WIDELY ARTICULATED BUT LOWLY UTILISED: CONGRUENCING ODL ACCLAIM WITH UTILISATION

A Keynote Speech at

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Terms/Concepts

Articulation

Pronouncements

Terms/Concepts

Congruencing

Equating,

Harmonising or

Walking the Talk (Dr. Delvaline Mowes – Keynote Speaker)

Terms/Concepts

Acclaim

Enthusiastic and public praise

Terms/Concepts

Utilization

The action of making practical and effective use of something [in our case ODL]

Walking the talk (Dr. Delvaline Mowes – Keynote Speaker)

Terms/Concepts

Open Distance Learning (ODL)

Is a multi-dimensional concept aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between student and institution, student and academics, student and courseware and student and peers. Open distance learning focuses on removing barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student-centeredness, supporting students and constructing learning programmes with the expectation that students can succeed (UNISA, 2008)

Terms/Concepts

ODL Approaches

Approaches which utilise ICTs to extend teaching and learning opportunities to learners that are separated by time and space from their alma-mata, facilitators and fellow learners

Examples

E-Learning, Online Learning, Mobile Learning, Blended Learning, OERs, MOOCs, Flipped Classrooms

Introduction/Background

- There exists wide articulation or acclaim for ODL approaches.
- This has however remained as a hype
- On the ground, use of ODL approaches remains decimally low especially in Africa
- Not many studies on congruencing utilisation of ODL approaches with the hype accorded to them
- This paper is exactly attuned to this task

Going Forward

a. ODL in development protocol, agendas and policies.
b. Some ODL projects and conferences
c. Utilisation of ODL approaches
d. Factors affecting utilisation of ODL
e. Our research problem and questions
f. Scope
g. Methodology
h. Findings
i. Congruencing ODL acclaim with utilisation
j. Conclusion

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (1)

International Articulation for ODL

Sustainable Development Goal No. 4

Alludes to the use of ICTs for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (2)

International Articulation for ODL

The 2017 European Union Agenda on Higher Education

Emphasises technology driven programmes and curricula because, "Technology offers new ways to structure the way learning and teaching is organised, including through open, online and blended learning to increase flexibility and teacher-student interaction" (European Union, 2017, p.5). Technology has the potential to permit authentic learning approaches where students learn by simulating real-world problems in the classroom.

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (3)

International Articulation for ODL

The Common African Position (CAP) on Post-2015 Development Agenda

Implores African countries to strengthen the "science and technology component of education curricula" as means to achieve excellence in education. It further stresses the need to "achieve excellence in human resources capacity development through an improvement in the quality of education and training by … increasing the use of ICT in education", among other strategies (African Union, 2014, p.8, p.9).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (4)

National Articulations for ODL – South Africa

- SA at forefront of ODL articulation
- UNISA – 1946: first ODL University in the World (UNISA, 2017)
- SA's ICT in Education policy has been evolving since 1995 (Isaacs, 2007).
- In 2007 the Technology Enhanced Learning Initiatives (TELI) was established followed by a feasibility study to establish a Dedicated Educational Channel.
- In 2001, the National Department of Education and the Department of Communication jointly released a Strategy for ICT in Education, which resulted into the development of the e-Education White Paper adopted in 2004.
- South Africa's ICT in education policy had a goal to have every learner in pre-university education being ICT capable by 2013.

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (5)

National Articulations for ODL – Uganda (1)

- National Policy on ICT developed in 2003; reviewed in 2012 (Farrell, 2007)
- Role of ICT in fostering lifelong learning opportunities articulated
- It articulates ICT integration in the education curriculum as one of the strategies for providing improved literacy and building a cadre of competent human resource for the country.
  - This vital role necessitated further policy articulation of use of ICT in education.
  - As such the need for a standalone policy for ICT in education became apparent.

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (6)

National Articulations for ODL – Uganda (2)

- In 2006, Uganda developed its first ICT in education policy. It has enabled
  - development of guidelines on the use of ICTs in schools;
  - signing of an agreement with Microsoft to subsidise educational software licenses and training of teachers
  - budgeting for ICTs for secondary schools;
  - negotiation with ICT service providers to subsidise rates for ICT systems
  - training teachers in ICT skills;
  - introduction of Computer Studies as a subject in secondary schools curriculum; and
  - provision of funds and infrastructure for ICTs in some schools.
  - Waiving of taxes on computers

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (7)

National Articulations for ODL – Uganda (3)

At higher education level, the White Paper derived from McGregor Report (2008) of the Visitation Committee to Public Universities in Uganda recommended a phased expansion of distance education in public universities, immediate establishment of an Open University and integration of e-learning in conventional classrooms

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (8)

National Articulations for ODL – Uganda (4)

Vision 2040

Aspires to provide access to affordable quality … education services to all Ugandans through flexible teaching and learning methods employing ICTs (p.10).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (9)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Makerere University (1)

Makerere University Strategic Plan 2008/09 – 2018/19, demands for the introduction of open, distance and e-learning delivered programmes in at least six units of the University (Makerere University, 2008).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (10)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Makerere University (2)

Job Evaluation, Re-Organization of the Staff Structure and Financing of Makerere University Task Force recognises the critical role played by ICT in enhancing access to quality education through ODeL pedagogy.

Recognises Government's effort in securing a loan from ADB to support infrastructure development including that for delivering education through ODeL pedagogy (Omaswa, 2014).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (11)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Makerere University (3)

The Policy on ODeL, 2015

Provides a conducive environment for the diffusion of ODeL approaches at Makerere University

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (12)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Kyambogo University

ICT Policy, 2014

Objective 7.5: "to strengthen capacity of innovations in ICT development, use of the technology and general work flows". Strategy No. (vii) targets "harness[ing] ICT potential in enhancing online and distance learning in order to maximize flexibility in education and reach out to a wider coverage of prospective learners" (p.16-17).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (13)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)

ICT Policy, 2014

Promises to "operate an E-Learning software platform and facilities in accordance with the University's E-Learning policy (Mbarara University, 2014, p.12).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (14)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Busitema University

Strategic Plan 2014/15 – 2018/19

Has a strategic action to "develop online processes and electronic information centers" (Busitema University, 2014, p.10).

ODL in development agendas, protocols and policies (15)

Institutional Articulation for ODL – Gulu University

Draft Strategy for e-Learning

Proposes to establish a dedicated e-learning unit to nurture and manage distance and e-learning at Gulu University (Ogange, 2014)

Some ODL projects and conferences

African Virtual University Project

- AVU initiated in 1997 (Okuni, 2000).
- Satellite based DE project sponsored by the World Bank
- It employed a multi-media approach to teaching and learning.
- Used live or pre-recorded lectures transmitted by satellite from the US or Ireland and viewed on TV Screens in Africa.
- It also involved hand-outs, textbooks and other material transmitted electronically
- AVU is now headquartered in Kenya and following a blended learning approach

Some ODL projects and conferences

AfDB HEST V Programme

- Providing ICT infrastructure at public universities in Uganda
- For Mak USD 1 million set aside for procuring e-learning equipment and building capacity for e-courseware development

Some ODL projects and conferences

Distance Education Leapfrogging Project (DELP)

- A USD 3 million Project
- Aimed at leapfrogging 1st generation distance education into 4th and 5th generation distance education

Some ODL projects and conferences

Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL)

- A GBK 2 million project
- Funded by DfID/SPHEIR
- Aimed at sharing scares expertise amongst East African Universities through blended learning
- Partners: Makerere University, Open University of Tanzania, State University of Zanzibar, Strathmore University, Kenyatta University, Rwanda University, ACU, CUE(K), UE, SEDA

Some ODL projects and conferences

Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries (BSU)

- MAGAART (Maseno University, Gulu University, Aarhus University, Roskilde University and Tribhuvan University) partnership
- Funded by DANIDA
- The project undertook an e-learning needs assessment survey and produced an e-learning strategy for Gulu University

Some ODL projects and conferences

E-Learning Africa Conference

- Commenced in 2006 in Addis Ababa
- The largest e-learning conference on the African Continent
- Bringing together experts and stakeholders engaged or interested in e-learning and ICT-based training, education and development on the African continent

Some ODL projects and conferences

Other ODL conferences

- Distance Education and Teacher Education in Africa (DETA)
- Teaching and Learning Festival, UNISA
- CSET ODL Conferences, UNISA,
- eLearning Innovations Conference & Expo, Kenya
- The Distance Education Leapfrogging Project Workshop, Mak
- Etc

Utilisation of ODL approaches

Makerere University Business School (MUBS)

- MUBS has since 2006 explored possibilities of using e-learning to increase access to its programmes at its study centers but with limited success (Kituyi & Tusubira, 2013)

Utilisation of ODL approaches

Makerere University

ODL started in 1991, with 2 programmes
Since then only 3 additional programmes added

2 new online programmes approved in August 2017 after a long journey (2013 -2017)

ICTs in conventional programmes - only 33% of faculty at Mak were using MUELE (Lubega, Mugisha & Muyinda, 2014)

Factors affecting utilisation ODL

- Lack of flexibility in platforms
- Inability to strike a balance between the needs of the different stakeholders
- Negative stereotypes
- Limited enforcement of policies and strategies
- Limited human capacities to utilise ODL approaches
- Wrong assumptions about ODL approaches
- Limited mainstream funding – mainly project funded

Our research problem and questions

- Develop a framework for congruencing ODL acclaim with utilisation
- Research Questions
  - What factors explain the high articulation/acclaim levels of ODL approaches in public universities?
  - What is the present utilisation level of ODL approaches in public universities?
  - What factors explain the present utilization levels of ODL approaches in public universities?
  - How can utilisation of ODL approaches be congruenced with the hype surrounding ODL?

Scope

A study was designed and carried out in public universities in Uganda. These universities bear comparable characteristics with other universities on the African continent and therefore developing regions

Methodology

Mixed research approach involving primary data collected in a survey across public universities in Uganda and secondary data obtained from records and literature.

4221 academic staff in public universities. Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample determination table, a sample size of 351 respondents was targeted. However, 120 valid responses were returned representing a response rate of 34%. The study elements were selected using stratified random sampling

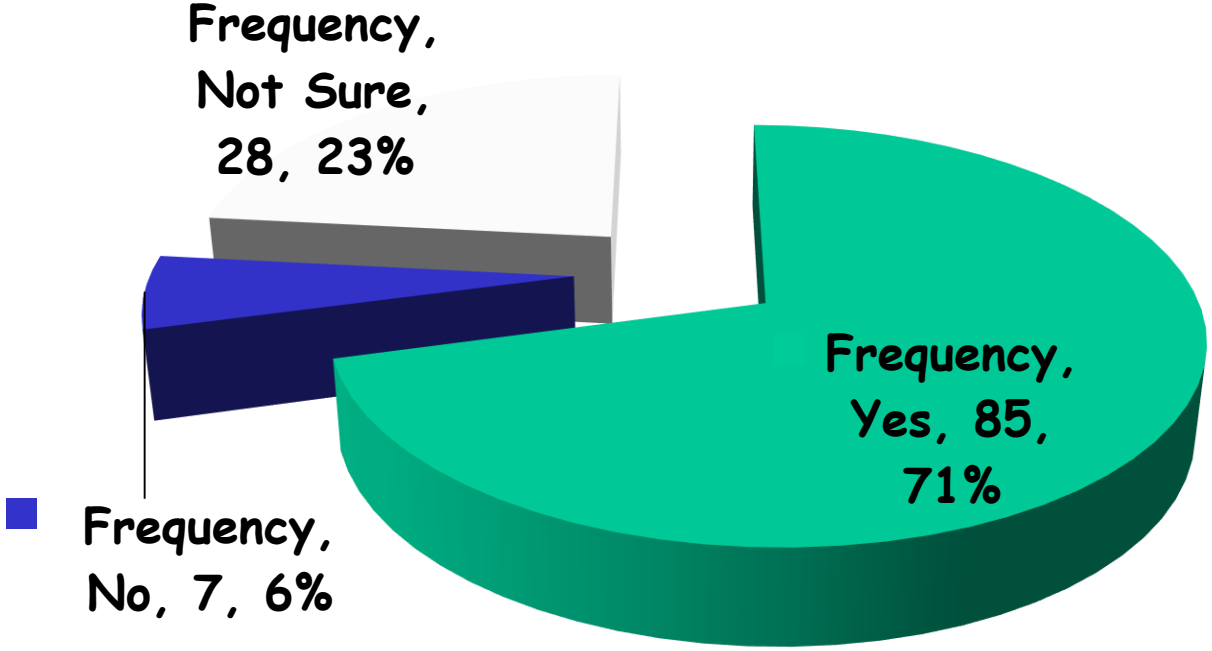
ODL articulation levels in public universities

Respondents were asked whether:

- Teaching with ICTs was part of their universities' academic improvement plans
- They valued ICTs as important tools for teaching
- Teaching with ICTs changed the way students learnt
- They advocated for teaching with ICTs, and

ODL articulation levels in public universities

Teaching with ICTs was part of universities' academic improvement plans



ODL articulation levels in public universities

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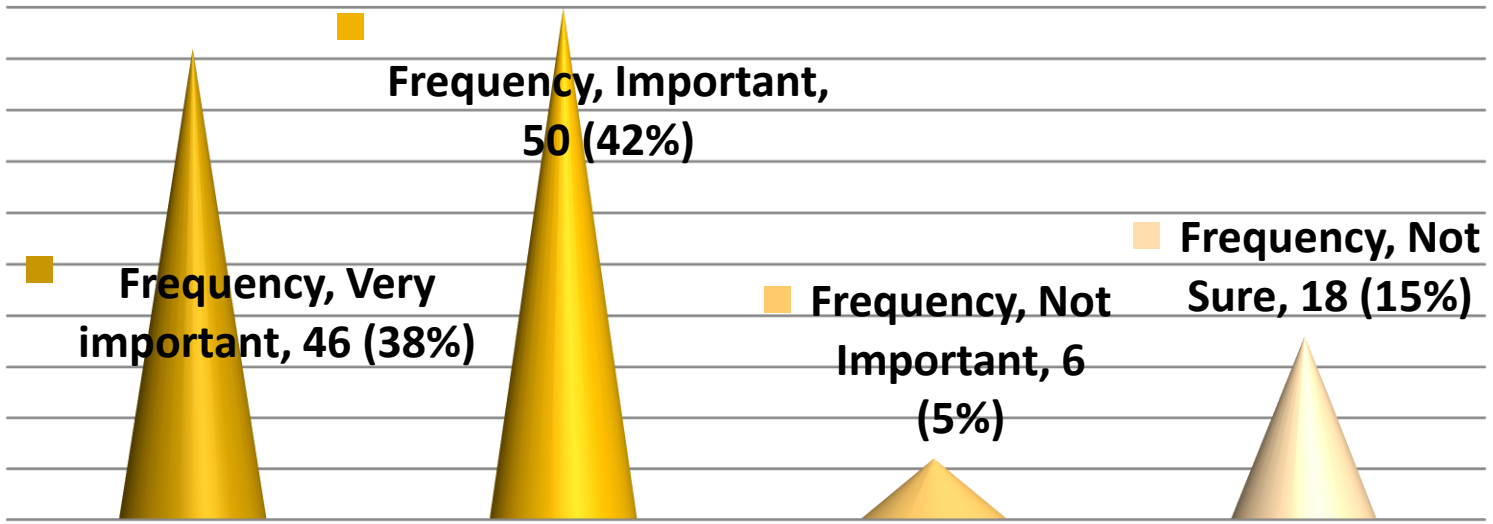
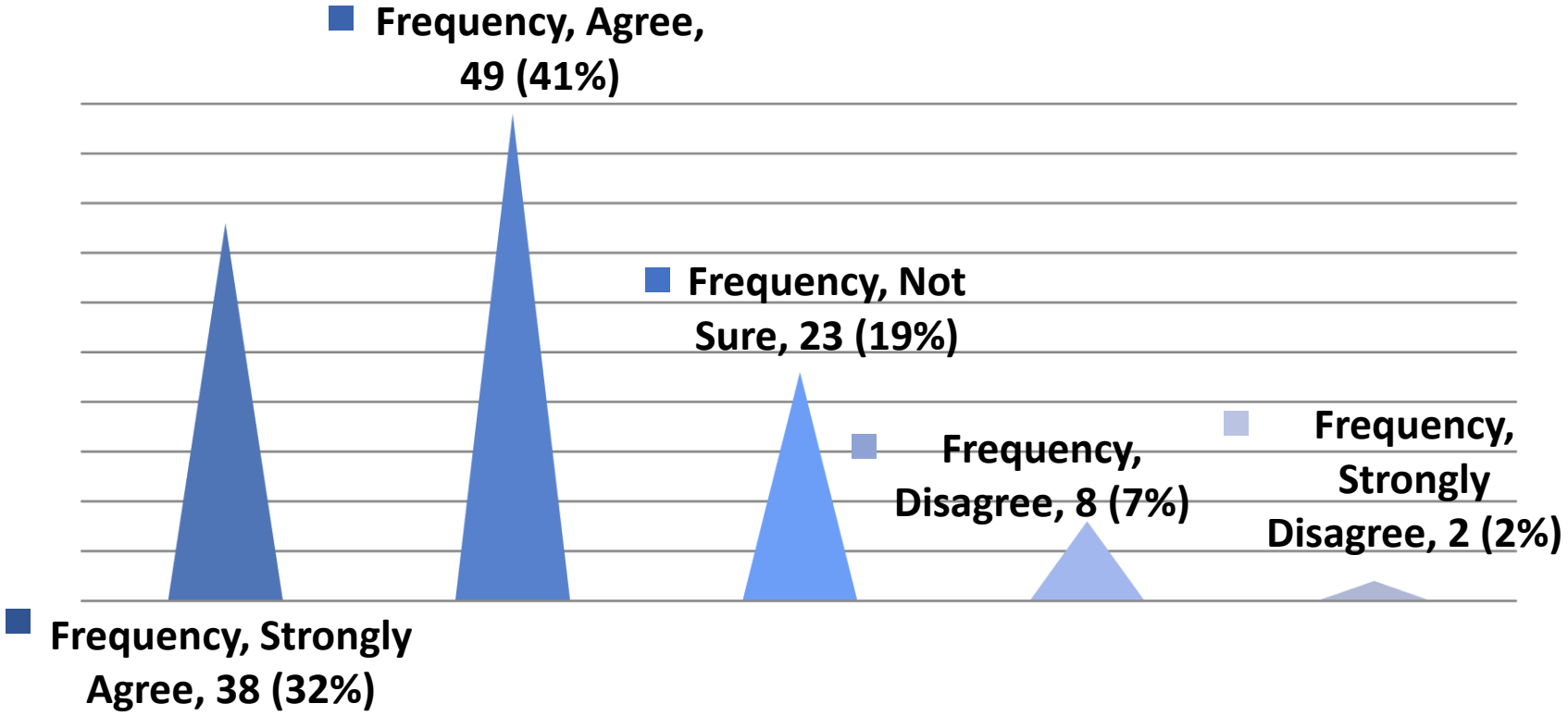


ODL articulation levels in public universities

Teaching with ICTs changed the way students learnt



ODL articulation levels in public universities

Advocating for increased teaching with ICTs

- All respondents were in total agreement arguing that ICTs
  - Have the potential to improve knowledge levels
  - Can improve speed and accuracy
  - Enhance storage of data and networking,
  - Improve lecture delivery
  - Are a cost effective
  - Are swifter, saves time
  - Enhance records keeping

IT IS VIVIDLY EVIDENT THAT THERE IS A HIGH LEVEL OF ODL ACCLAIM

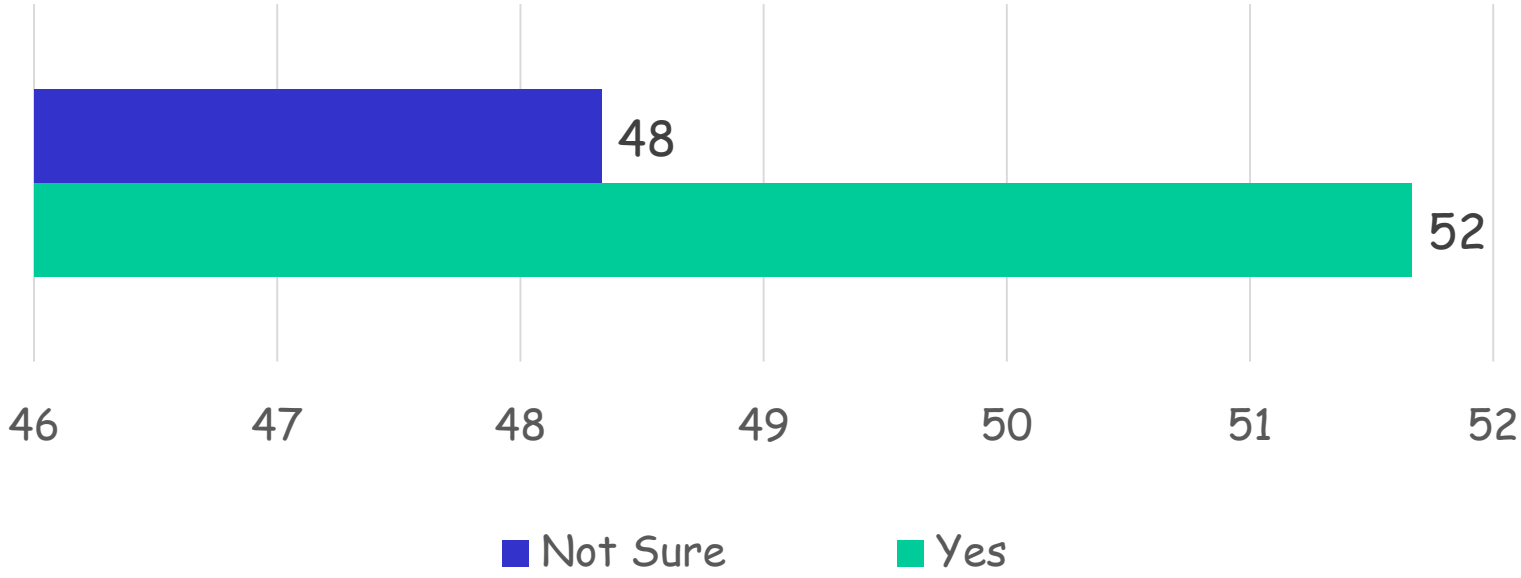
ODL Utilisation/State of Practice

Questions used to adduce utilisation

- Whether universities had any e-learning systems in place
- Frequency of access to the system
- Location, purpose and time of access to the system
- Number of courses per faculty on the system

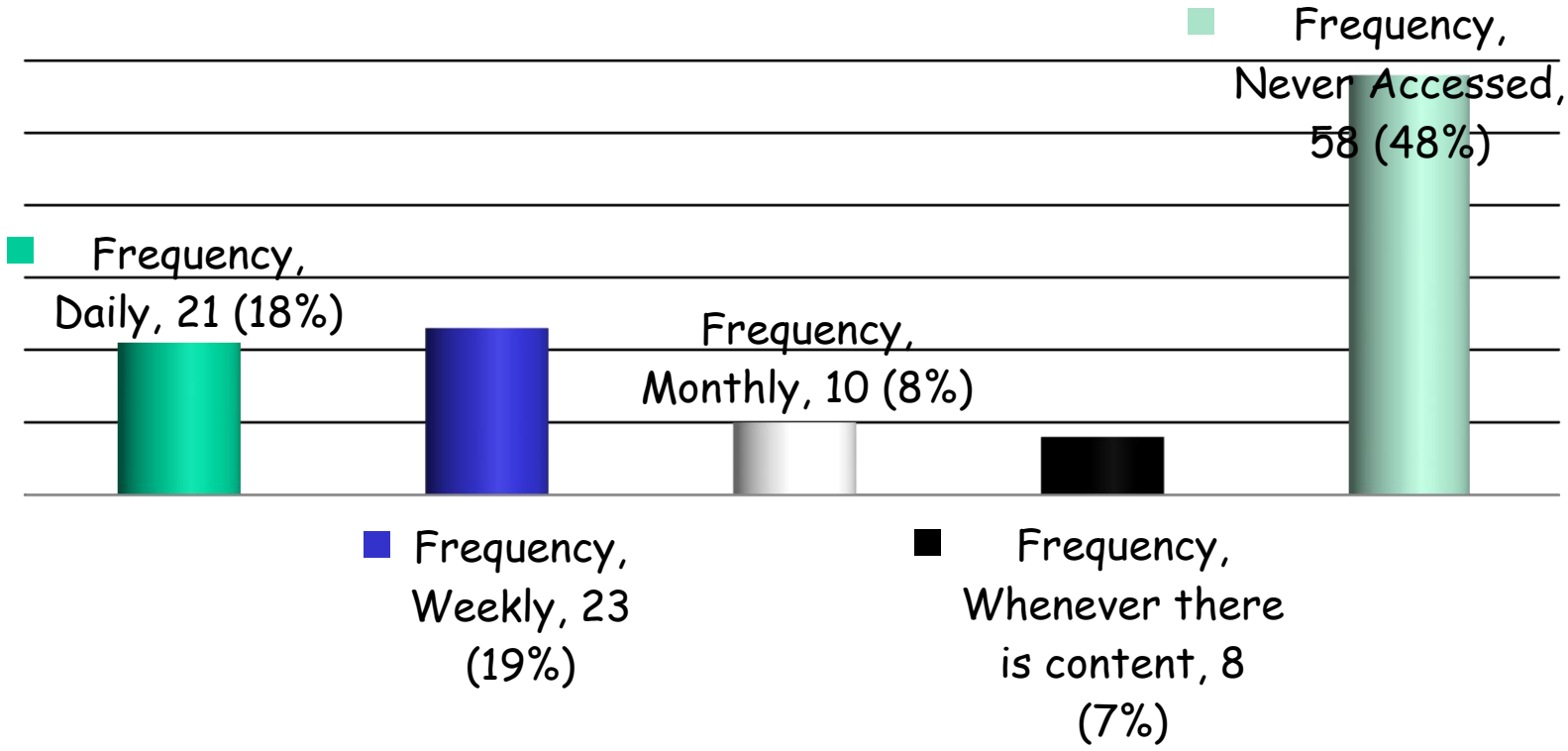
ODL utilisation/State of Practice

Whether universities had any e-learning systems in place



ODL utilisation/State of Practice

Frequency of access to the system



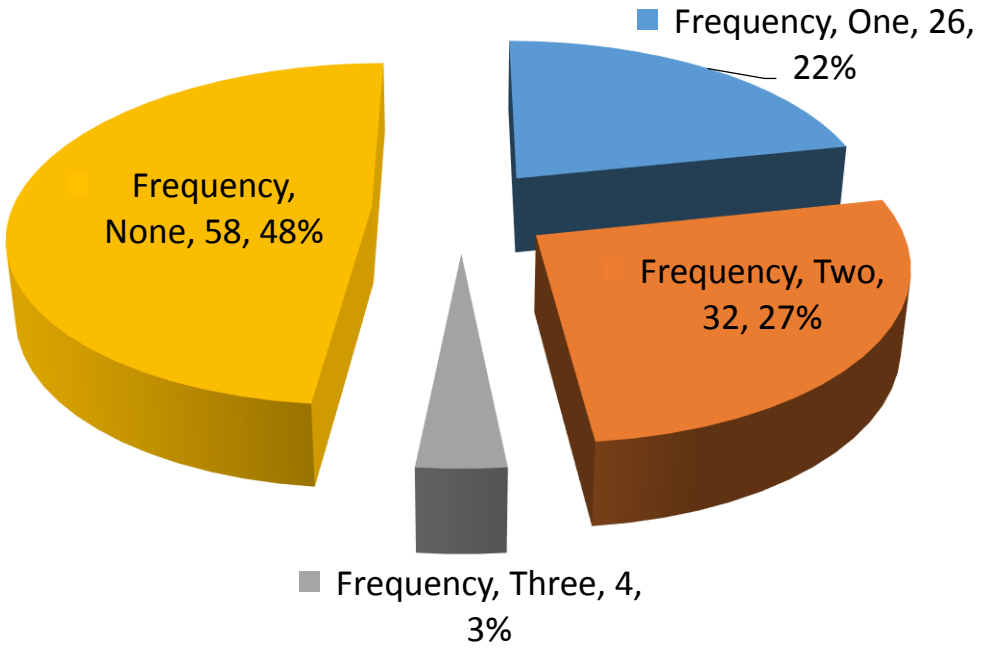
ODL utilisation/State of Practice

Location, purpose and time of access to the system

- Those who accessed the system did so from their offices to:
  - develop e-content,
  - upload and update teaching materials,
  - set assignments and
  - check on students who log onto the system.
- Accessed anytime (53%) , Morning (32%), afternoon (6%) and Night (8%)

ODL utilisation/State of Practice

Number of courses per faculty on the system



IT IS VIVIDLY EVIDENT THAT THERE IS LOW UTILISATION OF ODL APPROACHES

Factors for the low utilization levels of ODL approaches

- Institutional capacity constraints; and
- Individual capacity constraints

Factors for the Low Utilization Levels of ODL Approaches

Institutional constraints (1)

- Limited budgeting for ODL
- Ineffective LMSs/poorly customised
- Inflexible LMSs (No m-learning affordances)
- Insufficient bandwidth
- Lack of/limited LMS access credentials
- Lack of/limited computers for staff and students

Factors for the Low Utilization Levels of ODL Approaches

Institutional constraints (2)

- Intermittent power supply
- Intermittent Internet connectivity
- Dormant ODL policies and strategies – only passionate staff
- Lack of dedicated ODL pedagogy support unit
- Mismatch in skills set for staff supporting ODL pedagogy – IT specialists with no training in ODL pedagogy/education

Factors for the Low Utilization Levels of ODL Approaches

Individual capacity constraints

- Attitudinal constraints, and
- Capacity constraints

Factors for the Low Utilization Levels of ODL Approaches

Individual capacity constraints – Attitudinal Constraints

- Almost all faculty and administrators schooled using conventional classroom based approaches
- Most stakeholder more familiar with and favour traditional approaches
- ODL approaches thought of as being 'inferior'
- ODL approaches are more time consuming

Factors for the Low Utilization Levels of ODL Approaches

Individual capacity constraints - Capacity Constraints

- Faculty lack requisite skills for
  - Using LMSs (only 38% trained. 68% not trained)
  - Leveraging pedagogical affordances of different ICTs
  - Developing pedagogically sound e-courses (About 80% have never developed a pedagogically sound e-course)
  - Facilitating with ICTs (92% had never facilitated an e-course)
- Training not institutionalised
- Training results in active use (100%)

Congruencing ODL hype and utilisation

Two dimensional framework

ODL-AUC Framework

[ODL Articulation & Utilisation Congruencing Framework]

Dimension 1 – 'Soft' (S) Congruencing

Dimension 2 – 'Hard' (H) Congruencing

Congruencing ODL hype and utilisation

ODL-AUC Framework

'Soft' (S) Congruencing	'Hard' (H)Congruencing
Put in place dedicated ODL pedagogues to support fellow academicians	install and operationalize LMSs
Create positive attitude and awareness for ODL among stakeholders	Ensure sufficient bandwidth
Attune staff and learners to student centered pedagogies	Setup a dedicated ODL support units
Inculcate 21st Century skills among learners and faculty	Provide ubiquitous Internet
Train and retrain learners and faculty in ODL pedagogy	Provide steady power supply
Make using ODL approaches attractive	Integrate mobility into tethered LMS systems
Operationalize institutional and national policies on ODL	Blend various ICTs for pedagogical purposes basing on their affordances
Improve internal efficiencies for ODL	Provide devices for seamless accessibility
Efficiently utilize existing ODL resources	ICT support unit with IT specialists
Adequately budget for ODL activities	
Encourage creativity & innovation in ODL	
Ensure regular support for ODL learners and faculty	
Plan well for and institutionalize ODL projects	
Setup quality assurance frameworks and practices for ODL	
Encourage research on ODL pedagogy	

We are validating the ODL-AUC Framework through the DELP

Conclusion

The less attention accorded to the 'soft' dimension as opposed to the 'hard' dimension has caused the imbalance between ODL utilisation and its acclaim/Articulation. We have adduced therefore that utilisation will be congruenced with acclaim/articulation if more effort is put in reducing institutional and individual capacity constraints affecting ODL in dual and single mode institutions