

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DISTANCE AND
CONVENTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES
ASSESSED IN TERMS OF ACCESS, DELIVERY AND
OUTPUT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is handed in herewith for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria is the researcher's independent work. It has not been submitted for a degree or examination before in this or any other university.

FOLAKE RUTH ALUKO

_____ day of _____ 2007

ABSTRACT

This study is about the comparison of distance and conventional education programs at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. It is assessed in terms of access, delivery modes and output. The purpose is to investigate and to compare the impact of distance and conventional education on the performances of learners in a postgraduate degree program (B.Ed. (Hons) with specialization in Education Management, assessed in terms of access, delivery and output. It explored documents that were both at the macro (Government Policy documents) and macro (University's / Faculty documents) with the aim of answering the main research question, with other identified sub-research questions that have been raised.: *What is the comparison between the impact of distance and conventional education on the performances of learners in a postgraduate BEd (Hons) degree program with specialization in Education Management, when assessed in terms of access, delivery mode and output? A review of relevant literature exposed and compared the essence of both modes of delivery.*

Data were collected from identified key role players on the program, which included administrators, module coordinators, course presenters, and tutors, some of the students on the program, and some of those that had discontinued their studies with the university. These were done using one-on-one semi-structured and focus group interviews, telephone interviews and questionnaires in order to obtain qualitative and quantitative data. A sample of 127 distance education students, 45 conventional students, 6 module coordinators, 10 course presenters, 4 tutors, 4 administrators, 1 instructional designer and 10 students that had discontinued their studies participated in the investigation. The data collected were analysed through the use descriptive and inferential statistics, and tabulation for the quantitative data, while the computer assisted qualitative data

analysis software [CAQDAS] (Atlas.ti) was employed for the analysis of the transcribed interviews.

From the data obtained, it was confirmed that there is a myriad of possible factors that may be responsible for the divergences in the performances, throughput and output rates of enrolled students on the BEd (Hons) Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria. It was further revealed that South Africa has identified distance education as a tool of redressing past inequalities in higher education, a process, which the university was involved in by starting relevant programs to this end. However, even though equal access is the focus of the country, but it appeared as if little is being said about financially supporting distance education as for instance, there was no financial assistance to distance education students on the program.

Due to the incursion of the university into areas, where the impact of university education had not previously being felt, its choice of the mode of delivery was limited to the *print*, the first generation, which was expected to bring all students on the program at par since all would have access to it. However, despite the efforts made by the university, it was discovered that there existed some gaps between the qualities of the learning experiences, which students from both modes were exposed to. Examples of those identified were lack of designated counseling unit for distance education students, and inadequate number of administrative staff to meet the needs of the ever increasing number of distance education students. However, it appeared that there were no prominent discrepancies that could be found between the two modes, and one could assume that both modes were guided by a similar underpinning philosophy, which drove the ethos of the programs that impacted on the instructional design.

It was also found that there were challenges faced by the academic staff involved in the program under investigation, who felt that there might be the need for the institution to demarcate between academe interested in distance education, and

those that were not, and the need for the institution to review its stand on rewards and incentives systems for staff involved in distance education. It was believed by them that this would be the way out of the dearth of research presently facing the university on this delivery mode.

The study suggests that quality issues especially in relation to an African setting should be looked into, since a large percentage of the students involved in the program were from the rural areas. Finally, the study identified various limitations, and made suggestions for further research, and recommendations for improvement and immediate action.

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KEY WORDS

Conventional Education

Output

Distance Education

Quality

Transactional Distance

Quality assurance

Access

Mixed-methods approach

Delivery modes

Generations

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	-	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACRL	-	Association of College and Research Libraries
BEEd	-	Bachelor of Education
CE	-	Conventional Education
CAQDAS	-	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Software
CHE	-	Council on Higher Education
COL	-	Commonwealth of Learning
COLISA	-	Confederation of Open Learning Institutions South Africa
CQA	-	Centre for Quality Assurance
CUP	-	Committee of University Principals
DE	-	Distance Education
DoE	-	Department of Education
ETQAs	-	Education and training Quality assurance Bodies
FDE	-	Further Diploma in Education
HELP	-	Higher Education Loan Program
HESA	-	Higher Education in South Africa
HEQC	-	Higher Education Qualifications Committee
ICT	-	Information Computer Technology
JIPSA	-	Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
NADEOSA	-	National Association of Distance Education Organizations of South Africa
NCHE	-	National Commission on Higher Education
NQF	-	National Qualifications Framework
NSBs	-	National Standards Bodies
OECD	-	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development

QAA	-	Quality Assurance Agency
QM	-	Quality Management
QPU	-	Quality Promotion Unit
QUAL	-	Qualitative
QUAN	-	Quantitative
RPL	-	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAIDE	-	South African Institute of Distance Education
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA	-	South Africa University Vice-Chancellors Association
SCOTVEC	-	Scottish Vocational Education Council
SGBs	-	Standards Generating Bodies
SERTEC	-	Certificate Council of Technikon Education
SMS	-	Short Message Service
TDT	-	Transactional Distance Theory
TQM	-	Total Quality Management
UP	-	University of Pretoria
UNISA	-	University of South Africa