

Bridging the Divide: Enhancing Student Success in Accounting Education Through Open Distance e- Learning (ODeL) Institutions

Presentation by: Sedzani Musundwa

Co-Authors & Funding acknowledgment

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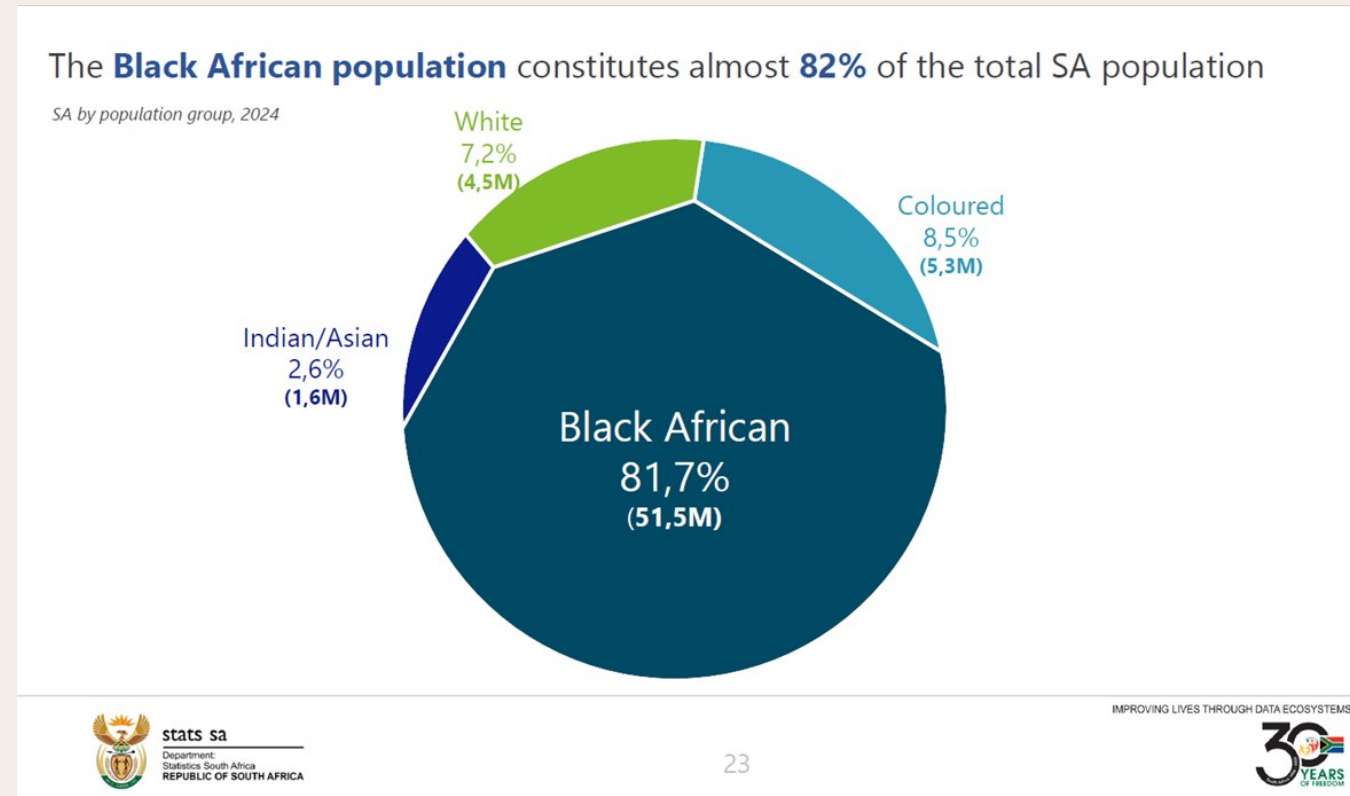


UNISA Open-
Distance Learning
Research Support
Programme

Research problem

- Open Distance e-learning (ODEL) institutions are pivotal in expanding access to higher education, particularly for equity students.
- *However, persistent challenges—from administrative inefficiencies and technological limitations to rigid academic structures—continue to hinder student success, particularly in accounting education, where complex curricula demand high engagement and support.*
- This study explores how ODeL institutions, focusing on the University of South Africa (UNISA), can enhance meaningful access and improve success rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (equity students).

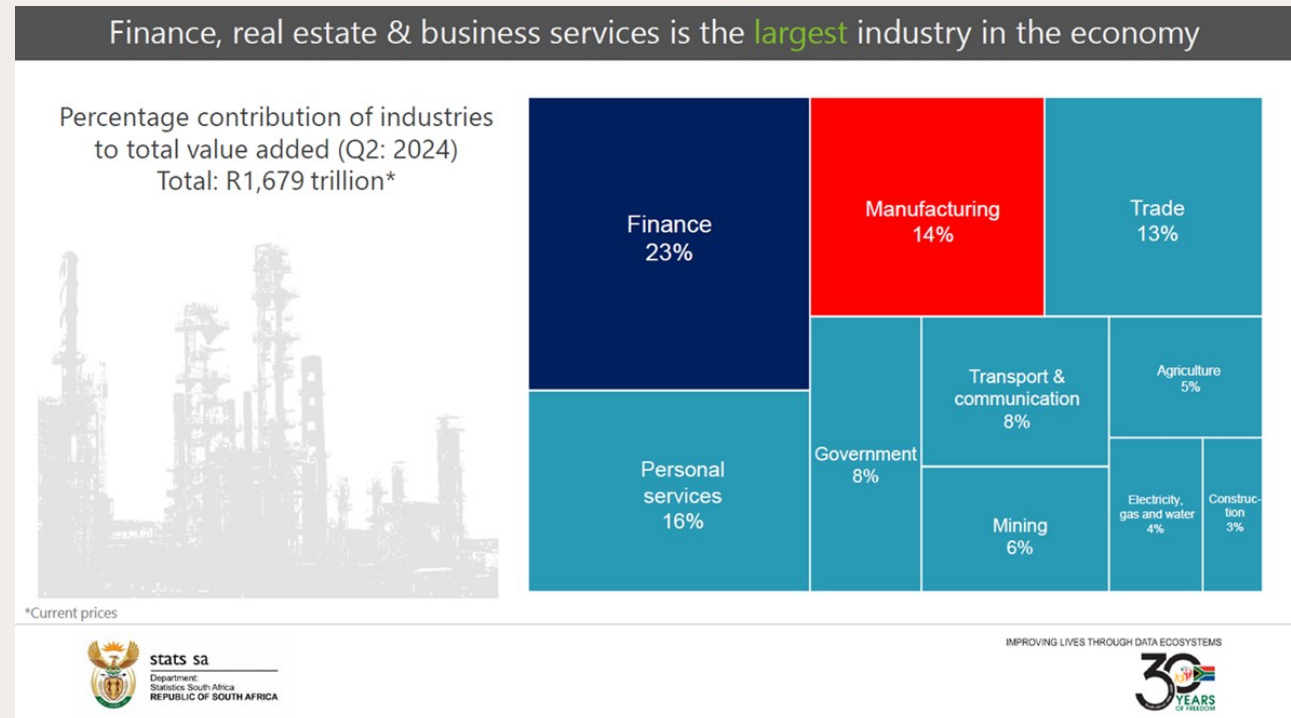
Why are equity students a concern



- Access to higher education was limited under apartheid
- The majority of the population is now uneducated
- Equity students = majority of the population dynamic in the country

Accounting of particular concern

1. Accounting is needed to bolster the economy
2. Largest industry in the economy
3. Passing accounting students is not a luxury



ODeL model offers a practical access solution

1. Flexible teaching (fits the schedules of working students);
2. Online (cuts out travel time);
3. Footprint in 130 countries (surpasses geopolitical boundaries);
4. However ...



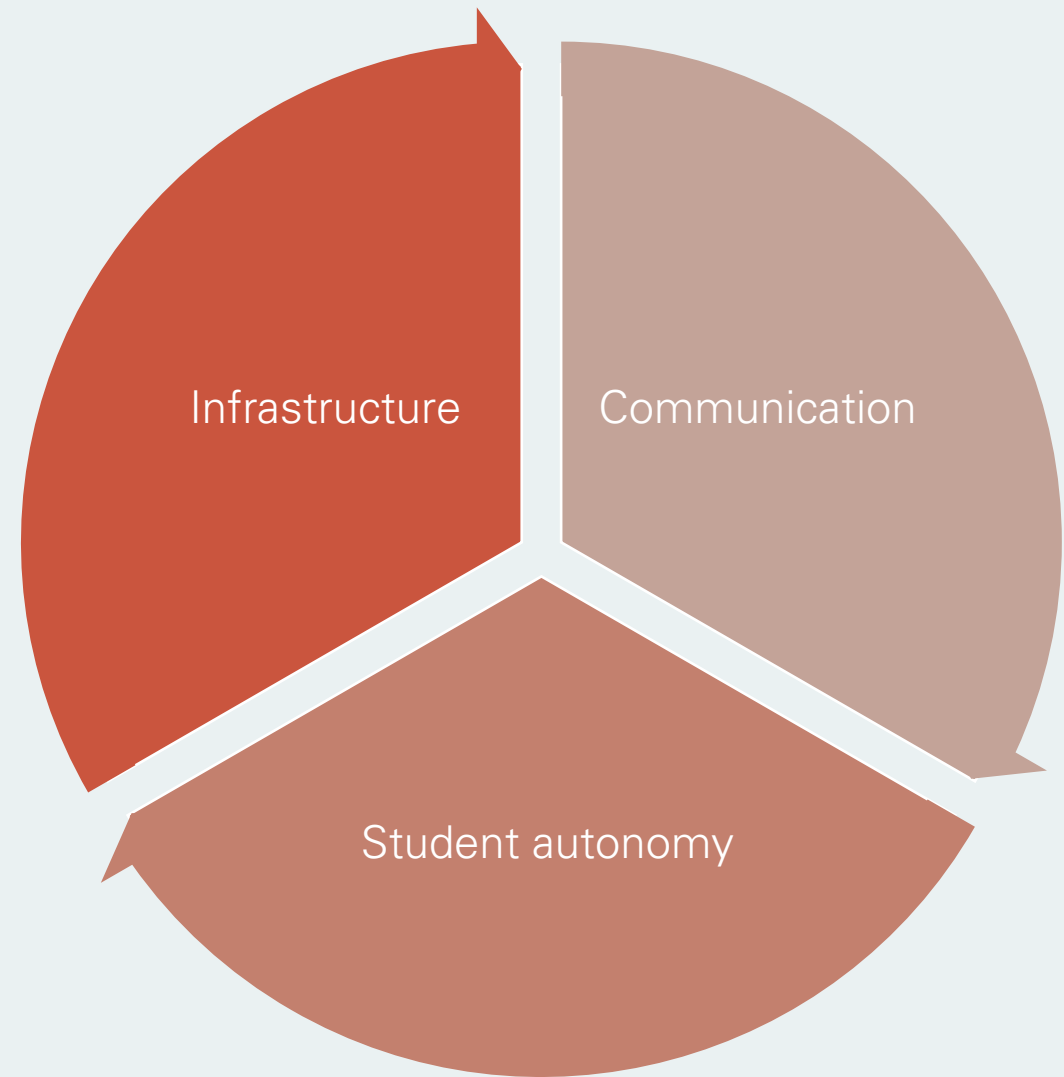
Pass rates are low...

This study explores how ODeL institutions, focusing on the University of South Africa (UNISA), can enhance meaningful access and improve success rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Theoretical lens...

Moore's Transactional Distance Theory

- The psychological and communicative space that arises when educators and learners are separated by space and time. It facilitates an exploration of how behavioural responses to this space can widen or narrow the gap between them.



Approach

Phenomenology

Qualitative approach,

- We interviewed students and educators to investigate key barriers to academic achievement in ODeL settings
- Comparative of experiences of the same setting

Findings

Communication

- As a behavioural function
- Highlights frustration
- Unproductive

Structure

- Institutional
- Programme

Student autonomy

- A direct output of the other two functions

Conclusion



ODeL does provide access, however it may not be MEANINGFUL if measured on student success.

Low hanging of 3 dimensions that can be easily addressed.

Thank you

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