students are increasingly under-prepared.
- Varied responses from lecturers: some respond by shifting role and even partnering with student development and support while some are resistant to the pressure for change.

| **Socio-political (17)** | • "Disadvantaged" rhetoric seems persistent.
• Student politics reflect national socio-political issues.
• Identities and feeding areas of transformed universities have changed and subsequently the student profile and student needs changed.
• Pressure for accessibility for socio-political reasons.
• Phenomenon of first generation students; the lack of social support systems for those entering higher education and even trend of acculturation has very immediate consequences for the student development and support functions in the university.
• Internationalisation has a socio-political impact on campuses.
• Globalisation sets new demands for student skills development.
• Socio-political factors impact directly and influences the service portfolio of the unit.
• Financial needs of students are mostly linked to socio-political factors. |

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding socio-political factors.
- Participants identified local, national and international socio-political factors impacting on the university and the student development and support functions.
- Related factors are the preparedness or under-preparedness of students entering the system; financial factors; national agenda and pressure for access to higher education.

| **Strategic planning** | • Persistently strong views on the importance of |

and management of the university (36)	organisational structure. • Specific line function, e.g. academic versus non-academic deemed to be very important. • Buy-in from all stakeholders very important for the student development and support environment. • Student development and support type interventions need to be integrated and even part of the curriculum. • Impact of risk-management and quality audits are positive in that it is highlighting the importance of the student development and support functions within the university. • Professionalisation of the student development and support function is essential. • Commitment to student support and development by the senior management is essential for the function to have impact and achieve any success. • Representation on critical academic forums is essential for the student development and support manager. • Funding strategy is a very sensitive matter as these functions are not funded directly by the government funding framework and requires steps like top slicing and similar.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding strategic planning and management of the university:
- Very firm opinions regarding the impact of the strategic plan and management style of the university.
- Very firm and almost unified opinions regarding the importance and benefit of an academic line-function for the student development and support function.
- Debate about drawing student development and support type interventions into the main curriculum and moving away from the traditional add-on or peripheral functioning.
- Increased managerialism, implementation of the HEQF, risk-management and quality auditing can be utilised as opportunities by the student development and support practitioners in order to bring the function to the core of the university business.

Student attitude and behaviour (12)	• Perception that students are not really motivated to attend workshops and sessions for development. • Risk that staff may start to take too much responsibility for the success of the student. • Students changed: perspectives and needs. • Mass events and interventions not too successful anymore; stronger focus on individual needs. • Differences between resident and non-resident students. • Students very much focussed on immediate needs.

	• Statement that maturation levels are very low.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding student attitudes
- Participants had certain views on student attitude and behaviour but generally found it difficult to formulate the views.
- Awareness of certain risks in intervening to the level where students do not take responsibility for their own success any more.
- Matter for general concern is the motivation and commitment of students,

Student preparedness (35)	• Experience and research on the needs of incoming students indicate lower levels of preparedness for higher education. • Consistent views expressed regarding: - poor language proficiency of students - academic literacy needs of students - Impact of the lack of career guidance. • Socio-economic profile of students has changed. • Diversity of student profile. • High risk students require intensive and comprehensive interventions. • Impact on unit in terms of the range of expertise available. • Increased application of admission tests. • In addition to English proficiency the reading levels of students is an area of serious concern. • Levels of maturity often impacts on willingness to participate in developmental programmes and other interventions. • Institutions are implementing risk profiling type strategies for early identification of academic risk factors. • Preparedness of lecturers to accommodate needs and adjust teaching approach is an important factor. • Gap between secondary and tertiary education is very big. • Question the quality of secondary education. • Agenda to increase access contributed to the problem of under-preparedness as more students are entering the system and some should perhaps not be in higher education. • The institution is under-prepared in many ways.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding the preparedness of students
- Student under-preparedness generally acknowledged.
- Universities are implementing admissions testing and risk-profiling to identify areas of under-preparedness.
- Quality of secondary education questioned: learners manifests very poor language

proficiency; reading abilities and also generally poor academic literacy and subject knowledge.
- The under-preparedness of students challenges the student development and support unit(s) in terms of the range and scope of services and expertise required.
- Personal consequences of wrong career choices (lack of career guidance) are serious.
- Universities can now be considered under-prepared as a result of the challenges posed to them on how to deal with under-prepared learners.

Student profile (40)	• Internal person-profile had changed as a result of the social environment and therefore the student profile has also changed. • Lack of social and family support has impact on the academic level and ultimately bears consequence for the student development and support function. • Learners find the paradigm shift from secondary to higher education very hard. • Increased pressure to mainstream student development and support interventions. • Success rate analysis still indicates that discrepancies between the performance rates of black and white students remain. • Higher education has to compensate for deficits in the secondary schooling system. • Racial profile of the student population has changed dramatically and it has serious implications for the student development and support environment in order to deal with greater diversity of culture and needs. • Implementation of OBE at schooling level has definite impact.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding student profiles
- Majority of participants acknowledged a change in student profiles in terms of race and gender.
- Other changes reported related to preparedness and academic literacy levels.
- Changes in student profile also impacts on teaching strategies and approaches.
- Universities are battling with being prepared for the changed profile of students.
- Shift required from student deficit thinking to teaching deficit thinking.
- Implementation of OBE plays a role.
- Impact for student development and support on the levels of the service portfolio and the range of expertise.

Teaching strategies (12)	- Increased consciousness of teaching and learning issues. - Diversity of students and academic preparedness places demand on teaching. - Shift required: Stop looking at the deficit in students and start looking at the deficit in teaching. - Curriculum development and staff development cannot be separated. - Problems of teaching and learning are not just problems that arose because of students. - Teaching strategy has to be tackled at various levels from student development and support units but also from lecturers and curriculum. - Practitioners experience that issues are not only about skills deficits but also about teaching. - International notion that skills development is something separate from the curriculum but it is not. - Changing needs of students remains a major factor.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding teaching strategies
- Issues about teaching strategies do impact directly on student development and support.
- This issue relates very close to the changing curriculum for higher education.
- Changes in student profile and specifically academic preparedness a critical factor.

Technology in education (2)	- Growing demand for time and space independent services. - Growing focus on post-graduate, experiential learning and on-line programmes. - Student development and support now has access to a variety of education technologies.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding technology in education
- Participants mostly indicated positive expectations about the impact of technology.
- The access to technology can potentially enhance service delivery of the student development and support environment.

Unit management approach (36)	- Reflective practices are making a positive contribution. - Difficult to separate functions into various line functions. - Structure with two foci: the development of staff and the development of students. - Focus: we work with the curriculum. - Unit management has to constantly adjust operations to

institutional change and respond effectively to new challenges.

- Focus: consolidated all services in one strategically focussed unit.
- Focus: separated services between academic and student affairs line functions; academics just do their own thing.
- More structured management not negative as it improves control and monitoring.
- If effective unit management can start to participate in university management e.g. risk reporting.
- Huge differences in the unit management approaches across institutions.
- Forms part of a bigger strategic value chain.
- Overlooking and not responding to the needs of students would constitute under-preparedness of the institution.
- Units need to have strong full-time staff components and not depend on part time staff.
- Institutional mistake to separate student development and support issues from the curriculum.
- Focus: devolution model (with the risk that the services become almost invisible).
- An academic line function is very functional.
- Partnerships between the student development and support environment and academic departments are very important.
- Responsive and aligned strategic plan required.
- Organisational culture also impacts on unit management.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding the student development and support unit management:
- Improved management strategies include reflective practice and participative management.
- Participants consider it essential that unit management would need to be alert and responsive to changing needs of the student, the university or on national level.
- Various focuses or approaches mentioned namely: centralised, consolidated or devolutionised approach. General consensus that the consolidated approach is the most effective.
- Strategic alignment of unit with university goals and objectives important.

Unit planning (9)	• Changing school curriculum (with life orientation as a learning area) should have medium term effect and direct impact on student development and support functions in terms of what is required. • How student development and support is positioned and presented in a University is an important factor that

	determines if it is still seen in the historical context of upliftment.
	• Government (national) strategy has direct impact and must be accommodated in the planning of unit work.
	• Buy-in and commitment of critical stakeholders essential but still difficult.
	• Unit planning and synergy with organisational planning and structures essential; cannot afford to function in isolation any more.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding student development and support unit planning
- Most issues raised are related to the previous issue on unit management.
- Planning needs to accommodate student needs but also national and university strategy and goals.
- Unit planning cannot be done in isolation but needs to be in synergy with larger organisational plan and purposefully address institutional goals and objectives.

Unit responsiveness (21)	• Student development and support environment needs to ensure that the institution is prepared in terms of the challenges posed by students and their needs.
	• Pragmatic approach required.
	• SDS Practitioner needs to partner with academic colleagues.
	• Lecturers have a heightened awareness of student needs.
	• Organisational culture also determines if unit can effectively respond to changes and challenges.
	• Response is linked to student learning.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding unit responsiveness:
- Strong views regarding the need for partnerships between academic colleagues (lecturers) and the SDS practitioner.
- Lecturers are increasingly aware of the issues and it creates a window of opportunity for the practitioners.
- Responsiveness is essential for the unit to remain relevant.

Unit service portfolio (16)	• Observation that there is a reasonable consistency in service portfolios.
	• Increasingly curriculum based interventions.
	• Paradigm of upliftment needs to be replaced with a paradigm of equipping students with skills.
	• Curative and therapeutic role will never disappear but there is a trend to do more developmental and pro-active work.

	• Service portfolio changes with changes in core business. • Credit bearing, i.e.. curriculum-based provisions are critical. • Students are under-prepared and it creates an imperative to respond with relevant interventions. • Student profile is diversifying – service portfolio must respond. • Leadership and line-function matters. • Scope of support required increased. • Foundation strategy from DoE has impact. • In structures where services are not consolidated overlaps or gaps cause problems.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding the unit service portfolio:
- Service portfolio is a direct reflection of planning and responsiveness.
- Student needs is central to determining unit service portfolio.
- Integrated and consolidated service units required to offer a comprehensive service portfolio.
- National and institutional level strategies have direct impact on service portfolio.
- Line-function and positioning most important to enable unit to have a relevant service portfolio.
- Trend: interventions and development programmes to be part of programme curricula/ credit bearing.

University access (26)	• Access or massification is a national agenda driven by the DoE. • Access starts during the recruitment phase. • Inequality of schooling systems very diverse and subsequently the quality and preparedness of students coming into the system is problematic. • Learners are not exposed to career counselling or guidance • University access agenda allows students into the system that should actually not be at university. • Post-graduate profile is changing rapidly changing. • Because of the impact of increased accessibility you cannot have an add-on approach to student development and support any more. • Universities developed a new admission model and approach including admissions testing. • The system is taking in students that are not prepared and the failure often destroys the individual.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding university access and accessibility
- National agenda and subsequent pressures have impact on success rates.
- Legacy of inequality at school level causes variance in the preparedness of students entering the university.

	- Lack of career counselling at school levels has dire consequences for all.
University funding and resources (21)	• We experience that within the institution we don't get the funding that we need. • It depends very much on how the institutional management view student development and support and it determines what kind of budget is allocated. • The fact that the funding formula doesn't provide at all for the specific function all does not make any sense. • Resourcing depends on what management sees as important. • Structural positioning determines the kind of budget we receive. • There is much research that makes the learner profile and the needs of students a fact. The funding formula should be adjusted to provide. • Theory and policy may be there but in practice it is not funded by the DoE. • Buy-in and commitment by university managers are very important. • The funding situation makes us very vulnerable. • The numbers of students that are serviced justifies a proper funding formula.

Comment and interpretation on the issues raised regarding university funding and resources
- Organisational structuring and line-function of the function is important as it impacts on the resource allocation.
- The absence of specific funding categories in the funding formula for higher education.
- Perceptions, attitude and commitment of university management is important as it determines funding. Some participants indicated that what they are doing is well endorsed by management while some report the opposite.
- Units depend on top-slicing, grants and similar and the fact that there is no pre-determined portion of the budget in the funding formula leaves the function very vulnerable.
- An academic line-function seems to be more viable in terms of funding and budget allocations.
- The stability of funding impacts on the stability of service delivery.

4.4.3.3 Analysis of the relationships between identified factors

The following spider-gram (figure 4.6) indicates intricate and multilevel relationships between the various factors that were indicated by the participants.
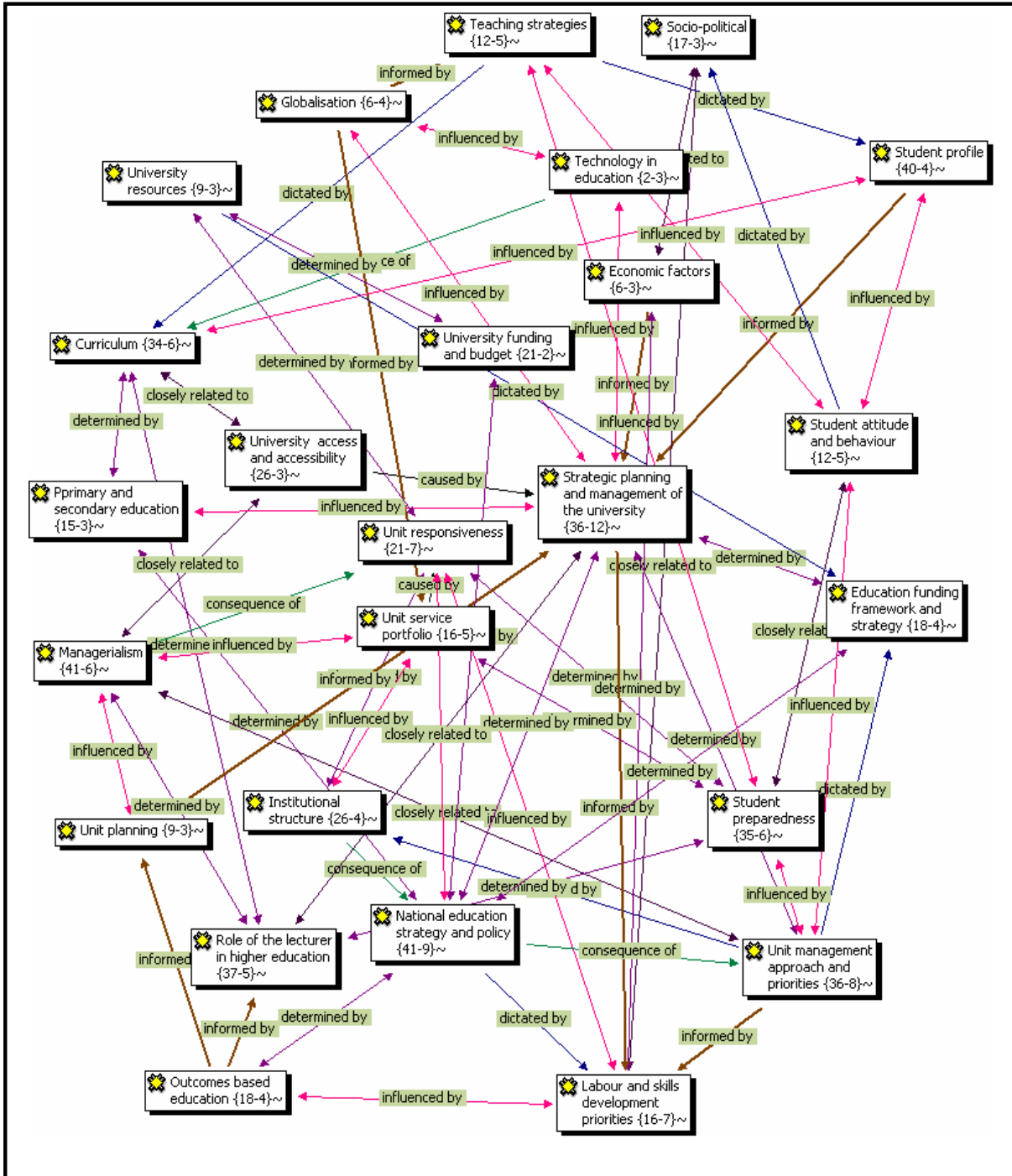

Figure 4.6: Diagrammatic representation of the relationships between the factors impacting on the provision and management of student development and support in HE

During the interviews it became increasingly evident that the factors that participants identified were not singular factors but they are interrelated. The data-analysis confirmed the trend that was initially observed. I proceeded to identify specific relationships and constructed a relationship-scale that indicates different levels of intensity and interrelatedness:

- Factor at the base of the arrow is dictated by the factor at the arrow point.
- Consequence of means that the factor at the base of the arrow evolves as a result of the factor at the arrow point.
- Determined by means that the factor at the arrow point is pertinently determined by the factor at the start of the arrow.
- Influenced by means that the two linked factors have influence on each by each other.
- Informed by: means that the factor at the base of the arrow is strongly informed - though not determined - by the factor at the arrow point.
- Closely related to means that the two factors are interlinked and recursive to some degree.

The relationships indicate that not one of the factors identified by participants are isolated or stand alone factors. The relationships again serve to demonstrate the complexity of factors impacting on the managing and provisioning of student development and support in higher education in a developing country.

Section 4.5 is a critical review of the research process and actions with focus on issues of reliability, objectivity on the process followed to ensure a reasonable triangulation of findings.

4.5 Review of issues of trustworthiness, credibility and triangulation of data and findings

By nature of the research problem the ultimate relevance and value of the study depends largely on trustworthy and credible methods and actions during the research process.

I maintain that the internal validity of the qualitative design of this study is promoted by extensive planning and application of the multi-methods of questionnaire, extended interviews and interview reflection phases and notes. The various methods of data collection allowed verification and cross checking of interpretations by me. The interview schedule not only gave structure and focus to the process of interviewing and discussion but also provided a means of verification of interview or discussion outcomes. It was possible to compare the initial text analysis and observation notes on factors identified with findings of the interview to determine the codes (factors) for further analysis in the *Atlas.ti* text analysis system.

The continuous reporting and reflexive mode of data analysis allowed thorough analysis and early identification of any biases that may have existed.

Five specific strategies enhanced the validity of the study:

- Application of multi-methods in data collection;
- verbatim data (audio recordings and transcribed interviews);
- prolonged and persistent field work (recursive work);
- triangulation of data and findings;
- continuous reflection on the research process.

Figure 4.7 demonstrates the cycle of data collection and the impact of continuous reflection in this study
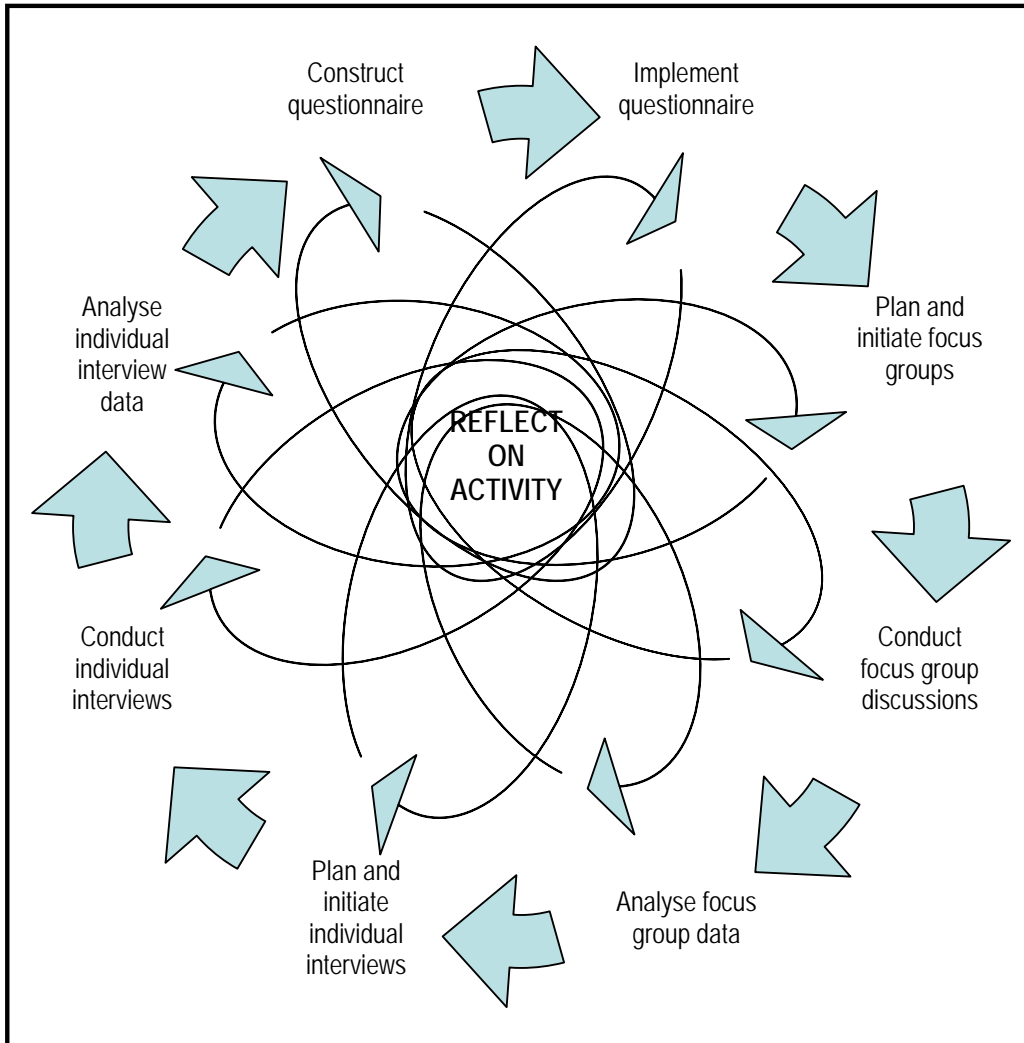
Figure 4.7: Continued reflection on the research process

The graph depicts a process wherein the reflection indicated essential in order to review questionnaire items, verify perspectives and interpretations with participants of groups and individual interviews the process was flexible and the required adaptations were made. The cyclical review and reflexive procedure also facilitated immediate review of data and early verification of interpretations where required. The strong focus on triangulation facilitated quality of outcomes and enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of the final results.

This process of continuous triangulation as part of the reflexive approach, assisted me as a novice qualitative-researcher to identify potential contradictions and continuously identify trends in the discourse. In my experience I became acutely aware of how the reflection and triangulation forced me to frequently test my own views and assumptions on the various factors and made it easier to monitor and control the impact of such presumptions in the interviews.

Since the study culminates in comments and recommendations to the Government and higher education sector, the credibility of the research had to be ensured by all possible means.

4.6   Summary of findings: factors impacting on the provisioning and management of student development and support in higher education

In summary the following most critical factors were identified as having impact on the management and provisioning of student development and support in higher education in a developing country:

- University strategic management: referring to the priorities and strategic goals and objectives of the university. Also relating to the specific organisational structure and specific line function of the student development and support services with high emphasis on consolidated services and an academic line function.

- Unit management: referring to the style and approach of the unit management and ability of management to be responsive and align functions with the university strategic direction.

- Student preparedness and student profile: referring to the shift in student profiles and the subsequent shift in student needs as well as the growing academic under-preparedness of students entering the

university sector. The latter aspect also related closely to the problems at primary and secondary schooling levels.

- University and national funding mechanisms: referring to the lack of specific provisioning within the national higher education funding framework and formula and subsequent vulnerability and dependence on university management goodwill to provide for the specific functions.

I found no marked difference in the views of policy makers, university strategic managers, student development and support managers or practitioners. All participants highlighted similar factors as indicated above with only the policy makers indicating a slightly lower awareness of the impact of their own national strategies on this specific function within the university.

4.7   Closing

The data collection unfolded over an extended period with intensive interviews with a range of participants. Participants were identified based on their relevant position or background and their potential ability to provide relevant information towards identifying factors impacting on the management and provisioning of student development and support in higher education.

Although I initially drew a list of ideal participants and acquired interviews with 75% of these participants there were also a few targeted individuals, especially those in very senior positions that did not participate. The research was nevertheless extensive and a range of very senior officials on government, university management, unit management and a large number of practitioners participated in the study. Valuable insight was gained from the perspectives and honest opinions that were shared with me as the interviewer. The ethical clearance and reassurances provided by me consistently set a platform for open and frank discussion and

sharing of views. The pre-prepared ethical statements and written confirmation of confidentiality to participants were extremely valuable and facilitated productive interviewing.

The training in qualitative procedures and the *Atlas.ti* software system enriched my perspectives and ability and skill to mine the data and get the best possible information for the texts of interviews.

The trends in factors identified by participants became very prominent and the process of reflection highlighted the specific factors fairly early in the study. It posed a challenge in that I had to avoid focussing on only those prominent factors. This awareness and imposed control ensured that additional factors were also identified and confirmed and the interviews proceeded.

The research ultimately successfully identified specific factors that could now be used for further research and analysis.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the analysis and findings as well as specific recommendations to the bodies of governance and the higher education sector based on findings regarding factors impacting on the management and provisioning of student development and support in higher education while considering the context of a developing country.