

**EXPERIENCES OF OFFENDER STUDENTS WHO ARE REGISTERED FOR ONLINE  
MODULES AT UNISA: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG CORRECTIONAL  
FACILITIES**

By

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**DECLARATION**

I Pindiwe Christoleen Seloma affirm that **EXPERIENCES OF OFFENDER STUDENTS WHO ARE REGISTERED FOR ONLINE MODULES AT UNISA: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES**, is my work and all the sources that I have utilised or cited have been shown and acknowledged by means of complete reference.



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Signature  
PC Seloma

23 March 2020

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my late Mother Cecilia Buqwana who always encouraged me, from a very young age to study and reminded me that education is the key to success and is not inherited.

To my husband Simon Makaluwane Seloma, who supported and encouraged me throughout my journey when things got tough. And also, for making our home comfortable enough to close the gap when I was not available for our kids.

And to my two beloved sons Ikageng and Ithuteng Seloma, I appreciate your support and understanding, you permitted me to spend more time on my studies.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to investigate experiences of offender students who registered for online modules with the University of South Africa (Unisa) from Correctional facilities in Gauteng. Theories of Transitional Distance and Wellness Model were used as theoretical thoughts for the study. To achieve the objectives of the study, a qualitative research design was adopted, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Thirteen offender students from one of Gauteng's Correctional facilities participated in the study. Information concerning the study was communicated to all participants and consent forms were completed after all participants agreed to the terms set out for participation. The study revealed various challenges experienced by offender students such as poor administrative support services by Unisa and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) staff, which excludes offender students from receiving adequate training to use online resources effectively. Further the findings reveal that correctional facilities were not conducive as learning environments because internet access is mostly regarded as a high-risk factor that compromises security at these facilities. Subsequently, applying restrictions to address bridge of security through technology is envisaged as an exclusion of certain learning material by the offender students. The findings highlight the plight of offender students and required learner support services which will enable them to become successful participants in post-school education. The researcher recommends that DCS reforms its practices as the current restrictions technically exclude offender students from accessing education through Open and Distance Learning institutions such Unisa and exposes DCS to possible legal litigation. Given the move by Higher Education institutions towards online mode of education, it is critical that offender students be accommodated in this new dispensation.

**KEYWORDS:** Offender students; Correctional facilities; Online learning; Internet; Access, Learner support.

## SETSOPOLWANA (ABSTRACT)

Maikemišetšo a nyakišišo ye ebe ele go nyakišiša ditšhitišo tšeo bagolegwa (mapantiti) ba go ithutela le Unisa ba kopanago le tšona ge ba ingwadišitše go ithuta dithuto tša *online* ba le kgolegong ya Gauteng. Teori ya *Transitional Distance gammogo* le ya *Wellness Model* di berekišitšwe bjalo ka dikgopolo tša teori mo nyakišišong. Go fihlelela maikemišetšo a maleba, nyakišišo e ile ya kgetha *qualitative design* gomme tshedimošo ya kgoboketšwa ka dipoledišano tšeo di beakantšwego. Bagolegwa ba lesometharo ba go ithuta go tswa kgolegong ya Gauteng e bile batšeakarolo ba go ithaopa mo nyakišišong. Tsebo mabapi le nyakišišo e ile ya tlhalosetšwa go batšeakarolo ka moka le diforomo tša tumelelano di tladišwe ka ge go bile le kwano go mabakana ao a beilwego gore motho a tšee karolo. Ntle le tšeo di fokotšago bophara bja nyakišišo, yona e utulotše ditšhitišo tša go fapafapana tšeo bagolegwa ba go ithuta ba kopanago natšo go swana le thušo ya go fokola ya *admin* go tswa go bašomi ba Unisa le ba kgoro ya tša kgalemo; tša go se akaretše bagolegwa ba go ithuta go hwetša tlhatlho ya maleba ka tšhomišo ya didirišwa tša go ithutela *online*. Se sengwe seo se tšweletšego ke gore dikgolego ga se mafelo a maleba a go ithutela ka gobane phihlelelo ya *internet* e tšewa bjalo ka lebaka la botšhošetši le legolo la go ka bea polokego ya lefelo kotsing. Go tee le seo, go beiwa ga taolo ya tšhitišo bjalo ka mokgwa wa go thibela go tshelwa ga polokego ka *technology* e bonwa bjalo ka go se akaretšwe go dilo tše dingwe tša go ithuta ke bagolegwa bao ba ithutago. Dipolelo tša nyakišišo ye di bonagatša boima bjo bo rwelego ke bagolegwa bao elego baithuti le hlokego ya thušo ya baithuti yeo ekaba kgontšhago go tšwelela ka morago ga go fetša ditthuto tša bona. Monyakišiši o eletša Kgoro gore e fetole mekgwa ya tshepedišo ya yona ka ge seo se thibela bagolegwa bao elego baithuti go fihlelela thuto ya *ODL* mafelong a go ithuta go swana le *Unisa*, ebile seo se bea kgoro sebakeng sa go ka sepetšwa Kgoro ya Tsheko. Ka ge mafelo a thuto ya godimo a tšea kgato ya go fana ka thuto ka mokgwa wa *online* go bohlokwa kudu gore bagolegwa bao elego baithuti ba akaretšwe mo kगतong ye.

## **ABSTRACT (isiZulu)**

Inhloso yalolucwaningo bekuwukuphenya ngezinsalelo ezitholwa ngabafundi asebegwetshiwe ababhalisele amamojula aku-inthanethi ne-Unisa abavela ezikhungweni zoku Hlunyeleliswa Kwezimilo ezise Gauteng. Izinkolelo-mbono zeTransitional Distance and Wellness Model zisetshenziswe njengezinhlaka zethiyori yocwaningo. Ukufezekisa izinhloso zocwaningo kwamukelwa umklamo wocwaningo olulandayo futhi imininingwane yaqoqwa ngezingxoxo - mbuzo. Abafundi abayishumi nantathu asebegwetshiwe ababambe iqhaza ngokwentando yabo bavela esikhungweni esisodwa sokuHlunyeleliswa Kwezimilo eGauteng. Imininingwane ephathelene nalolucwaningo yaziswa bonke ababambe iqhaza futhi amafomu okuvuma agcwaliswa ngemuva kokuba bonke ababambiqhaza bevumilene nemigomo ebekiwe yokuzibandakanya. Ngaphandle kwezinqinamba, lolu cwaningo luveze izinsalelo ezahlukahlukene ezibhekana nabafundi ezifana nezinsiza-kufunda ezingezinhle ngakubasebenzi bakwa-Unisa nabasebenzi boMnyango Wezokuhlunyeleliswa Kwezimilo; okunholela ekutheni abafundi abanecala bangatholi uqeqesho olwanele lokusebenzisa izinsiza kusebenza eziku-inthanethi ngempumelelo. Okunye okutholakele ukuthi izindawo abazisebenzisayo azilungisiwe njengezindawo zokufunda ngoba ukufinyelela kwi-inthanethi kubhekwe kakhulu njengento ebeka engcupheni enkulu ezokuphepha kulezizindawo. Ngakho, ukusebenzisa imingcele ukusombulula inkinga elethwa ukusebenzisa itheknoloji kubukeka njengokukhishwa inyumbazana ekufinyeleleni kwizinsiza-kufunda zabafundi. Umcwaningi weluleke isikhungo sokubuyekeza kwenqubo mgomo mayelana nezindlela ezibekiwe zokuvimbela abafundi abasusa odweshu ekutheni bengavunyelwa ukuthi bethole imfundo noma ngabe babuqamama nesikhungo semfundo njenge nyuvesi yase ningizimu neAfrica kuphinde kubekwe iDCS (isigungu sokuqondiswa kwezigwegwe) lapho kudingeka khona imiqathango yezomthetho. Kwizinqumo zesikhungo semfundo ephakeme sokusebenzisa izindlela zobuchwepheshe okanye izinkundla zokuxhumana ekufundeni, kusemqoka okanye kubalulekile ukuba abafundi abasuse odweshu nabo bafukanyelwe kulouhlelo olusha lwemfundo.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATION**

DBE	-	Department of Basic Education
DCS	-	Department of Correctional Services
DHET	-	Department of Higher Education and Training
DLA	-	Digital Learning Advisor
EFA	-	Education for All
GITO	-	Government Information Technology Officer
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology
IT	-	Information Technology
LMS	-	Learning Management System
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NDP	-	National Development Plan
ODeL	-	Open Distance e-Learning
ODL	-	Open Distance Learning
PARC	-	Professional Administrative Research Committee
SAPS	-	South African Police Service
SRC	-	Student Representative Council
TVET	-	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNISA	-	University of South Africa
VC	-	Video Conference

# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Department of Correctional Services (1998) refers to an offender as both a sentenced and an awaiting trial person. Act no 2 of 2008 referees someone who is sentenced as a convicted person who is condemned and confined on or under Correctional supervision. Amended section 2 of Act 111 of 1998 further defines awaiting trial as someone who is officially incarcerated in a Correctional facility and has been found guilty of an offence but has not been sentenced to imprisonment or correctional command. The ultimate purpose and intention of Correctional facilities is to rehabilitate offenders so that they can eventually become better citizens. The societies plan education through their socio-economic development (Michal & Lock, 2002). Subsequently, the empowerment of society improves their economic situations, social and culture (Isife & Nneka, 2016). To facilitate learning and improve the educational needs of offenders, several approaches and interventions have been explored; offenders who are in Correctional facilities also require these improvements. The participants in this study are offenders who have registered with the University of South Africa (Unisa) in order to pursue their academic goals. For the purposes of this study, participants were referred to as offender students.

Unisa has adopted an Open Distance e-learning (ODeL) as its delivery model. ODeL model puts an emphasis on the usage of various technologies as the core of teaching and learning. As a result, Unisa offers some of the modules purely through online technologies. These models are referred to as online modules. One of the educational challenges the offender students face while in incarceration is inadequate access to technologies. Therefore, the study investigated challenges experienced by offender students who registered for online modules while in Correctional facilities.

The critical learning needs encompass crucial learning e-resources and basic learning content that is required by society because it enables them to survive in development of their lives, working and living in dignified manner and contributing entirely in their advancement, quality improvement of their existence and continuous learning to make informed choices (World Declaration on Education for All, 2006). Furthermore, there are six international agreed goals of Education for All that aim to meet the learning needs of all children; 1. The most vulnerable and underprivileged children requires expansion and improvement of inclusive early childhood care and education; 2. Certifying that with the aid of 2015 all children in threatening environment and persons fitting to ethnic subgroups, get access and complete unrestricted and obligatory main

education of adequate quality; 3. Through unbiased access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes ensures that learning needs of undeveloped people are met; 4. The level of adult literature should be improved and provided equitable access to continue basic education for all by 2015; 5. Accomplish gender equality and access to basic quality education by 2005; 6. To achieve recognised and measurable learning outcomes and quality of education should improve to ensure excellence in essential life skills, literacy and numeracy (Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, 2000).

Kilfoil (2015) suggests that new enrolment for undergraduate degree students are expected to register and complete one mandatory online module per college successfully from 2013. The Commonwealth of Learning (CoL) has acknowledged the suitability of the pedagogical approach used in signature courses. Subsequently, Unisa signature courses are the best interactive online courses introduced in 2013. Therefore, offender students registered for the online modules as part of their curriculum to complete their respective registered qualifications. Each online module consists of fifteen compulsory assignments that may only be submitted online. Currently, there are several offender students who deregister for modules that have online components. Act 2000 of 1996 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, under education, suggests that every individual shall have the right to primary schooling and have an equal access to educational institutions.

Then, the Correctional Services Amendment (Act no. 25, 2008) substitution of section 41 of Act 111 of 1998 clearly states that sentenced offenders should be given access and support to certain training programmes to meet educational basic training needs. Again, to address the illiterate of sentenced offenders who are and/or children/minors educational training programmes offered in terms of section (1) (b) must be obligatory. Such training programmes may be prescribed by the regulations. At the same time, the provision of services with the promotion of social and healthy mental functioning is also highlighted. The department must provide; as far as feasible, training, development and support programmes which meet special needs of sentenced offenders. According to this Bill, sentenced offenders have the right to take the programme and use the services offered in terms of subsections (1), (3) and (4). Furthermore, sentenced offenders may be compelled to participate in programmes and use services offered in subsections (1), (3) and (4) wherein the opinion of the National Commissioner, their participation is necessary especially when taking into consideration the nature of previous criminal conduct and the risk they pose to the community. In addition, it is vital that programmes must be responsive to persons with special needs by ensuring that women are not disadvantaged. Consequently, in Council of Europe policy, prison education is known to own contribution additionally to those just described – that of disputing undesirable impact of the correctional facilities, restraining the humiliation done to offenders through incarceration (Council of Europe, 1990, p.15). The important functions of



Council's declaration states that education and training of offenders shall not be financially disadvantage by collaborating in learning and development (Council of Europe, 2006, p.28). Therefore, any person in correctional facilities is seen as a citizen, a part of society and is central to the Board of Europe's correctional arrangement in common and its prison instructional policy approach.

Education in Prison Council of Europe (1990) set out mostly the Council's policy on prison education and this is often recognized strongly within the (European Prison Rules Council of Europe 2006). People that are confined are equally eligible to a form of variety of adult education as persons within community outside the prison. The Council of Europe encourage active developmental role and critical attitudes of member of the society in the community by ensuring equality in adult educational opportunity and cultural democracy (Council of Europe, 1990, p.17–18). Hence education is for everybody Correctional facilities stresses that access to an extensive curriculum is recommended to advance all offenders by taking cognisance of their social, economic and context (Council of Europe,1990, p.8). The focus is clearly defined, to recognise the offenders as complete citizens. Subsequently, the training and development in correctional education in some countries shows a different retreat from holistic insight. The National Plan 2030 alluded that Education, Innovation and Training are essential to South Africa's long-term expansion. Therefore, the essential element of this plan is to eradicate poverty and diminish discrimination in the society. Furthermore, the National Plan 2030 stipulates that teaching and learning is imperative for good citizenship, enhancement and diversifying life.

The treatment of incarcerated people was approved as basic principle by the UN General Assembly in 1990. The focus on offenders' rights and being recognised, treated with dignity as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1990). One of the prisoners' rights included was to take part in social activities and full educational development of human personality. Council of Europe outlined wide curriculum that suggest full educational development of the entire offenders.

## **1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The rationale for conducting this study was to explore the challenges that the offenders face with their online studies/modules. Further exploration is on whether the offenders can submit their work online until they complete their qualifications. If there is hindrance to complete online modules, students will not be able to accumulate the required credits per academic year. As a result, these offenders become demoralised and consequently deregister. The education and training invested on offenders' education may need justification on returns on state investors (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders & Miles, 2013). The benefits of such investments are also

naturally expensive. Returning more job-ready for offenders to our most troubled societies, helps break the ghetto-to-prison revolving door that has helped to build the largest prison complex on earth (Paige, Cohen & Shively, 2004; Wacquant, 2000). Any offender who obtained a degree is more likely to avoid incarceration and less fewer chances to victimise others, and rather to be able to support families inside the legitimate economy and thus to break recidivism of incarceration that plagues more children of imprisoned people (Christian, 2009).

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is an attempt to see how offenders who are registered Unisa students manage online modules. Furthermore, the study may benefit Unisa academics with compiling online module curriculums and provide alternative pathways that allow a variety of students to complete their formal qualifications. The study might have an influence on Unisa assessment policies to transform the method of assessment of online modules by considering students who do not have access to computers or are incarcerated.

The study might also influence the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) to transform policies on the use of computers and access to the internet for offenders that are studying qualifications with online module components.

### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

An aspect of my job description entails community outreach in Correctional facilities; students who are offenders shared their frustrations and challenges with online modules through conversations that took place during prison visits, which were to assist them with the application and registration processes of Unisa. Offenders shared their frustrations when registering online modules with Unisa. Offenders who register with Unisa often de-register because they experience challenges due to limited access to computers. These challenges contribute towards them not being able to both complete and submit their compulsory online assignments. In addition, some students do not have enough access to the internet. If offenders are not given access to the internet and are unable to complete their online assignments, they will be further disadvantaged and excluded by the system, in that they will not attain the requisite credits to complete their qualifications. Furthermore, online modules in Correctional facility pose a challenge to offenders because of the denied use of internet, more often also; the number of computers available is sometimes limited. The history of repeating classes at school may affect offender students and lead them to hesitate success in their current studies hence they de-register online modules (Cantor et al., 2006).

## **1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What are the experiences of offender students who registered at Unisa for online modules at correctional facilities in Gauteng?

### **1.5.1 Sub-questions**

1. What are the challenges of offender students who registered at Unisa for online modules at Correctional facilities in Gauteng?
2. What academic support is given to offender students registered for online modules at Unisa in Correctional facilities in Gauteng?
3. Which intervention strategies are needed to support offender students registered for online modules at Unisa at Correctional facilities in Gauteng?
4. Which inclusive strategies may be used to support offender students registered for Unisa online modules at Correctional Centres?

## **1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.6.1 Research Aim**

The aim of this study was to explore experiences of offender students who registered for online modules at Unisa in Correctional facilities in Gauteng.

### **1.6.2 Research Objectives**

1. To identify the challenges experienced by offender students registered at Unisa for online modules from Correctional facilities in Gauteng.
2. To find out if there is academic support given to offender students registered for online modules at Unisa in Correctional facilities in Gauteng.
3. To recommend intervention strategies that support offender students registered for online modules at Unisa from Correctional facilities in Gauteng.
4. To determine inclusive strategies that may be used to support offenders registered for online modules from Correctional Centres.

## **1.7 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS**

Online Module – A learning module is a sequenced collection of subject-related online materials designed to teach a topic or skill ([www.aeseducation.com](http://www.aeseducation.com)).

Access to Technology – The method of gaining access to a computer system or network ([www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com)).

Un-sentenced Offenders – Someone who is legally incarcerated in prison but who has not been sentenced to imprisonment (Correctional Service Act 1998).

Inmates/Prisoner/Offender – Refers to someone, whether condemned or not, who is detained in custody in any prison or who is being transferred in custody or is a route from one prison to another prison (Amendment of section 2 of Act 111, Correctional Service Act 1998).

Sentenced Offender – Someone who is lawfully detained in prison or correctional centre or a person who has been imprisoned (Amendment of section 2 of Act 111, of Correctional Service Act 1998).

Correctional Facility/Prison – Any place established under this Act as a place for reception, detention, confinement, and all land buildings or premises adjacent to any such place, (Correctional Service Act 111 of 1998 as amended by correctional Service Amendment Act 32 of 2001).

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study used Moore's Theory of Transactional Distance (Moore, 1993) as a lens which focuses on physical separation that leads to psychological communication gap and space that may potentially lead to a misunderstanding between the input of the instructor and that of a learner. This theoretical framework is suitable for this study since there is a separation gap between lecturers and the offender students. Subsequently, the theoretical framework positions the study in the discipline in which the researcher is working (Henning, 2004). Moreover, according to the extent of dialogue, structure and the characteristics of each learner educational learning programs changes in transactional distance (Moore, 1980). Offender students are isolated in different ways by virtue of being situated in Correctional facilities. The distance between the offender students and lecturers may have an either negative or positive impact. This study also focused on the support that offender students may need in distance education. The study also considered the impact that the social wellness dimensions have on offenders when it comes to establishing and maintaining positive relationships with their families and friends. Both the community and social workers may add important value when it comes to influencing and changing the offender's behaviour when on parole. This is by teaching them to adapt to life outside the facility and coexist with the society again after spending years in Correctional facilities. That is why the study also incorporated Bill Hettler's Wellness Model of 1976. This Wellness Model consists of six integrated life approaches that contribute to an individual's wellbeing of which the offender students may need to demonstrate in their daily lives of living inside Correctional facilities and with the community at large. The six key areas of the Wellness Model lead to a happy and a healthy fulfilling life of an individual. The areas in discussion include physical, emotional, occupational,

spiritual, intellectual and social (Patafsky, 2019). Therefore, the Wellness Model fits well in this study because social wellness of the offender students is important whether in facilities or in their respective communities. This model was scrutinized in this study. The theoretical framework is further expanded in chapter two.

## **1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.9.1 Research paradigm**

The study is located within an interpretive paradigm. In an interpretive paradigm, knowledge is socially constructed, and researchers attempt to understand phenomena by getting the meanings assigned by participants to the phenomena (Walsham, 1993). Therefore, information comes directly from participants and information acquired from the participants can be justified as a true reflection. This study closely looks at the challenges faced by participants who registered for online module(s) at Unisa from Correctional facilities as offenders. For this reason, the researcher adopted this approach as it uses broad sources and data analysis method in research to produce valid findings, reality and lived experiences of offender students at Correctional facilities (Henning, Rensburg & Smith, 2010). In this study, information was collected by obtaining data through interviews. Offender students were also observed while interacting with one another. While observing interactions between offender students, the researcher was able to denote meaning as well as understand participants' perceptions at Correctional facilities environment. The social wellness model helps others enjoy healthy interactions and relationships, whereas the interpretive framework shoulders on making meaning in social context.

### **1.9.2 Research method**

The researcher opted for a qualitative approach which provides an opportunity to explore the topic in a deeper manner. Qualitative research puts emphasis on the importance of understanding the social world through perceptions, attitudes and experiences of individuals. Qualitative approach assisted the researcher to understand the feelings and opinions of offender students (Maree, 2007). Furthermore, Creswell (2007, p.6) points out that qualitative research probes deeper into the quality of social life and locates the study within settings which provide opportunities for exploring all possible social interactions. Hence qualitative research was applied in this study as it attempts to answer how offender students make sense of their own lives. Subsequently, personal perspectives and experiences of offender students were explored and reported by using this method.

### **1.9.3 Research design**

The research design was a case study that examined a bounded system, or a case over time in depth, employing multiple sources of data founded in the setting. The case may be a program, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bounded by time and/or place. The researcher defines

the case and its boundary (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The participants of the study are in a restricted environment; that is Correctional facilities, over a certain period depending on their individual sentenced years. This is the reason the researcher focused on situations, their boundaries and uniqueness as used to illustrate an issue (Stake, 2000). The emphasis is on one entity within which the site of the study or several entities that can be multisite study for the same purpose.

#### **1.9.4 Location**

The location of the study was in the Gauteng Correctional Centre in South Africa. The study focused on offenders that are studying through Unisa and their curriculum have a component of online module(s).

### **1.10 SAMPLING**

#### **1.10.1 Sampling technique**

A sampling technique is the process of selecting units from a population of interest, with the aim of deriving from a few selected items, instead of an entire number of units. Purposive sampling technique was employed, as the researcher used personal judgment to sought participants, who are opulent and had first-hand experiences to share in relation to the topic. The researcher was able to get hold of the offenders who are registered students of Unisa, through personal contact. Lavraskas (2008, p.524) points out that the main objective of purposive sampling is to produce a sample that can be considered “representative” of the population.

Corbin and Straus (2008, p.92), state that purposive sampling is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. A non-random technique does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. However, the researcher decides what needs to be known and seeks to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and or experience.

### **1.11 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

#### **1.11.1 Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used as a method of data collection that is crucial in the process of gathering information. Green and Smith (2005, p.286) define semi-structured interviews as “... those organised around area of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth”. In-depth interview represents one of the possible ways to access the experiences, thoughts and opinions of respondent (Silverman, 2013, p.56). The interviews are suitable when one is particularly interested in complexity or predetermined question in an interview schedule, hence the interviews unfolded organically rather than dictated by the schedule. By asking respondents to comment on raised issues, the semi structured interview

allows people to broadly express their views. The questions were focused on finding out the reasons that often lead the offenders to de-register the online modules.

### **1.11.2 Open-ended questionnaire**

Open-ended questionnaires permit participants to express an opinion without being influenced by the researcher (Foddy, 1993, p.127). This type of questionnaire encompasses the possibilities of discovering the responses that individuals give spontaneously to questions asked.

### **1.11.3 Observation**

Observation is done in person by the researcher who comes prepared in order to focus on what can be observable. It is not a tangible tool by a method or technique that gives the researcher first-hand information and allows for the taking of notes, but it is rather influenced by circumstances, the method of observation as well as what the observer brings to the event.

## **1.12 DATA COLLECTION**

### **1.12.1 Data collection through interviews**

Data collection through interviews is a face to face interaction between researcher and participants with an attempt to understand participants' perspectives on their lives and experiences. Furthermore, the researcher used semi structured interviews to interview offender students in their natural settings with the aim to understand and gain more informative and valuable information from the participants. Thirteen offenders were interviewed in a Correctional services computer lab in the presence of the Correctional service official, though the official was in a closer but separate office both for security reasons and privacy not to hear the offender student's responses. The interviews took six days, five days from male section and one day from female section. On the third day interviews were destructed by building fumigations that were taking place and were continued the following day. The researcher was granted permission to use an audio recorder to record the semi-structured interviews.

### **1.12.2 Data collection through open-ended questionnaire**

Open-ended interviews consisted of questionnaires with formulated questions that were distributed by the researcher to thirteen participants. The participants wrote down their answers using their own words and expressing their opinions without the influence of the researcher. Then the researcher proceeded to record the answers in verbatim. After face to face interviews offender students were given open ended questionnaires which consisted of four questions to respond to. An open-ended questionnaire was used in order to allow offender students to share their views, experiences and reflect on any information that participants deemed to fit the researcher's advantage. Subsequently, open-ended questions provided in-depth information and where participants could not understand the researcher provided clarity.

### **1.12.3 Data collection through observation**

Observation is another purposeful way of collecting data by the watching and listening phenomenon as it takes place in the field of research. The researcher observed and took field notes while interacting with participants. The researcher used a non-observation method to obtain in-depth information from the participants when attempting to access *myunisa* and *mylife* accounts. The observation allowed the researcher to witness participants struggling to access the *myunisa* portal as a result of poor internet connection at the Correctional facility.

## **1.13 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to a mass of collected data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011, p.147). Raw data was transcribed and kept ready for analysis. Qualitative data analysis is for general statements about relationships among categories of data and builds grounded theory. Data analysis means of (mainly) statistical techniques helps us to investigate variables and their effects, relationships and patterns of involvement within our world (Leedy & Ormorod, 2001, p.165). Neuman (1997, p.426) defines data analysis as a search for pattern in recurrent behaviours, objects of a body of knowledge. Once data have been collected the researcher needs to organise the data in a more meaningful way. The idea of data analysis suggests transformation, through analytic processes the researcher turns the data into a clear, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and original analysis (Gibbs, 2007, p.1).

### **1.13.1 Data analysis of interviews**

The collected data from interviews was firstly transcribed and saved in different computer hard drives. Subsequently, the transcripts from interview sessions were analysed, codes and categories were grouped into themes. Thematic system was used to gather data received from participants. This systematic process is used to organise and describe data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **1.13.2 Data analysis of open-ended questionnaire**

A more in-depth analysis was done through questionnaires in order to get more perspective and experiences from participants on challenges experienced by offender students in Correctional facilities. Interrelated categories were sorted accordingly.

### **1.13.3 Data analysis of observations**

The researcher made some detailed notes and watched the participants interacting (Kumar, 2014, p.175). The researcher used a pre-planned schedule to observe offender students connecting computers in a laboratory, interpretations and conclusions were drawn from observations and the researcher tried not to be biased. Coding and categories merged to formulate themes as alluded in chapter five figure 5.2.



## **1.14 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher should confirm credibility, that is one of the most important considerations in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Four criteria are recommended by Lincoln and Guba (2000) in order to ensure trustworthiness; these are how credibility corresponds with the concept of internal validity; since it seeks to convince that the findings depict the truth of the reality under study, or, in other words, that they make sense.

### **1.14.1 Transferability**

Transferability is realised when the researcher affords adequate data about the research context, processes, participants and researcher participants and participant relationship to enable the reader to decide how the findings may have been transferred. Although the data generally cannot be transferable (Gasson, 2004). The researcher thoroughly interpreted and interrogated the data to make it transferable and convincing.

### **1.14.2 Dependability**

Dependability demands that the researcher thoroughly describes and precisely follows a clear and thoughtful research strategy. Dependability refers to the degree to which findings could be related to or repeated in other contexts, groups or settings. Furthermore, the data was verified to check whether it agreed with themes that emerged from the participant's information (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

### **1.14.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability is comparable to replicability, in such simplest way that it needs different researchers or observers be able to acquire similar findings by following an analogous research method in a very comparable context (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Confirmability refers to the extent to which research findings are a function of the subjects and conditions of the research only. In terms of qualitative research, analysis subjects, specialists or alternative research findings establish confirmability, that isn't essentially confirmed by the sound judgment of the researcher or the instruments as compared to quantitative research. Appropriate research methods are essential to credibility, which was achieved by using triangulation.

### **1.14.4 Credibility**

Credibility in qualitative research is defined as the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy. Therefore, credibility refers to the degree to which findings represent the meaning of research participants responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.15). The credibility of the study is considered for use when verifying data with participants (Drisko, 1997, p.191; Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.143).

### **1.14.5 Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to the various data sources that are examined to obtain evidence that will authenticate the construction of themes (Creswell, 2014, p.201). Triangulation is a concept which is used in qualitative research method and includes the use of results from one set of results to substantiate the other results from one set of data (Brannen; 2004, p.314). This method is however, in a midst of controversy about whether it really achieves what it is meant to achieve in qualitative research. Richie and Lewis (2003) state that, the protection that it provides is through a fuller picture of a phenomena and not necessarily a more certain one. Triangulation is employed to check data and decide if it corroborates (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002), and thus to validate research findings. It is one of the most important ways to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings.

## **1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of University of South Africa. Written informed consent was obtained from participants. Approval letter to conduct a study at the Correctional services was issued by the Commissioner of the Correctional services. The researcher considered the importance of and explained the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

## **1.16 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **1.16.1 Limitations**

The limitation of the study was the unwillingness of offender students to be interviewed as well as gaining access to the research site. The fact that the research was conducted in only one Correctional centre in Gauteng was a limitation.

### **1.16.2 Delimitation**

The study was limited to offenders who are Unisa students at a specific Correctional centre in Gauteng.

## **1.17 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

**Chapter One** – This chapter introduces the study and presents a background to the study. It includes the rationale, research problem, as well as the aims and objectives of the study.

**Chapter Two** – The chapter presents the global and local literature that was sourced for this study.

**Chapter Three** – The methodology of this study is presented in the chapter.

**Chapter Four** – This chapter presents the findings of the study.

**Chapter Five** – The conclusions emanating from the findings as well as recommendations to the concerned parties and for future studies are made in this chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on providing literature on the challenges experienced by offenders who study at ODeL and ODL institutions. Literature review creates a link between the existing body of knowledge and the topic under study (Bowen, 2005, p.210). The chapter outlines the lens of the study and the literature that covers offender students in higher education.

#### 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used an integrated approach by utilising two theories; namely, the Theory of Transitional Distance and the Wellness Theory.

##### 2.2.1 Transitional distance theory

The researcher in this study used the theory of Transitional Distance by Michael Graham Moore (Moore, 1993). The theory was preferred as it links to this study by providing the wide-range outline of the pedagogy of distance education. It permits almost unlimited generated number of hypothesis for research (Moore, 1993) and lead to typology of all instructive programme having distinctive characteristics of separation of a learner and teacher (Kegaan, 2000). Moore (1993) defines Transitional Distance as a role of structure (course design), dialogue between the instructor and the learner autonomy.

Offender students who are in an incarcerated environment are separated from the society and subjected to an environment that is non-habitable for learning. Moore (1972) differentiates two main concepts relating to distance learning, distance teaching and learner autonomy. The term Transitional Distance does not refer to topographical distance between the teacher and the learner, but to the development of a transaction. That is the development of a form of interaction between the teacher and the learner because of their topographical separation times, Moore and his acquaintances further elaborated the theory (Moore, 1980, 1993; Moore & Kersley, 1996). Whereas, Keegan (1996, p.10) defines and refers distance education to six traditional elements; namely, the separation between teacher and the learner, two-way verbal exchange between teacher and learner, the impact of educational institution, the use of technology, the possibility of meetings and self-directness of the learner's involvement. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of Moore (2007) defines the Transitional Distance between teacher and the learners.

Offender students need to interact with teachers during their learning journey. It is for this reason that Moore emphasises that the development of the transaction is influenced by three basic

factors; (i) Because of the distance in Correctional Centre environment, offender students may not have the autonomy to interact and have dialogue with teachers on online modules that require the use of internet. What worsens the situation is the need to have full access to computers or laptops and manage to do assignments. For an example, Correctional Service Minister Sibusiso Ndebele was under pressure not to oppose a court application brought to his attention by 10 inmates of Durban's Westville prison who wanted access to laptops, internet and other learning material for their Unisa studies (*Mail & Guardian*, 2017). (ii) Regarding the basic factors, the structure that refers to the degree of structural flexibility of the learning programme, the goal of education within the prison setting, is to ensure that the inmates are equipped with appropriate skills that would potentially enable them to pursue further training upon release and live better (Walklin, 2000, p.206). (iii) The autonomy that alludes to the extent to which the learner exerts control over learning procedures. The autonomy of the offender student is limited behind bars because of the uniqueness of prison culture with a regime branded by a focus of security measures such as lockdowns and headcounts that constrains the possibilities of learning. Dialogue and interaction are crucial between learner and the teacher. Subsequently, the dialogue between the offender students and lecturers is rather limited because of Correctional Service security measures. "Each learner matter" Green Paper of European Commission (2005) emphasises the reduction of re-offending through training skills and employment, with the objective of breaking the cycle of occurring recidivism.

The former minister of Correctional Services Sibusiso Ndebele stressed that prisons should be centres geared towards the rehabilitation of prisoners through education. The question is that are South African prisons ready to allow unlimited access to the internet for offenders who are currently studying.

### **2.2.2 Wellness model**

The Wellness model is relevant to this study because it touches on the wellness of the offenders in Correctional Centres. Du Toit and Quayle (2011) claim that the Wellness model is used extensively by student through counselling and development practitioners in South Africa. This model focuses inclusively on physical, intellectual, social, environmental, occupational, financial, emotional and spiritual dimensions of an individual's development. The Wellness model has been developed in the United States of America (USA) in the 1970s (Hettler, 1980, 1984). Research shows that the Wellness model has been widely used in USA for the assessment and conceptualisation of students' needs and for planning students' developmental intervention, (American College Health Association, 2003, 2009; Leafgren, 1993; Owen, 2002; Griek & Olsen, 2007). Therefore, the researcher saw this as an important and relevant lens for the study. The offenders need a balance in these Wellness dimensions for them to achieve full wellness

(Patalsky, 2010). Hettler (1976) the co-founder of National Wellness Institution (NWI) outlines the six dimensions as physical, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and social wellness.

### **2.2.2.1 Physical wellness**

Dunn (1977) stressed the significance of the individual to understand his or her body and being sensible about exercise. Therefore, in achieving both physical and mental fitness as well as high-level wellness, offender students need to manage stress in a fundamental way. In this model, the offender's physical wellness is essential for them to live purposefully, function creatively especially in a stressful environment like prison and be able to have physical strength in different situations. That is why it is important for offender students to take care of their physical bodies and take exercise as a necessity. During leisure time, offender students kept busy by exercising and participating in various sports to keep fit. Physical wellness discourages the use of substances such as drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. Hettler (1976) defines physical wellness as the benefit of looking good and feeling terrific, which leads to a psychological benefit of enhanced self-esteem, self-control, determination and sense of direction, which is why this study looked at physical well-being of the offenders. Furthermore, Hettler (1976) states that as one develops intellectual curiosity one will strive to expand and challenge the mind with creative endeavours.

### **2.2.2.2 Occupational wellness**

The occupational dimensions involve individual fulfilment in life because of someone's work, whereas negativity towards work leads to dissatisfaction. Studying during one's incarceration may have an impact on one's career upon release. Hettler (1976) indicates that travelling a path towards occupational wellness will equip one with unique gifts, skills and talents to work in both personally meaningful and gratifying ways. Therefore, this study looked at the skills and talents that may contribute meaningful rewards to offender students within their community. Offender students are studying different qualifications that may influence them to be able to occupy various career paths in life; that is why this study looked at job satisfaction, the choices of a profession, personal performance and career ambitions, all which are paths terrain of offender students. As alluded on figure 4.5 in Chapter 4 of this study where offender students indicated that they are registered for online modules in different colleges such as College of Agriculture and Engineering Science (CAES), College of Economic Management Science (CEMS), College of Human Science (CHS), and College of Law.

### **2.2.2.3 Spiritual wellness**

The spiritual dimension has something to do with the search for meaning and human existence in life. Therefore, the wellness dimension also touches on spiritual beliefs of offender students and how that will benefit them in terms of being tolerant of each other's beliefs while in incarceration and studying. Therefore, spiritual wellness extends on spiritual involvement and something that gives a relationship in existence meaning and purpose while in incarceration.

Natural forces exist in the universe through acceptance, tolerance and appreciation of other people's spiritual beliefs. In a journey of life, people experience disappointments, fears and joy, happiness and pleasure; how one reacts in times of disappointments and tough times inside prison; which is why the wellness model is linked to this study and touches on the spiritual wellness of offender students. Spiritual wellness assists when seeking spiritual consistency in values and beliefs. Most of the participants indicated that they joined a church choir at a Correctional centre to revive their spirit. Generally, in life, it is better to be tolerant of other people's beliefs than to become intolerant as that leads to anger which may as a result lead to bad deeds. The study focused on how offender students use their spiritual wellness to cope with their studies.

#### **2.2.2.4 Emotional wellness**

Wellness in emotional dimension starts by accepting others and developing awareness of the feelings and sensitivity of others (Hettler, 1976). Having emotional intelligence, one would be able to express their feelings freely and manage them effectively. This wellness dimension may assist offender students to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, control their feelings and be aware when their emotions are challenged. Therefore, by understanding their limitations and learning to control their feelings from hurting others leads to accepting differences and realising the importance of seeking support from other offenders. Consequently, it is critical that offender students should have, interdependent relationships with others based on mutual respect, trust and commitment. That is why taking responsibility for personal actions and not always blaming others.

#### **2.2.2.5 Intellectual wellness**

Hettler (1976) defines the intellectual dimension as recognition of one's creative stimulating mental activity. Therefore, the intellectual wellness in this study may assist on how offender students enhance their knowledge and skills through training and development while realising the importance of sharing gifts or abilities with their peers.

With intellectual wellness dimension, an individual devotes most of their time pursuing personal interests, reading magazines and books to keep abreast with current affairs. This is a challenge in the prison environment whereby there is a lot of noise and disturbance as many studies have shown the overcrowded prisons to be. Although offender students may study under the challenging environment, they must pursue the wellness dimension to develop themselves academically as eluded in Chapter 4 of this study.

#### **2.2.2.6 Social wellness**

The social dimension has the capabilities to function in an interdependent manner with others, the capability to assist and accept help from peers. Therefore, when one has a well-developed social wellness, it encourages them to contribute to the environment and to the community.

It is evident that positive interaction with others is characterised by creating and building relationships, friendship, showing care and compassion to peers. Individuals at large may have encouraging impact on someone that has conquered social wellness. Offender students should interact and socialise with their peers and get support where necessary than to be in isolation. As it emerged from the themes in Chapter 4, some of the offender students get the support from their family members.

## **2.3 ONLINE MODULES**

The introduction of Open Distance Learning in tertiary education has had a great impact on how tertiary education institutions are administered. The enormous numbers of higher education students on a global scale were an important feature of the 20th Century as Schofer and Mayer (2005) reveal that approximately half a million students' enrolments during 20th century increased the number to 100 million by the year 2000. Online modules are meant to be accessible 24/7 to students and make the learning journey easy. Students study at their own free time and space, therefore, many studies focus on e-learning advantages even though other students experience the disadvantages. Clarker (1999) states that flexibility is an advantage in the usage of learning based upon technology associated to the conventional direct learning method.

Consequently, Unisa (2008, p.2) defines Open Distance Learning as a perception pointed at bridging the time, economic, geographical, social and communication distance between students and institution, students and academics, students and learning material, and students and peers. Therefore, students can succeed with the expectation that open distance learning provide provision to support students, constructing learning programmes and student-centeredness.

However, the groups of students who are offenders in Correctional Services Centres are affected because of constraints and restrictions on internet usage to access the study material, laptops, memory sticks, etc. The study conducted by Ferreira and Venter (2011) alludes on barriers of learning at an open distance learning institution; it excludes the designated group in Correctional Services Centres; therefore, this study focuses on offenders who are Unisa students who registered online module(s).

### **2.3.1 Purpose of online modules**

The demand for online learning is growing rapidly and seems to be the most important course delivery mode for students in Higher Education, therefore, the enrolment for online modules has increased despite the challenges that might be experienced by students including offenders (Allen & Seaman, 2009; Schrum & Hong, 2000; Song, 2004). Many studies revealed that University of South Africa (UNISA) began a distance learning programme in 1946, therefore, Unisa should accelerate the ways of learning to keep abreast with latest trends of technology (Ferreira & Venter,



2011). The offender students registered with Unisa will have to adapt to the global e-learning changes in higher education despite the technological challenges Correctional facilities are faced with.

### **2.3.2 Advantages of online modules**

Online learning is a method of teaching at a distance, which enables students to follow and learn courses through the internet and other technological devices. Furthermore, teaching and learning is no longer restricted to the physical classroom, it can take place through virtual classes using computers and laptops. According to Kearsley (2000, p.65) online learning is a good deal of personal social activity. Therefore, the benefit of studying online in this context may eliminate discriminating factors such as race and other physical differences. The White Paper of the Department of Education (2000, p.2) puts an emphasis on the ambiguity of learning, therefore, facilitators ought to get that meaning is made in interactions amongst individuals and incorporates all human qualities, demeanours, feelings and sentiments.

### **2.3.3 Disadvantages of online modules**

The study conducted by Cho (2012) defines the purpose of developing online student orientation, through online learning seems to be successful, there is still concerns about online learning. Students who are new to online learning may effectively feel misplaced and isolated of which it is regarded as the main concerns (McInerney & Roberts, 2004). We cannot ignore the fact that in South Africa we experience electricity outage which is affecting the students and individuals who are battling financially and have constrains in education opportunities. The reality is that technological advancement may remain a challenge to the society and may continue affecting disadvantaged students which includes offender students who are trying to improve their lives through education. According to Fozdar and Kumer (2007, p.4) the mobile technologies can be linked to many other media like audios, videos and internet even though there are limitations such as screen size. Therefore, there are numerous ranges of technologies such as Skype, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp student groups, video conferencing which provide two-way communication. However, students must have access and data to be able to use them effectively.

The study conducted by Ferreira and Venter (2011), also indicates that, although Unisa introduced different ways to improve students' lives, many students do not complete their studies and do not cope with ODL context. Prison environment and overcrowded Correctional centres may be a disadvantage and a contributing factor to offenders' education.

Briggs (2005) found supporting evidence that the uneasiness and anxiety in an academic environment may be inflicted by high expectations involved in online learning. In the context of Correctional services offender students may experience the same challenges as online learning technology changes rapidly. As a result, offender students may have their emotions triggered and

need to find ways to cope with stress and anxiety. Another great fear is that students' inability to interact with their peers in online learning environment may result in failure in online interactive activities such as Microsoft teams and other discussion forums which offender students may not have adequate access to because of poor bandwidth and Correctional services restriction rules on internet usage (Cho & Jonassens, 2009). Although one of the aims of e-learning is to save time and money, the reality is that in the context of rural environment the previously marginalised village students may find e-learning expensive due to high demands of technological essentials like data and modems. This may also have negative impact on offender students at Correctional facilities (Bethaam & Sharpe, 2010).

#### **2.3.4 Format of online modules**

The format of online modules consists of assignments that are submitted online, online tutorial classes using different types of technologies e.g. Internet, online discussion group, videos, CDs and satellites. Unisa is currently using *myunisa* online portal where lecturers can upload tutorial letters, discussion classes to keep the students informed and have access to study material online. Examinations are also conducted online where students have an autonomy to search the information online and submit their assignments online. However, offender students may experience challenges on submissions of online assignments because of lack of full access to internet.

### **2.4 OFFENDERS LEARNING BEHIND BARS**

The goal of teaching and learning within correctional settings, is to ensure that inmates are given the appropriate training and development and acquire technical skills for the betterment of their lives which may benefit community beyond incarceration (Walklin 2000, p.206). Subsequently, skills obtained may contribute to reducing re-offending and improve intellectual wellness by discovering new potential hence self-employed. Simpson (2003, p.210) contends because of the noise and disruptions caused by inmates and correctional officials offender students may experience constraints and challenges to study at Correctional services environment. Therefore, in such an environment the resentment may not be limited to Correctional officials only but also offenders as they are habitually confronted with harassment and bullying from fellow inmates (Simpson, 2002). Subsequently, the online modules at the Correctional environment may cause an element of exclusion as part of core pedagogy because of internet access that is highly contentious.

The new vision for education towards 2030 is to commit, to inclusive determined objectives of not leaving anyone behind and renewal of education agenda. This may bring hope in improving some of the challenges faced by offender students at Correctional services environment highlighted in

Chapter 4 of this study. Furthermore, the vision for education towards 2030 reaffirms to promote quality life-long opportunities for all, in all settings and all different stages of education. However, some studies revealed that correctional centres are for punishment and not for lavishness, therefore wasting taxpayers' monies on educating offenders is inappropriate (Steurer, Linton, Nally & Lockwood, 2010, p.41). Furthermore, Hemmens and Marquart (2000, p.297) alluded that by the virtue of prison experiences, their lives have historically been meant to be unpleasant, therefore offenders are always expected to suffer and be punished. This claim is in contradiction with the vision for Education 2030 and may exclude offender students from training and development endeavours.

## **2.5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

According to the Department of Education (2001) inclusion consider all learners by creating teaching and learning flexible enough to accommodate diversity. Therefore, a learner-centred approach must be implemented to ensure relevance in the education system. Landsberg and Gericke (2006) define education as a constitutional right for everyone. This concurs with the vision of declaration for education 2030. Therefore, inclusive education is a strategy that can be used to assists individuals to exercise their rights and permit members of the society to reach their full potential by allowing them to participate in available educational programmes which are inclusive of offender students at Correctional facilities (Engelbretcht, 2009). Inclusive education in South Africa is conventional known to support and provide education that is suitable to all learners regardless of their background, capacity and conditions encountered (Donald et al., 2010). Subsequently Education 2030 commits to address the inclusion and equality through education to all the excluded and marginalised.

Booth (1996); Booth and Ainscow (1998); Dyson and Millward (2000) state that the most significant factors that may not be put-on one-sided perspective by countries including schools is the importance of teaching and learning inclusiveness at all educational levels. Therefore, a recent analysis of international research which (Ainscow et al., 2006) suggests various ways of thinking about inclusion highlights that these are; (a) The Inclusion of persons with disabilities and special needs requirements should be addressed; (b) Inclusion as a responsive to disciplinary segregations; (c) Inclusion embraces all vulnerable individuals that are excluded; (d) Inclusion promote schooling for all; and (e) Inclusive teaching and learning for all. Therefore, it is for this reason that the researcher perceives the offenders in Correctional Centres as a group of people that are vulnerable and excluded or marginalised.

Social inclusion refers to certain individuals who experience difficulties to access schooling, vulnerable and confronted by learning barriers in an educational setting (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Furthermore, Mittler (2000) argues that there is rapid increase of inclusion in education which is being seen to overcome the disadvantaged and discrimination in any sets of vulnerable learners who experience segregationally pressures within the educational system. Whereas, Jonavic (2011) emphasises that the education in correctional schools should be modified in order to meet the actual needs of the offender students, therefore teachers should determine and identify the needs of the inmates prior to teaching. Ultimately, it may assist offender students who have special needs to be included on learning outcomes.

South African Constitution permits all citizens to education irrespective of their circumstances (Republic of South Africa, 1996). That is why, offenders who are incarcerated are also encouraged and provided with education opportunities of teaching and learning in various institutions. However, all citizens especially in correctional facilities are faced with a great challenge of lack of educational resources. Although, it is not new that certain standards cannot be implemented due to lack of resources for educational provision and reports show that in some countries like Uganda and Tanzania, the same problem as in South African Correctional facilities occurs (Dissel, 2001). The overcrowding of prisons and other security priorities is still a challenge in DCS. It is evident that the high crime rates in South Africa and overcrowding of prisons, culminates in the overstressing of resources and educational facilitators in Correctional facilities.

### **2.5.1 Recidivism of ex-offenders**

Recidivism is a broad term that refers to relapse of criminal behaviour, which can include a range of outcomes, including rearrests, reconviction, and re-imprisonment. However, Urahn (2011, p.7) defines recidivism as the act of re-engaging in criminal offending despite having been punished before. Harris, Lockwood and Mengers (2009, p.1) concurs that recidivism is most frequently measured in terms of re-arrest, referral to court, reconviction, or re-confinement. Furthermore, Schoeman (2003) states that recidivism rates in South Africa are estimated to be between 55% and 95%. Subsequently, Dissel (2008, p.27) has reaffirmed this by arguing that recidivism in South Africa will continually remain high and a concern because the of rehabilitation systems in the country; namely, prisons are not as effective as expected and almost non-existent. Therefore, these percentages are relatively high as compared to Norway recidivism rates which are very low as indicated in the *New York times* report of (29 March 2015).

In South Africa, crime stop statistics (1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019) reveal serious high crime rates that are estimated at 1 678 990 and 17 different crime categories at 83.1% were reported to South African Police Services (SAPS) and an additional 339 231 crimes were detected as result of police investigations at 16.9%. However, there are still concerns of under reporting of crimes by the community. The Correctional Services, especially in South Africa still places emphasis on sentencing offenders though the rehabilitation process is applied through various programmes. The high rate of recidivism remains and contribute to the absorption of offenders into the

mainstream of unlawful activities. Subsequently, discrimination in the society contributes to crime that is obviously ongoing and growing within the community which may exacerbate anger, anxiety, and sense of exclusion from a minimally better lifestyle. Furthermore, it is obvious that inequalities among people showed that distraction and anger is likely to increase, thus contribute to the country's instability. The study conducted by Cullen and Johnson (2012) suggests that we should only use correctional facilities when penalty can be shown to produce good results instead of non-custodial sanctions. Therefore, advocates of imprisonment must be able to show that placing an offender at correctional facilities, not only does not have a complication effect but also makes an individual better and is less likely to recidivism. Advocates assert that correctional facilities can have such an effect because the chances of re-offending are higher, painful to offenders than lenient sentence in the community.

According to *New York Times* report of (29 March 2015), the intention of Norway's correctional systems was introduced to mitigate the high risks of psychological pressures amongst the offenders. This approach was introduced to the society with the assurance that offenders will be converted under this system. The lowest rate of recidivism that is at 16% in correctional island in Norway shows that Norway is still leading compared to all prison in Europe as *Guardian* story, (22 May 2015) revealed. Considering social welfare economy in Norway that shows much lower rate of inequality compared to United States. For example, several studies have proven that increased inequality is directly associated to high number of crimes as revealed by the (*New York Times* story, 29 March 2015). This becomes evident and imperative, when considering the resentments of inequality in crime statistics. The number of Norway offenders is at approximately 3,800 compared to 2.2 million in the United States. When dividing those numbers by the total population in each country, it produces similar percentages (approximately 7.5%) of the population incarcerated. The improvement of the rehabilitation programmes depends on availability of funds from the government. There is different causes of recidivisms shown by numerous studies (*New York Times* story, 29 March 2015). Furthermore, the study conducted by Bello (2017) shows that failure of integration programmes, failure of support, peer pressure and other provocations, economic stress, mental stress and inability to secure employment contribute to recidivisms in South African Correctional facilities. It is evident that offenders may be easily influenced by various factors in the community and tempted to commit crime due to peer pressure and lack of support from their families.

### **2.5.2 The Philosophy of “Ubuntu” behind and outside bars**

The word “*Ubuntu*” is not new in the African context and defines African values and ethos. As a worldview, *Ubuntu* is characterised by basic values such as humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion, warmth, empathy, giving, commitment and love, sensitivity to the needs of the others, consideration, patience and kindness (Msila, 2008, p.69-70).

Ntseana (2011, p.309) reaffirmed the personification of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* emphasises on most profound cultural values, spirituality, shared orientation, communal responsibility and collective empowerment: “*Motho ke motho ka batho*” (a person is a person by the people). In my indigenous language isiXhosa, *Ubuntu* means ‘*umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu*’ therefore the core belief of *Ubuntu* is that ‘people are people through other people’. This is the reason the study also touches on how offender students are treated by the community during parole period to show the spirit of *Ubuntu*, care, love and forgiveness. One would also wonder if the lack of *Ubuntu* from the community causes recidivism by offenders. As mentioned in Chapter 4, themes emerged that supportive family members contributes to positive lifestyle of offenders compared to those who are neglected and feel rejected. One of the studies conducted by Johnson and Quan-Baffour (2015) interrogate the perceptions on “prison” curriculum or correctional education offered by South African indigenisation principle which also links to the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. However, this study only focusses on the philosophy of *Ubuntu* behind and outside prison. The Lord’s Prayer from the bible says forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. The spirit of caring and forgiving as defined by the philosophy of *Ubuntu* seems to be forgotten by the society towards offenders as it manifests during parole period.

## **2.6 OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)**

Moore and Kearsly (1996, p.6) define ODL as teaching and learning and delivery of learning material to learners who are separated from their lecturers. Subsequently, Barnett and Matton (2010), Unisa (2014) outline ODeL as online learning method that connects the time, geographic, economic, social, education and interaction detachment between learning institution, the academics and the students, the learning materials and the students and among the students themselves. Department of Education (2007), Mbatha (2014) concur that the ODeL is known by use of latest technological gadgets that permit numerous active online communication and interaction between the lecturers and the students through online groups of the same learning institution. These includes skype, blogs, video conferences, online discussion forums, social media and Microsoft teams, etc. Unisa changed from correspondence mode to ODeL and went through numerous rapid changes in teaching and learning environment to keep abreast with online technologies (Unisa, 2014). Therefore, Unisa ODeL necessitates enhancement of learner support, teaching and learning that need a definite approach to develop conceptual framework and strategy (Chetty, 2014). Furthermore, the latest technology in ODeL environment may support student learning by utilising digital advanced learning devices. Hence, higher education institutions for teaching and learning are facing ICT revolution which may bridge the gap between the students and online learning materials (Bennett & Maton, 2010). ODeL students are mostly

perceived as students with full access to technology and ability to utilise it optimally without seeking any assistance from the lecturers. This may not include marginalised students from the villages who do not have full access to technology.

### **2.6.1 Challenges experienced by offender students in ODeL**

In any open distance education environment students are expected to be autonomous and learn to be independent, interact on various discussion forums without any constant assistance from educational institutions, even though academic learner support is commendable. Therefore, the rapid growth of distance education is mostly due to technological development. Hence, Ferreira and Venter (2011) alluded that technology assisted in facilitating delivery of education in anytime, anyplace and flexibility to close the distance between lecturers and students. Despite the efforts by ODL institutions, declining graduates' rates (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012) indicate that majority of the students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, find it difficult to succeed in ODL (Makoe, 2012, p.65). The success of student at open distance learning is determined by the flexibility of learning provision and comprehensive learning programmes, provided the access to learning barriers are eliminated for the betterment of learner's education (Unisa 2008, p.2). However, this may not serve the same purpose to incarcerated students simply because the best portion of learning takes place outside Unisa where various demands and challenges may constitute barriers if students are unable to cope with and manage these demands.

offender students under Correctional facilities may have difficulties that prevent optimum use of numerous technologies and mobile devices for their studies due to surroundings and restrictions obligatory to incarcerated students. Pritchards (2009, p.30) described collaboration and interaction of students may be regarded as an independent process and strategy to socialise and share ideas and activities to overcome uncertainties that concerns learning. Furthermore, Fozdar and Kumar (2009, p.6) allude that students generally prefer guidance from lecturers and need additional face-to-face contact and formal lectures. While, Minnaar (2011) revealed some challenging factors that may demoralise students in online learning environment and have negative impact worldwide. Those issues are technical problems, connectivity which is referred to as infrastructure and access, fright and human contact, therefore, incarcerated students may experience numerous challenges on technical connectivity when utilising technology devices in an obligatory environment.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the theoretical frameworks and scholarly narratives that the study borders along. The researcher looked at all scholarly materials already available to support the

study. The focus throughout this chapter was placed vehemently on scholars whose work echoes similar sentiments as those of the researcher.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The researcher, in this chapter examined the research methodology utilised to collate and analyse data on how offender students are supported in online modules in Correctional facilities. The identification of the research paradigm, the research design and sampling technique was used throughout the study. Furthermore, the research instruments, data collection procedures, data analyses, ethical related matters were addressed, considered and outlined in the chapter.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The study is located within an interpretive paradigm, which is defined by Henning, van Rensburg and Smith (2010, p.2) as the paradigm that enables the participants to tell a coherent and serve as organising principle of in-depth meaning that social reality is interpreted. Subsequently, Reeve and Hedberg (2003, p.32) and Maree (2015, p.59) affirm that the emphases of interpretive paradigm is to understand the world based on individual experiences. The paradigm used is fit for this study because it gives the researcher an understanding on experiences of offender students who are registered for online modules at Unisa and understands the uniqueness of each situation and interprets the meanings constructed. Woods (2006) and Creswell (2009, p.176) affirm that individuals must have an opportunity to be elaborative on their personal understandings of a situation to allow the researcher to be able to draw a meaningful analysis.

The researcher used this paradigm with the intention to recognise comprehensiveness, complexity of phenomena and develop an understanding of the meanings imparted by each individual on the phenomena and their social context (Maree, 2015, p.59). The researcher had an opportunity to interact with offender students and observe the interactions they had with one another while using laptops in the Correctional services computer lab. The researcher obtained different perspectives from the offender students through face to face interviews (Maree, 2015). When analysing the data, the emerged perspectives were utilised to provide insights on ways in which a group of participants make a meaning of their situation. The researcher provided an opportunity for all participants to express their views on challenges experienced.

#### **3.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

##### **3.3.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research was applied in this study, as it attempts to ascertain how people make sense of their lives; therefore, the personal perspectives and experiences of the participants were

explored and reported on by using this method. The qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study since the researcher was permissible to access offender student's environment (Creswell 2014) to find out about the challenges they experienced with online modules at Unisa. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further define qualitative research as the process that examine the day-to-day lives of different groups of individuals and communities in their natural settings and refer it as naturalistic. The researcher had an opportunity to interact with offender students in Correctional facilities and attempted to understand educational settings, processes and their experiences. The researcher attempted to understand the impact of transitional distance between the learner and the lecturer.

Domegan and Fleming (2007) explain that when there is less information known about the problem, qualitative research aims to determine issues about current challenges. That is why the researcher attempted to uncover those challenges and the necessary interventions needed to provide academic and administrative support. The researcher used qualitative approach that involves multiple realities of the challenges experienced by offender students as different people construct different meanings from the same event.

### **3.3.2 Case study**

One of the reasons that influenced the researcher to choose case study design was the uniqueness of the phenomena. Hence, an in-depth study of experiences of offender students in Correctional facilities was undertaken. A case study is an in-depth analysis where the researcher chooses to investigate and identify a case in a certain organisation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell (2008) refers to a case study as an in-depth examination of a bounded system with individuals based on various extensive sources of data collection that includes events and processes. Correctional facilities are a unique place for this study. Being bounded means being restricted and unique according to place, time and participant characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 370).

Therefore, the researcher used the case study for exploration and to understand the situation that offender students experienced with online modules. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to use the case study to explore academic intervention strategies that can be used to support offender students in Correctional facilities. A case study in qualitative research was intentionally used decisively so that the researcher can examine and describe the event (Maree, 2011).

### **3.4 LOCATION**

The study took place in the Gauteng Correctional facility in Pretoria. The identified Correctional facility had offender students who registered for online modules at Unisa.

### **3.5 SAMPLING**

This study used purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling the researcher deliberately chose the site and type of participants whose features are of interest to the study (Silverman, 2002, p.104). Whereas, Rubin and Babbie (2005, p.247) refer to purposive sampling as the researcher's knowledge of the population from which sampling can be drawn. Creswell (2007, p.125) adds that purposeful sampling informs an understanding of the research problem in qualitative research and carefully selects convenient participants and sites. Therefore, thirteen participants in this study were offender students who registered for online modules at Unisa.

According to Maree (2015, p.79) The pre-selected criteria of the participants were in accordance with the related research questions which informs purposeful sampling. Appropriate analysed information was chosen from suitable samples after the researcher consulted the topic to determine relevant criteria for the study. The thirteen participants were suitable for the study hence they were selected. These participants were chosen with the aim that the research topic would be addressed by the relevant information shared by offender student.

One of the roles of the researcher is to thoroughly search the imperative information from specific informants, places and groups. The right samples are likely to be conversant and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.350). Maree (2011) affirms that the researcher needs not to choose the entire population but rather select a smaller number of individuals for sampling.

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) purposive sampling assures information needed and shows some features or processes that are of interest to the specific study. Maree (2007, p.79) affirms that the researcher must consider limitations of the individuals, thereafter, carefully select purposeful sampling and pre-selection before actual selection of the respondents. Hence the researcher obtained first a list of all registered offender students from Unisa ICT and made a comparison with a list that was provided by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) educators. The researcher did a pre-selection of specific online modules per college. The online modules determined the level of year of the offender students or what level of study they are in. Creswell (2007, p.125) adds that this form of sampling is used in qualitative research and that participants and sites are selected and that can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem.

### **3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

#### **3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

The process of asking the participants questions to collect data through interview conversation between researcher and participants assist the researcher to learn about existing ideas, beliefs,

views, opinions hence they can be valuable source of information (Maree, 2015, p.87). A face-to-face interview is an interaction between the researcher and the participants of the study, of which, in this study the researcher prepared thirteen questions in advance, for the thirteen participants to share their experiences and provide insight. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) denote interviews as planned exchangeable information and social relationship between researcher and participants. The researcher interaction with offender students meant to exchange different perceptions and information related to research topic. The researcher acknowledged the fact that interviewing the thirteen participants involves not only the description of the experience, but also give a reflection on the description as discussed in Chapter 4.

Predetermined interview schedule helped the researcher to facilitate semi-structured interviews by collecting data from thirteen offender students in this study. Probing strategy emerged during interviews to verify what the researcher heard was what the participants meant. Subsequently, all questions were explained and elaborated further to assist the participants to understand better and probing was done where necessary to get the insight of the participants (Maree, 2015, p.87). Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes. An audio recorder assisted the researcher to record the interview sessions, ensuring that the verbal conversation is captured, saved and can be easily retrieved and listened to during transcribing process, this is aligned with what McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p.360) emphasises. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) recommend the use of both an electrical and battery-operated audio recorder to ensure data capturing. The audio was consistently consulted for close analysis.

### **3.6.2 Open ended questionnaire**

Open-ended questionnaire was used with the intention that the researcher get enough information from participants' views and ideas. Open-ended questionnaire allows the participants to include more information and emotions as they understand better the environment and topic (Maree, 2015). Participants were given only four questions to answer and were encouraged to ask the researcher to elaborate where they could not understand. This was not used as the only source of getting information.

### **3.6.3 Non-participant observation**

In this study the researcher was a complete observer which means the researcher was a non-participant observer, observing the interactions of the participants while using the computer for their studies and interactions among each other. Maree (2015, p.83) affirms observation as the systematic process that assist the researcher to pay attention into details of certain occurrences of behavioural patterns without necessarily questioning or communicating with participants. Whereas McMillan and Schumacher (2014) define observation as the method that accelerate the researcher's ability to hear and see naturalistic occurrences in the research sites. Therefore, it

was informative to observe offender students assisting each other at the computer centre with their struggle to connect to internet due to slow and poor connectivity.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION**

#### **3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Interview is a social relationship designed to exchange information between the participant and the researcher (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011, p.342). The researcher adopted case study where thirteen participants were interviewed in their natural location to collate their experiences, perceptions and views as qualitative research requires (Creswell, 2012; Babbie, 2007; Leedy & Omrod, 2005). The researcher conducted face to face semi-structured interviews in this study and had an opportunity to listen and understand the actual experiences of offender students who registered for online modules at Unisa.

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011, p.351) in semi-structured interviews the researcher obtained comprehensive informed depiction of a participant's views or perceptions related to topic. Therefore, by virtue of flexibility in probing, this method allowed the researcher to gain more information. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are especially suitable when one is particularly interested in the complexity or process or when an issue is controversial or personal. De Vos et al., (2011) adds that with semi-structured interviews the researcher usually has a set of prearranged questions on an interview schedule, that is the reason the researcher prepared some questions for the participants which were used in the interview schedule.

#### **3.7.2 Open-ended questionnaire**

Qualitative interviews require asking truly open-ended questions. Therefore, the researcher prepared four open-ended questions for the participants to express their views without restrictions and interviewer's interference (De Vos et al, 2011). The 13 participants were requested to answer the same questions in the same order. Henning (2010, p.52) further argues that the intension of the researcher in qualitative research focuses on feelings of the participants and makes sure that there is an understanding of their perspectives. Indeed, the participants were afforded adequate time, approximately 30 minutes to express their views and feelings on online modules experiences. To get more information from the participants, the researcher allowed them to ask some questions (Henning, 2010, p.67) as the participants are regarded as important in this study.

#### **3.7.3 Observation**

Observation is a way for the researcher to see and hear what naturally transpires in the research site (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.376). Therefore, by observing participants in their setting the researcher is expected to obtain informative understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, observation facilitates the in-depth understanding of the context of the participants which is Correctional facilities and the participants' behaviour, which allows the collection of a

more comprehensive data to reflect the importance of the effect of the context. The researcher observed time allocated to offender students while using computers, the interaction with other offender students and, observed supervision conducted by DCS educational personnel when technological tools are used.

The researcher followed the process of recording field notes and observing conditions, events, feelings, physical settings and activities through observing rather than asking (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.673; Walliman, 2006, p.95). The observation was done when the researcher visited the site; however, prior to site visits the researcher defined the purpose of observation and linked it with the research questions. Short-hand notes were made without losing the meaning. The researcher did not participate in activities of the participants. The following factors were observed and recorded by the researcher:

Table 3.1 Observed factors and responses

<b>Observed Factors</b>	<b>Response</b>
The time allocated to offender students while using computer	Limited hours approximately 4-5 hours, allocation of time was not consistent Other days computer laboratories are not opened
To observe if offender students have access to internet	Limited internet access is provided
To observe the interactions with other offender students while using computers	Offender students interact very well and assist one another where possible
Access to technological tools	Yes
Types of gadgets used	Laptops/computers restricted modems to limited offender students with legal permission
Purpose of using the technological tool	Offender students use technology for submitting assignments and to download study material
Supervision by DCS personnel when technological tools are used	No supervision, however, offender students ask for assistance where needed
Challenges experienced on connectivity	Poor bandwidth Slow internet

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS PER INSTRUMENT**

The data collected was first recorded using a tape recorder. Written transcripts on what was said by participants was recorded for the purpose of data analysis and saved in a computer protected by password. The researcher systematically examined the data to understand the views and experiences of the participants. Maree (2007) states that the aim of examining meaningful content of qualitative data is constructed on a systematic realistic procedure of qualitative analysis.

Whereas, De Vos et al, (2011) state that identification of patterns and how they relate among different categories is informed by the process of organising through qualitative data analyses. The intended process was to get important and valid responses to the research questions. The main research questions and the aims of the study were used by the researcher as guide to the interpretation of the data. Furthermore, the researcher used linear hierarchical approach building from bottom to top.

### **3.8.1 Semi-structured interviews**

The researcher used hierarchical approach, building from bottom to top to analyse raw data through semi-structured interviews and observations. Then the data was organised into categories and identified patterns. The relationship among categories is a pattern. The researcher attempted to get an understanding on complex relations among numerous people's situations, mental processes, beliefs and actions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p.406). Interview transcripts were critically examined and synthesised by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher had a list of all codes and read the entire texts repeatedly to see whether the codes make sense and are coherent. Codes related to research questions and categories began to show themes that were constructed from the data. The themes that appeared as major findings in qualitative studies are often used as headings in the findings section of the study.

### **3.8.2 Open ended questionnaire**

Maree (2015) defines qualitative data analysis as an inductive process of examining and organising data into categories and this process has been affirmed by McMillan and Schumacher (2006). In this process the codes emerge from data and identify patterns and relationship among the categories. Therefore, this study followed an inductive process whereby data collected from offender students was organised into categories and thereafter identification of patterns and relationships between those categories was checked and themes emerged. These themes assisted the researcher to get information that answered the research questions. Most of the themes repeated themselves in interviews and open-ended questionnaire and some of the participants' responses were approximately the same hence repetitions occur as discussed in Chapter 4 of this study.

### **3.8.3 Observation**

The researcher recorded field notes that were taken during the process of observation. The pre-planned observation schedule assisted the researcher to link the information with open-ended questionnaire answers from the participants. Some of the themes were repeated;

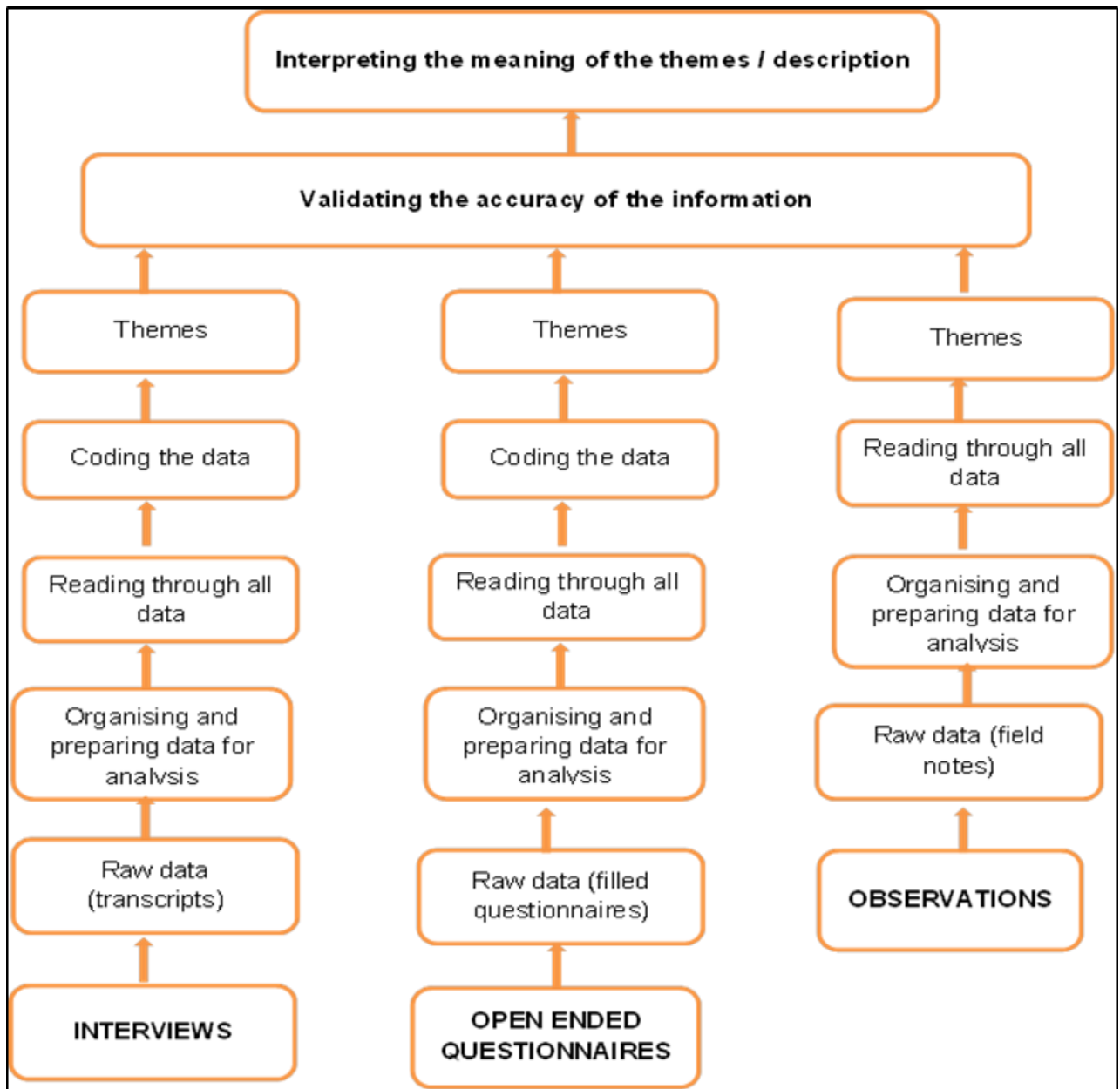


Figure 3.1: A replica of data analysis using hierarchical approach building from bottom to top (Creswell, 2014, p.197).



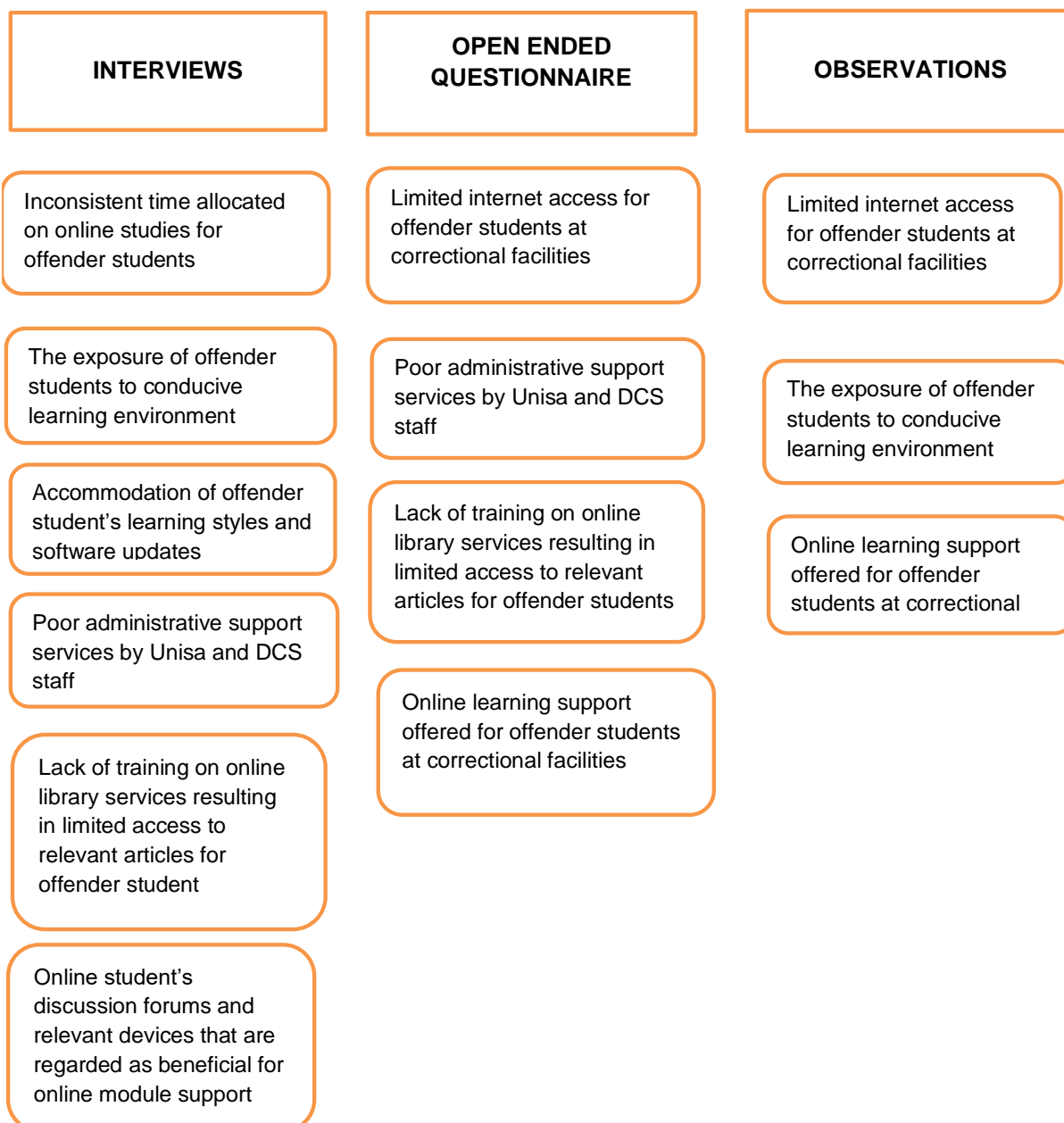


Figure 3.2: Themes that emerged from data analysis process.

The above steps were followed by the researcher, interpreted and discussed in Chapter 4 of the study.

### 3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher constantly kept in mind the evaluation process that can be used for assessing the trustworthiness of the data analysis which included consistent checks. Having another systematically way of coding to take the category descriptions and find the matching text which belongs in those categories and credibility (Maree, 2007, p.113). Trustworthiness is the

conforming term used in a qualitative research which determines the quality of the research. As outlined by Lincoln and Guba (2003) the term “trustworthiness” refers to the way the researcher can persuade the readers that findings in the study are of high quality and worth taking into consideration.

### **3.9.1 Dependability**

Durreheim and Wassenaar (2002, p.64) referred to dependability as the manner in which the reader can be convinced that the findings are trustworthy and occur as the researcher stipulate. The researcher aimed to achieve this by employing mentor checking. Furthermore, the researcher strived to eliminate any bias that might be brought to the study by continually reflecting on the research process (Maree, 2007, p.305).

### **3.9.2 Credibility**

The researcher applied triangulation approach for collection of information and data analyses to identify the inconsistencies in the finding of the study and it also assisted the researcher to build up credibility. The researcher spent time in Correctional facilities collecting data until data was saturated. The researcher observed curiously and noted what constituted noting (Creswell, 2009). The data collected from offender students must approximately support and affirm reality on the researcher’s findings that are guided by the guaranteed credibility (Durreim & Wassenaar, 2002). The researcher had an opportunity to use an audio recorder and collected informative field notes through observation of the participants with the aim of obtaining rich and accurate information.

Triangulation was employed in this study to ensure the credibility of the research findings. Stake (2000, p.443) defines triangulation as an intensive thorough process of using numerous perceptions to define meaning and confirm the reoccurrence of an observation or interpretation. Furthermore, interviews were conducted, observation and analysis of documents such as Correctional Service policy documents and Unisa Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Correctional Service were perused with the aim of getting an understanding and insights to the topic of the study.

### **3.9.3 Transferability**

The researcher compiled comprehensive description of the participants' views and context by applying thorough information about their views and experiences, and also the Correctional setting in which they live and function to ensure transferability. Maree (2007) alludes that transferability in qualitative study is viewed as a method through which the reader may take findings and transfer to another context. Maree (2007) further alludes that qualitative research is not to generalise findings across individual but rather an approachable way that provides an understanding from the participants' views hence the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and took field notes through observation and analysed the data accordingly.

### **3.9.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to possible potential similarities between two or more independent individuals that may confirm meaning, on data relevancy and accuracy. The researcher is expected to examine data analysis and scrutinise the documented information systematically in such a way that findings from the different researchers are compatible and attainable. The constructive evidence and examined thoughtful process must undoubtedly illustrate the objective of the confirmability that resulted to the conclusion.

## **3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

While conducting the study the researcher took consideration on adherence of research ethics while conducting the study. Silverman (2000, p.205) emphasis on the fact that research site is the private settings of participants therefore researchers are expected to comply and take cognisance of research ethical good conduct. The researcher respected the rights and values of the offender students as Creswell (2003) affirms that participant's cultural sensitivity and needs must be respected and constitute the researcher to be extra considerate when conducting the research. As defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) to be ethical conscious may assist the researcher to differentiate on what is wrong or right perspective. The well-being of participants when conducting a study may be influenced by proper planning and strategic ways to prioritise and protect participants. Hence offender students are the participants of the study, the enforcement of research guidelines were observed to protect them. Participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study.

### **3.10.1 Permission**

Department of Correctional Service (DCS) educators and Unisa department of Information Communication Technology (ICT) were considered as a starting point to request student list who registered online modules. When the researcher obtained permission from the institutional research committee then the institutional data and students was permissible to be utilised for the study. The researcher obtained a research ethical clearance from Unisa College of Education Ethics Review Committee (appendix H). Professional and Administrative Research Committee (PARC) provided endorsed approval letter for this study of which it was submitted to different stakeholders to use Unisa students as prospective participants for this research. DCS also approved permission letter to conduct a research to use offender students as participants of the study (appendix I). All approved research permission letters were presented to gatekeepers because of the obligatory mandate to account for any research conducted in their workplace and provide support and take security and safety precautionary measures of both researcher and participants.

### **3.10.2 Informed consent**

For this study to commence the researcher applied proper procedures and obtained consent. A letter was submitted by the researcher to the office of research at DCS to obtain permission to undertake this case study in three different Correctional facilities, but permission was granted for one facility due to the fact that offender students that are studying and due to write examinations are deployed from various nearby prisons to one central prison to prepare and write exams under correctional supervision. Ethical clearance certificate to conduct a research was obtained from College Research Ethic Committee Education. Offender students who participated in the study were informed about the permission letters obtained. The researcher engaged with prospective participants prior to data collection and explained important aspects for them to decide if they want to participate in the study or withdraw; namely:

- The purpose of the study
- Research instrument and procedure to be followed
- Researcher's role and participants
- The use of data
- The participants' right to withdraw without facing consequences
- The reason why the participants were selected
- Sharing of findings with the participants

The researcher gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions and to provide more clarity where necessary. After participants understood the study, they signed the consent form that was given to them. The researcher was obligated to read and explain the purpose of the consent form prior to the signing. Consent form is a signed binding form that illustrates an understanding of the research and give consent to participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### **3.10.3 Voluntary Participation**

The researcher explained to the participants that their participation was voluntary, and they had a right not to participate. Subsequently, all participants of the study volunteered to participate. As McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p.130) define voluntary participation as not obliged or pressurised participation by the participants. Babbie (2007, p.64) also alludes that voluntary participation and no harm to participants have become formalised in the concept of informed consent.

#### **3.10.4 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality**

The study ensured the confidentiality and privacy of the participants by not disclosing their names. Only the researcher had access to personal details of the offender students (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Anonymity means that the researcher cannot disclose the identity of the participants and data that has been collected. Therefore, the researcher is obligated to exercise and kept the information of the participants anonymous and confidential throughout the study.

Confidentiality means that no one has access to someone's data except the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). One of the strategies to protect privacy of the participants is data storage that was discussed with the participants prior to the data collection process. The data collected was securely locked in a safe and computerised information was protected with a password. Burns (2000) affirms that both researcher and participants must have an understanding concerning the results and findings of the study. The researcher continuously conducted the research according to the ethics standards as stipulated by Unisa PARC.

#### **3.10.5 Protection from harm**

The researcher guaranteed that participants are not exposed to any unnecessary emotional stress. Babbie (2007, p.27) affirms that the ethical rule of social research cautioned that no harm must be inflicted on participants. The researcher took upon herself to inform all participants about the availability of Correctional Services professional counsellors should they need debriefing after interview session (Maree, 2007: 306). Therefore, the researcher strives to conduct interviews in an honest manner as possible, respectful and sympathetic towards all participants. The researcher had an obligation to be compassionate and protect participants within all possible discomforts that may emerge from the research project (Creswell, 2003, p.64).

#### **3.10.6 Human rights**

Independence suggest that participants have a right and capabilities to assess available information, after weighing options participants can make their own choices (De Vos et al., 2011). All Participants were advised by the researcher that their participation in this study was voluntary therefore they were not subjected to any obligatory commitments to take part. A written consent form was distributed to all participants in agreement and they were requested to sign it. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw without justifying their decision.

#### **3.10.7 Risks and benefits of the study**

No potential risk was anticipated to participants of the study. However, the Correctional services planned to provide officials to escort the researcher to meet the participants in different computer labs of the Correctional facility. Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p.70) touches on harm that can be done to researchers and risks that researchers might be faced during field visits. Beneficence is an obligation to maximise possible benefits and to minimise possible harm therefore participants were informed about the potential benefits of the study (Grinnell, Unrau & Gabor, 2008, p.36).

This study may have potential to influence Correctional Services policies to adjust policies on computer internet access for students who are under correctional supervision that are currently registered for online modules. Students who are under Correctional supervision may have an opportunity to have more alternative ways to complete online module assignments and examinations. Another potential benefit of the study is that participants' views may have an influence on Unisa academics and Unisa assessment policies to adjust the method of assessment on online modules.

### **3.11 SUMMARY**

In chapter three the researcher explained the methodology and research design used. The study adopted the interpretive paradigm to obtain perspectives and views of offender students about challenges experienced by them when registered for online modules at Unisa while in Correctional facilities. Furthermore, the data collection was done through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations. The research location and participants were described, and the justification of purposeful sampling of the study was thoroughly explained. The researcher also explained how ethical principles were considered.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the themes that emanated from the analysed data. Several themes were identified after the three passes through the raw data, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Categories emerged naturally during and after data collection without imposition by the researcher. The major themes that emerged through interviews, open-ended questions and observations are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also presents the demographics of the participants accordingly and the colleges they are registered in.

Table 4.1: Themes from the data collected

Interviews	Open-ended questionnaires	Observations
Inconsistent time allocated on online studies for offender students	Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities	Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities
The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment	Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff	The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment
Accommodation of offender student's learning styles and software updates	Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students	Online learning support offered for offender students at Correctional facilities
Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff	Online learning support offered for offender students at Correctional facilities	
Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students		
Online student discussion forums and relevant devices that are regarded as beneficial for online module support		

#### 4.2 Biographical Information of the participants

Through interviews the researcher saw it eminent to get biographical information of thirteen participants as presented below:

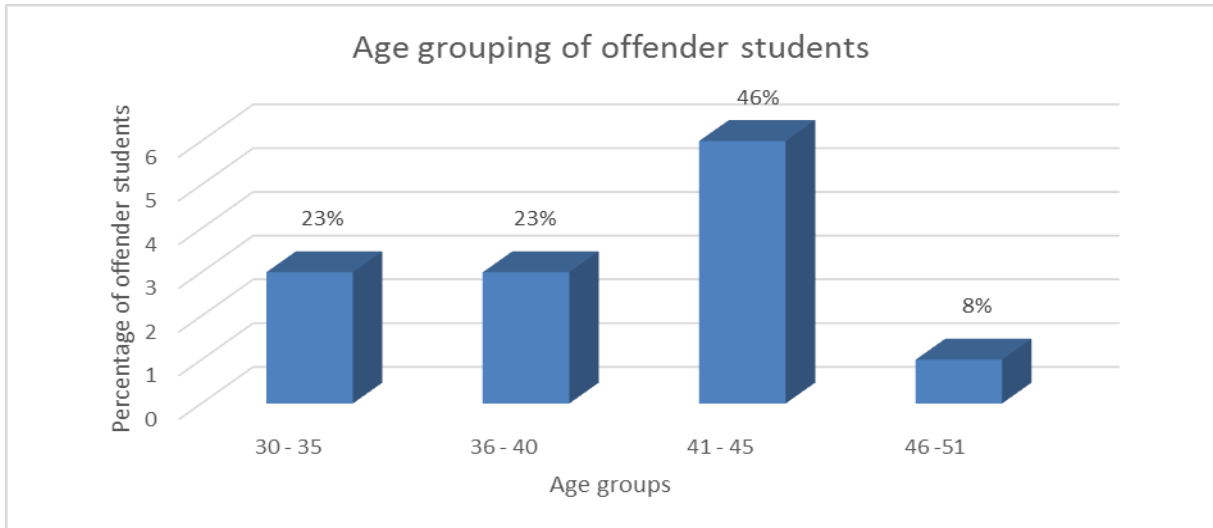


Figure 4.1 Offender students per age group

As illustrated in figure 4.1 above, the age group of thirteen offender students varied. The researcher conducted the study at an adult Correctional facility with no juveniles. Subsequently, the data collected shows that the age range of the offender students is between 30 years and 51 years old. Figure 4.1 shows the highest percentage of 46% of offender students ages are in the 41- 45 years old range. This is followed by two ranges at 23% at the age of 30-35 years old and 36-40 years old. Whereas 8% is at 46-51 years old range. These percentages show us the two folds of generation, adult to senior old range that are incarcerated and study with Unisa. Figure 4.2 present population of the offender students at the correctional facility that is made up of different races.

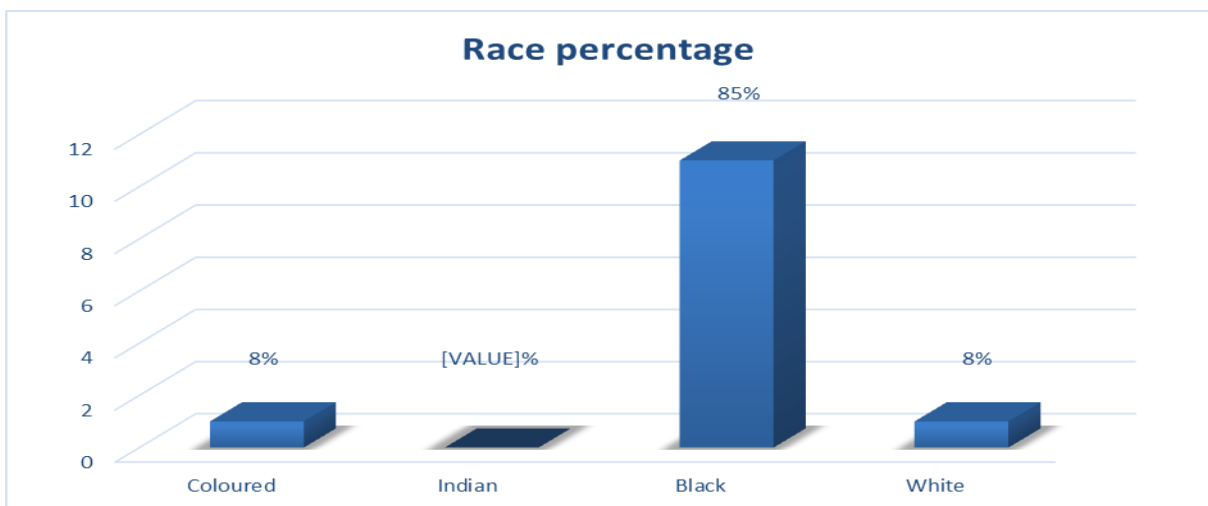


Figure 4.2 Race of the offender students

Out of thirteen participants that were sampled it is evident that the dominant race at Correctional facilities is black as figure 4.2 above shows 85%. According to the Department of Correctional Services annual report for 2016/2017 the inmate population was 79.6% black compared to white population at 1.6% and coloured at 18.2%. Therefore, the high percentage of blacks in figure 4.2 is justifiable.



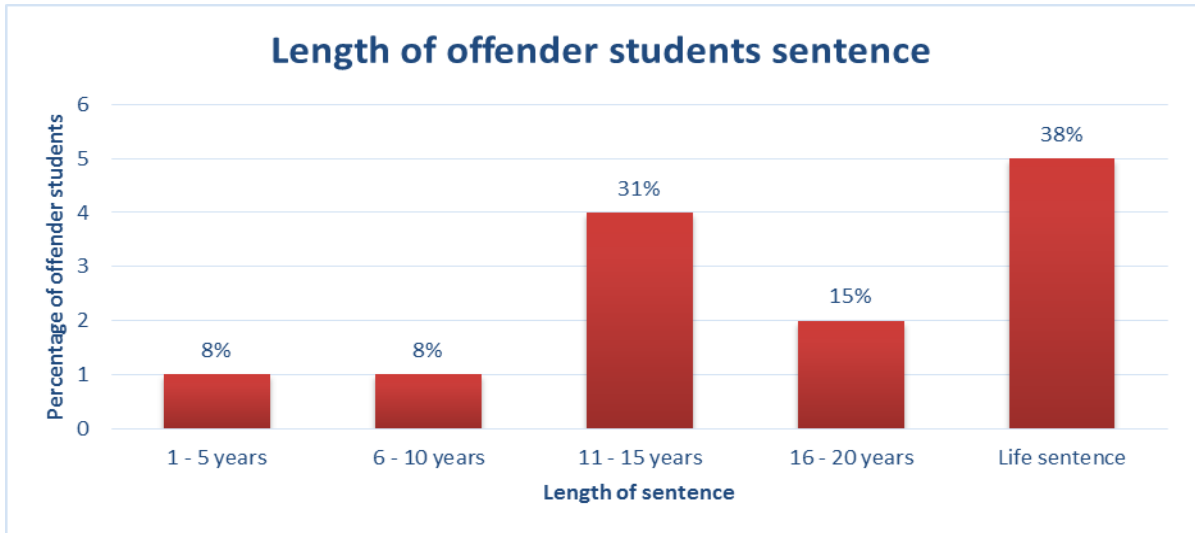


Figure 4.3 Length of sentences for offender students

The data collected in this study regarding length of the sentences of offender students varies, with the harshest sentence having the biggest percentage. According to figure 4.3 the highest percentage is for life sentence with 38% which is alarming. These offender students are still studying to become better citizens when they re-join the community. Section 51 of South Africa's Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1997 recommends that different types of crimes such as robberies, rape and murder approximately 10, 15 and 25 years respectively for lowest judgements. An offender must be granted a parole at least after attending parole programmes and served 25 years. Though parole is granted to offenders who already served life sentences in most cases if minimum sentence for lesser crime has been served which is a long period for a human being to be kept in a Correctional facility. There is a possibility that some offender students may leave the Correctional facilities at an old age range, especially the 8% illustrated at figure 4.1.

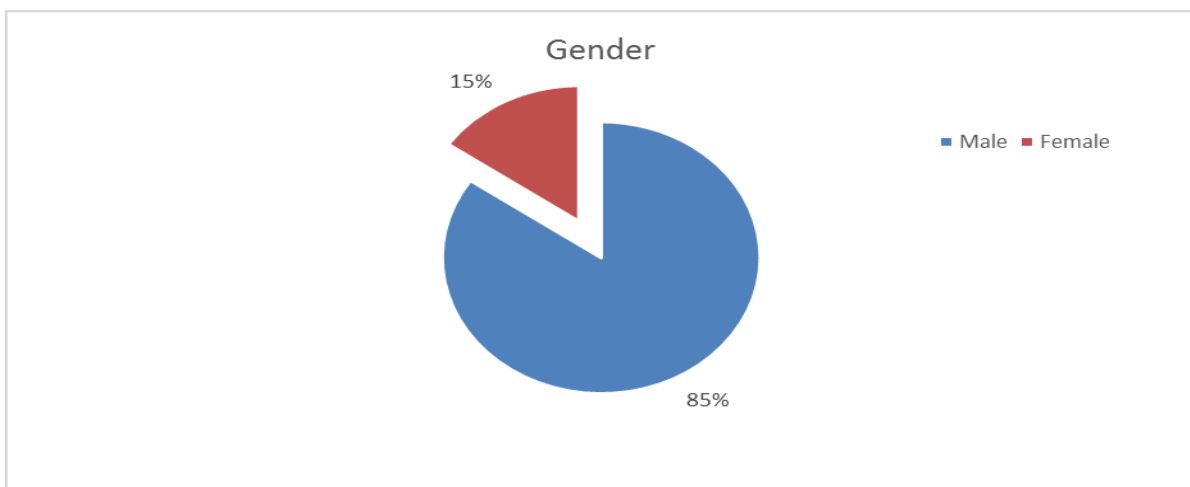


Figure 4.4 Gender of the participants

According to figure 4.4 females are at 15% while males are at 85%. This means that male participants are more dominant than females. It is encouraging to compare these figures with DCS strategic plan document 2015/2016 — 2019-2020 that shows inmates total population of sentenced offenders, the number of males in 2013/2014 was 108378 while females are 2630. Though findings of this study show that female percentage is less than male percentage, that does not mean females are not studying. When conducting interviews with participants it was mentioned that some females are studying with other educational institutions. Through observations from female section the researcher discovered that some females are studying online postgraduate qualifications through international colleges and universities.

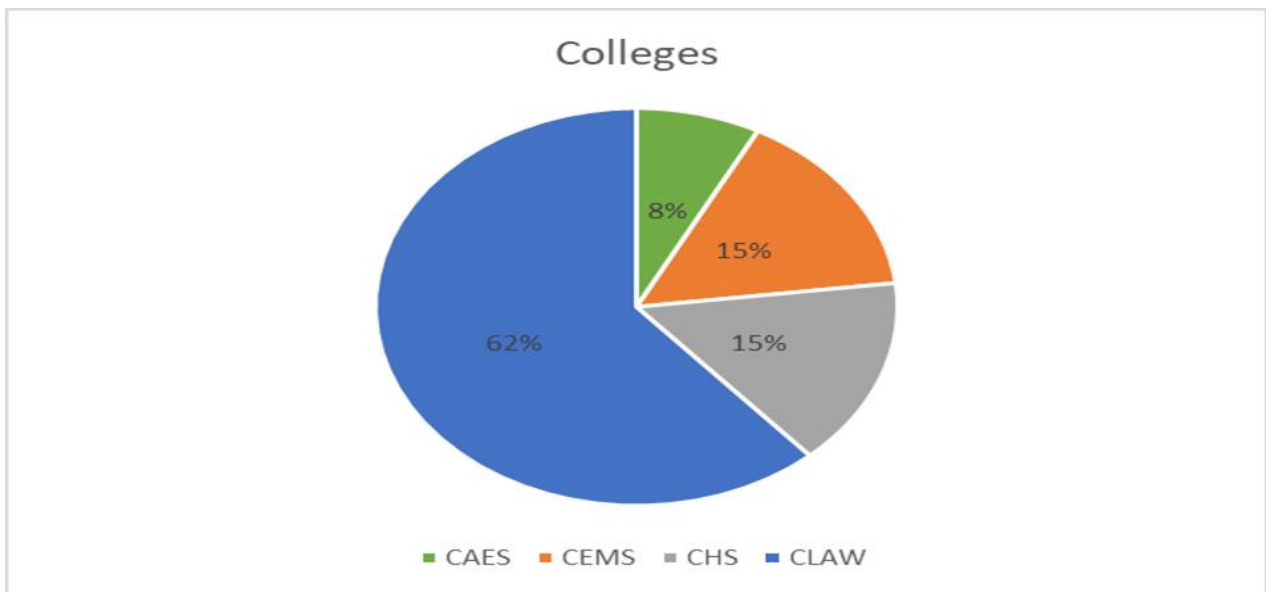


Figure 4.5 Participants' colleges

Figure 4.5 illustrates that the College of Law is dominant by 62% as compared to other colleges as most of the participants are registered for LLB under the college; which begs the question why? The reasons should be further investigated. Most of the participants are registered at undergraduate level though some are at postgraduate level. The themes that emerged from open-ended questions reveal that most of the participants require career guidance prior to registration for them to have a good career choice that enables them to utilise the qualification when they are released from Correctional facilities to contribute to the community. After serving a long sentence and completing parole period they remain with a criminal record. A criminal record is cleared through the expunge process. Therefore in this process offenders are required to go through expungement application process of which it is a court order process where the legal record of criminal conviction is erased in the eyes of the law and may set aside a criminal conviction (Section 27B (1) of criminal procedure Act no. 51 of 1977). This process may be viewed as not instant as it takes time and offenders may struggle before they can get an employment. There are

some possibilities of getting demoralised because of the challenges encountered along the process.

### **4.3 Interpretation of themes that emerged**

Below is a presentation of themes that emerged during data analysis under each method used to collect the data. There are elements of theme repetitiveness as data was collected in different methods but the phenomenon under investigation being the same.

#### **4.3.1 Interpretation of themes from interviews**

##### **4.3.1.1 Theme 1: Inconsistent time allocated to online studies for offender students**

Most of the participants mentioned the inconsistent time allocated for utilising computer laboratory (lab) at Correctional facilities. There are various reasons that influence the inconsistent hours and time allocated for offender students. When asked about the hours allocated to them to access computer laboratory (lab), the responses were as follows:

*Sipho participant 2: "it is difficult because sometimes we start 8:30-12-00. It also depends on the time that officials are available or not sometimes its half day sometimes they go to the meetings. After 12:00 they leave. Sometimes they are not available."*

*Thato participant 3: "Emm!! We do not have exactly allocate hours, reason being that we are in a system where we must work on hours that are available. We start with daily programmes. The prison opens for four hours."*

*Jabu participant 11: "In the hub it's basically 9-2pm (5 hours) but not every day. We experience half days in prison. In some days it's an hour depends to the availability of the officials. Officials sometimes are not available for the whole week which means we cannot use Unisa–hub."*

Laptops provided by Unisa at correctional facilities are not optimally utilised by offender students. This was revealed by inconsistent number of hours allocated to offender students to utilise computer labs. It is evident that hours spent by offender students in computer labs are limited and this affects their devoted study time. This was revealed by all participants. Sometimes computer labs open late and sometimes do not open at all. Offender students depend on availability of correctional officials as they cannot open computer labs without supervision. All participants indicated that limited study time provided, and hours allocated to them are inadequate which raises a great concern that may affect their progress. This theme shows time constrains experienced by offender students in correctional facilities and correlates with the findings of the study conducted by Dr Mafenya (2018) which indicated that lecturers in distance education experience time constrains attributed to workload which makes them unable to provide feedback to students. Therefore, if offender students experienced time constrains to utilise labs optimally in

correctional facilities the situation may exacerbate due to time constraints experienced by the lecturers in distance education.

#### **4.3.1.2 Theme 2: The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment**

The study revealed that the learning environment at correctional facilities is regarded as unique due to lockdown, daily headcounts and limited hours provided for offender students, therefore, the situation makes teaching and learning difficult (Watts, 2010, p.57). Inclusive education promotes good education quality, conducive learning environment, addresses the learning inequities and differences for all learners. Conducive learning environment is crucial for offender students for them to progress effectively in their studies. This has been confirmed by participants through interviews when they were asked which suitable time is best for them to study:

*Thabo Participant 3: For me it's when the prison is closed down. My best time is to work at night.*

*Zweli Participant 4: In the evening. Starting from 4pm it is quiet. During the day it is very hectic. Prison is not a suitable environment to study.*

*Elias Participant 8: "I prefer to study during the night, during the day there are too many activities. Which some they clash with my studies".*

*Linda participant 13 said "Sometimes it is noisy we cannot concentrate".*

Computer labs at Correctional facilities open during the day only. By the time offender students need to access the lab in the evening there is no access due to correctional rules and implementation of lockdown.

#### **4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Accommodation of offender students' learning styles and software updates**

The learning styles challenge manifested when one of the participants indicated difficulties of reading study material on screen when using laptops. Different learning styles accommodate different learning needs of all learners. One of the different learning styles is tactile style where learners need to touch and make notes on hard copies. The inclusive education promotes equal learning opportunities for everyone and stresses its clear vision for full access to education, (World Declaration on Education for All adopted in Jomtien, Thailand 1990). Moreover, the identification and elimination of learning barriers must not be compromised for people who experienced challenges in accessing learning resources and educational opportunities. This was confirmed by *Elias participant 8 who said, "We need printing facilities, I cannot read on the screen, there is no paper for printing and access to memory stick".*

Due to lack of resources offender students do not have printing facilities and privilege to recharge their students accounts for printing purposes, therefore, it is difficult for them to access printing

facilities. This is evident that the environment at correctional facilities is not conducive to accommodate different learning styles of offender students, though some participants indicated that they are privileged to access private laptops and modems. This was confirmed by *Sipho participant 2*, who said *“Everything is on the system. I do not see any problem.”* This shows that in any learning environment there exists students with different learning styles. The fact that some offender students cannot read on screen is a critical issue that requires pedagogical attention on online modules to support these learners. The fact that we all have different learning styles that touches our ways of thinking, behaviour, learning approach and the way we process information therefore tactile learners find it difficult to read effectively on laptop screens.

Laptops allocated at computer labs in Correctional facilities require frequent software updates; e.g. Some online modules require students to use Auto Desk Inventor. This is a licensed software that the students obtain from the link in the tutorial letter 101 of *CAD161S*. Each student has a student license while they are studying this module. This enables them to download and install the software. The link to use is <https://www.autodesk.com/education/free-software/inventor-professional/>. One of the participants shared his frustration which led him to de-register the module three times because of the low storage of the current laptops allocated in correctional centres, the participant said:

*Themba participant 5: CAD161S we rely on Unisa to access this software for this module you need to be supplied in a disc format, flash drive that will help students not to go pirating. You end up failing because not to say you don't know but the software is not doing exactly what is expected. DCS and Unisa tried to give us computers but they are not helping because the existing lab laptop cannot download the software for this module.”*

*Themba participant 5: “Make relevant software available to offenders like your Microsoft Visio etc.”*

*Thabang participant 6: “Certain software needs to be installed on these laptops, the links provided cannot open or downloaded on these laptops; it requires strong, fast internet connectivity and a large storage on the laptops.”*

Offender students who are currently using these laptops are excluded in these frequent software upgrades, therefore, they get frustrated and demoralised. It is evident that there is a lack of support provided to offender students to resolve this exclusion. It emerged that inclusivity is not practiced for offender students in Correctional facilities. During interviews offender students attested that they are excluded in some academic and administrative support programmes, most of the participants expressed their views deeply in this regard. Software compatibility poses challenges when they want to open certain links for some online modules. Whereas students from

outside Correctional facilities are easily assisted by the Digital Lab advisor (DLA) in the respective Unisa computer labs and software is upgraded regularly. The exclusion of offender students furthermore reviled when some of the participants mentioned Student Representative Counsel (SRC) that is not visible in Correctional facilities to represent offender students the same way they represent students who are outside the Correctional facilities. This has been attested by some participants as follows:

*Elias participant 8: "SRC of the institution must help us. That student mother body must help us. If you have no resources no one is available for to assist. Our needs are not represented by SRC."*

It is evident that there is a lack of SRC representative in correctional facilities as the offender students felt that their voice is not represented at Unisa. What surprises them is that they financially contribute the same fee paid by students outside the correctional facilities. Further investigation in this regard is highly needed.

#### **4.3.1.4 Theme 4: Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff**

Visibility of Unisa staff in correctional facilities viewed by offender students as a great concern, some participants feel frustrated and isolated due to lack of administrative support. Most of the participants mentioned that they do not have the privilege to meet them as they want. It is their wish to have one-on-one consultation with lecturers, tutors and administrative staff. Computer labs in correctional facilities require frequent visits by Unisa DLA to assist them on technical challenges experienced daily and to update software on laptops provided by Unisa. During application phase and registration period, offender students require inclusive administrative support from Unisa; for example - career guidance, advisors, orientation programmes and personnel from library to train them on how to use online library catalogue. When asked to suggest interventions needed to support them most of the participants said:

*Thabo participant 1: "What one recommends that Unisa should send tutors to give orientation on how students should navigate their way through those online modules."*

*Thato participant 3: "Unisa to provide someone that will come once a month or twice to assists us."*

*Thabang participant 6: "There should always be an official available to assist and support offenders registered for online modules."*

Based on responses provided by these participants it is evident that Unisa staff is not visible in Correctional facilities to provide more academic and administrative support for offender students registered at Unisa. The lack of academic and administration support impact negatively on the learning journey of offender students. Frequent visits from Unisa staff can make a huge difference

on offender students' learning performance. Learning challenges experienced by offender students could be easily resolved, trust easily built and a working relationship between Unisa staff and offender students will easily ensue.

It was mentioned by most of the participants that DCS officials are required to attend meetings, some take leave and afternoon-offs as a result their non-availability contributes to limited hours allocate per day for offender students. As mentioned above, limited hours allocated for computer usage and lock-up time affects time span for offender students' studies, which is worsened by "no movement time". No movement time is when the Correctional facilities prohibit any movement by inmates; including offender students, due to cell search and unforeseen incidents. During this period computer labs in Correctional facilities are closed until DCS declares safe movement. Some of the participants attest as follows:

*Zweli participant 4: "I once found that there was no data at hub, it was on Monday and due date for assignment was Friday. For three days waiting hub was closed because officials attended different meetings."*

*Thabang participant 6: "There should always be an official available to assist and support offenders registered for online modules."*

*Cathy participant 11: "We have limited access to the internet when an official is sick or on leave it poses challenges."*

*Jabu participant 12: "The non-availability of staff responsible for the Unisa hub is an obstacle we come across in submitting late and doing the assignments late."*

*Linda participant 13: "Officials must refrain from consistent half day as it impacts negatively on our studies."*

#### **4.3.1.5 Theme 5: Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students**

Based on responses provided by participants, it is evident that there is lack of training on how to use online library system. When participants were asked about challenges encountered when accessing online library system, there were mixed feelings, some find it difficult to use whereas some find the system very useful. Participants who tried to order textbooks via online library system honestly shared their views on how limited allocated time to use the system and poor internet connectivity affected them. Some participant did not show any interest in using the library online system due to the delays experienced when requesting textbooks online. This was confirmed by Linda participant 13 who pointed out "*I normally do not use it. I wanted a material that I used for assignments they responded very late*".

Most of Participants said:

*Thabo participant 1: "One needs training, if I was outside, I was basically going to take my laptop and ask Unisa people to show me how to access books online library."*

*Thato participant 3: "I was not successful; I think for me it was difficult, maybe I was unfortunate officials do not want to take responsibilities to show us. I was never fortunate enough to access this library online."*

*Zweli participant 4: "Poor connectivity as I mentioned before."*

*Themba participant 5: "I don't know how to use it. I have never access it."*

*Terror participant 9: "I tried to check one book, but I was not successful."*

*Florence participant10: "Slow system, to access slow internet connections, I spend 30 minutes trying to connect it can be so challenging to request books."*

Some participants still prefer to buy textbooks from the book shops to avoid delays and have future reference. This information was confirmed by the participants who said:

*Sipho participant 2: "The prescribed books I get them my own way, I buy hard copies."*

*Thabang participant 6: "I have never use library online. I buy textbooks."*

*Theo participant 7: "I don't use library, I check only myunisa and buy textbooks from the book shop."*

If offender students are not trained on how to request books and access articles online, it is obvious that due to lack of information they will hesitate to use library systems. Hence some of them tried to request books online without any success. That is why most of the participants buy textbooks from the bookshops.

To obtain additional information pertaining to certain modules it is necessary to access relevant articles and journals online to supplement study material provided by Unisa. Unfortunately, most of the participants found challenges across and some opted not to search these articles online. Limited time to search also affects them. This was confirmed by participants when asked to share experiences on how they access articles for their studies:

*Thabo participant1: "The only problem is that the sources that are not recommended and prescribed it is difficult to access them online, navigating on the process/ system, it takes time it is frustrating, it takes time to access them."*



*Sipho participant 2: "our problem is that time is limited on research you cannot limit time."*

*Thato participant 3: "Access of articles, I think because of the time one will not have enough time to access more."*

*Zweli participant 4: "It is difficult, same problem of network. We only access when network is sharp."*

*Florence participant 10 "Like I said we have a bad signal, very slow, my cousin downloaded for me."*

*Cathy participant 11: "No resources here, we have access on mmh!!! Except these LLB articles, if you don't have access from your family no one will offer help."*

*Linda participant 13: "Let's say first year Law degree they usually refer us to access to journals, when you go there on the internet, we struggle to find it. I am not sure if is it because no one has knowledge on how to access it."*

Most of the students do not use online library instead they use their family members as support for study material delivery. During data collection it became vivid that some services are excluding offender students. A variety of answers received from participants indicated some resistance from Correctional officials when requested to sign for the study material received. Other instances offender students end up not receiving delivered study material and journals requested from library. Therefore, family members take the responsibility to deliver study material, printed journals and assignment hard copies for offender students. This has been attested by some participants:

*Elias participant 8: said "I can say, I am fortunate since a member of the family assist me whenever I need to print certain articles."*

*Florence participant 10: "my cousin assists to download for me and print."*

*Cathy participant 11 said "No resources here, we have access on mmh!!! Except these LLB articles, if you don't have access from your family no one will offer help."*

*Thato participant 3: "Sometimes I submit my assignment through officials or through my member of the family."*

Lack of mobile library services in Correctional facilities imposes a serious exclusion on challenges experienced by offender students. It is with this reason some family members offer support to them. Most of the offender students buy textbooks to avoid online library service delays and usage.

#### **4.3.1.6 Theme 6: Online students' discussion forums and relevant devices that are regarded as beneficial for online module support**

Most of the online modules require students to participate in online discussion forums to share and acquire information. Unisa uses formal discussion forums called *myunisa* Learning Management System (LMS) for students to engage, interact and communicate constructively and participate in group assignments. This also contributes to the student's year mark (Tutorial letter BPT1501 101/3/2019). Most of the participants showed an interest and shared some benefits of students who participate in these online discussion forums though others did not show any interest. When participants were asked about their involvement in discussion forums most of them said:

*Thabang participant 6: "We use this forum when there is a question that one needs to discuss with other students. Discussion is helping."*

*Elias participant 8: "This semester it was the first time I engaged on online discussion. Discussion forums are contributing to our year mark."*

*Florence participant 10: "Yes, it is helping me it also gives you a chance to discuss with other students."*

Though some participants did not show any interest in joining these forums, their responses are as follows:

*Cathy participant: 11: "No, I am not involved. It feels that we don't have enough time to interact with others it is time consuming."*

*Linda participant: 13 "Sometimes we just conform because lecturers are forcing us to join discussion group forums."*

Some students engaged on informal online discussions through WhatsApp. It is evident that computer hubs in Correctional facilities are not open in the evening whereas most of the students are employed therefore participate in these online discussions in the evening. Some participants said:

*Sipho participants 2: "We have WhatsApp group with students doing the same module, when I do not understand I contact someone."*

*Thato participants 3: "We are leaving in two different worlds. Community outside, they do their things at their own time, while here we have limited time."*

*Zweli participant 4: "Most of the students in our forums are working. Only in the evening we join discussion forums. That is where sister!!! Eish!! Gaketsebe gore ke swanetse gogo botsa se!!*

*Eupsa kea gobotsa gobane ke nnete (“I don’t know if I should tell you this, but I am telling you because it is true) “we start smuggling through cell phones in the evening by joining WhatsApp group.”*

*Themba participant 5: “Yhaa!! Here in prison it’s a challenge. But we do have some ways of engaging. But we end up having WhatsApp group.”*

*Jabu participant 12: “We form a group chats!! On WhatsApp group and discuss with other students. When I contact people outside, they told me that they are using WhatsApp separate from Unisa website.”*

The interviews revealed that offender students are using informal platforms like WhatsApp to reach out to students who are outside Correctional facilities exchange information. One of the reasons for having WhatsApp groups was mentioned by some participants that most of the students are working during the day and effective group communication starts in the evening. Offender students who need private laptops usually apply for court orders, however, not all students manage to get private laptops through court orders. Zweli participant 4 mentioned that most of the students in their forums are working; they only become available in the evening where they engage using smuggled cellphones.

Through desperation offender students opted to use private cellphones to engage with other students who are outside the Correctional facilities to exchange information. It is unfortunate that most of the information shared via WhatsApp with other students does not contribute towards their year-mark because it is not the formal group discussion platform. It shows that WhatsApp group is the most effective online platform that is more convenient for offender students though they might lose their cellphones to confiscation if found. Therefore, participants suggested numerous gadgets to be used as an intervention support in Correctional facilities such as students’ interaction with tutors through video conferences (VC). Also, DCS must allow offender students registered for online modules to use the internet in their private cells under the supervision of correctional officials. Participants clearly indicated that academic support and interventions is needed:

*Thabo participant 1: “In this regard what would work for students is that they should be allowed to have their own modems, which will be used under the supervision of correctional officials because the internet provided by the correctional service is very weak.”*

*Sipho participant 2: “The head of the prison must allow us to use internet even in our own time.”*

*Terror participant 9: "If every student could have full time access to computer usage meaning that students support can be in the form of allowing students to be in possession of computers/laptop in their cells."*

*Florence participants 10: "Allow students to have computer after lock-up time so that the study material can be accessed through pdf file."*

*Jabu participant 12: "If a student has a personal computer, he/she be given the right to have it in his possession for 24 hours."*

*Linda participant 13: "Unisa should emphasise that personal computers including modems be allowed to registered students. Students are accommodated in individual cells therefore safety of such items is guaranteed."*

Private laptops are regarded as one of the most beneficial devices that could ease the burden of depending on Correctional facilities computer lab laptops. Offender students can utilise these private laptops and relevant gadgets such as modems, memory sticks & CD's at their own convenient time and do their academic work. Offender students who are privileged enough to occupy private cells have the privacy to study at any given time. Where security risk is anticipated in the use of private modems, Correctional personnel can monitor the use of these private devices.

#### **4.3.2 Interpretation of themes from open-ended questionnaire**

##### **4.3.2.1 Theme 1: Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities**

Serious concerns on limited access to internet were identified as a contributing factor that affected offender students; weak bandwidth, poor connectivity that caused slow internet. Some participants mentioned that sometimes the network is not available completely. Private internet usage was said to be prohibited in Correctional facilities. It is with this reason that most of the offender students try to apply for court orders to be given permission to have laptops and modems for private use; the responses that attested to these findings were as follows:

*Thabo participant 1: "Bandwidth is very weak. Internet is slow; it takes me 15 minutes to open. Time allocated is not enough."*

*Sipho, participant 2: "It is limited, sometime network is not available."*

*Thato, participant 3: "Yes, we do have an internet access. The challenge again it is not guaranteed. You can be here the whole day nothing happens because network is down; officials went for meeting, strike, like any normal employees will have challenges not to come at work. In most cases the number of officials is not enough."*

*Zweli participant 4: “No internet, the department does not allow private internet connectivity. We come to this hub, we struggle a lot because of the network we must smuggle modems to access internet. As a result, I was forced to have a modem. They took my modem. I depend on this hub to have access to submit my assignment.”*

*Elias participant 8: “Yes, I use the hub lab. I am organising my own computer.”*

*Cathy participant 11: “Yes, signal is terrible this is the fourth day without internet access.”*

*Linda participant 13: “Yes, sometime the network is not accessible. We are not allowed to have private internet. Sometimes we do not connect at all. Sometimes officials are not available for two days. Not always we can work on allocated time, we are not allowed to use private internet.”*

Online modules require students to download study material and submit assignments online; however, poor internet connectivity in Correctional facilities affects them. The situation becomes worse when the system is offline for the whole day or few days as mentioned above by Cathy Participant 11, which means offender students do not have alternative ways to connect to private internet. This was confirmed by other participants:

*Thato participant 3: “Material is online and unable to download; when you download the system will kick you out. While you are in the process the system will show you, it could not download. Challenge is access to personal computer; we are moving on this paperless environment.”*

*Theo participant 7 said “The problem is network it is very slow.”*

*Florence participant 10 attest on what Thato and Themba mentioned and said “Poor signal. myunisa system is very slow; I once needed to print exam paper online. You need to beg officials to print for you.”*

The challenge of limited internet access was also mentioned by some of the participants when connecting to *mylife* and *myunisa* accounts. These participants provided various reasons of poor internet connectivity. These reasons concur with what participants indicated above. Participants were asked about the challenges experienced when logging on *mylife* and *myunisa* accounts, the following was said:

*Zweli participant 4: “During the day it is very difficult because of the weak network. Some time network it is better but most of the time it is very poor.”*

*Themba participant 5: “It is too slow; sometimes you come here and leave without downloading. I had a challenge of a computer. I am left with this module to complete my qualification.”*

*Thabang participant 6: “Internet connectivity, it takes time to connect.”*

*Theo participant 7: "The problem is the network; we request officials to assist."*

*Elias participant 8: "Network problems you must wait for 30 minutes."*

*Terror participant 9: "Internet sometimes is very slow, sometimes it is not working at all."*

*Florence participant 10: "The most challenge is when the system is hanging."*

*Cathy participant 11: It is just the internet connectivity that is giving us problems it is slow."*

*Jabu participant 12: "Challenges it does not happen every day sometime internet connection is down. Sometimes the speed is very slow, for you to open your account it takes more than 30 minutes."*

Private internet usage under supervision by Correctional personnel could alleviate all challenges experienced by offender students on internet access. Though most of the participants indicated challenges on poor internet connectivity some participants responded differently for the same question. The following was said:

*Thabo participant 1: "No!! As every system is not perfect but mylife account is working okay. Everything is on point."*

*Sipho participant 2: "No I don't have problem logging on myunisa or mylife account."*

*Thato participant 3: "Emm!! Logging on there is no challenges. On mylife, not much challenges."*

Some participants have access to private internet use, through application approval for court order. Therefore, internet access is not a challenge to them, however, this system is excluding some offender students because not all of those who applied for court order received an approval. This practice causes a lot of dissatisfaction with offender students and leaves them thinking that they are not fairly and equally treated by the law and Correctional personnel. As a result, some offender students end up organising their private modems and laptops illegally, however, these internet gadgets end up being confiscated by Correctional personnel and students lose their saved work.

#### **4.3.2.2 Theme 2: Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff**

Although both institutions made means to provide laptops to offender students, to support them and open computer centre, private internet use, private modems, learning videos, private laptops and CD's are regarded as a security risk in Correctional facilities. Poor internet connectivity and limited hours allocated to use these laptops affect offender students. It is evident that offender students were concerned about the lack of support from both institutions as this theme is repetitive

from interviews and open-ended questions poor administrative support service became more strongly from participants as discussed in 4.3.1.4.

Some of the participants alluded by saying:

*Florence participant 10: "Tutors and professors should to come and see students more often to check on computers and internet access issues."*

*Cathy participant 11: "We need visits from Unisa staff."*

*Thabang participant 6: "DSC to appoint more educational officials to assist students registered online modules daily. Give students more time to access the internet for their studies."*

From the participants' responses, there is a need for DCS to appoint more education officials to assist offender students when they need help on Unisa registration queries, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) queries and computer queries.

#### **4.3.2.3 Theme 3: Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students**

This is a repetitive theme that comes out strongly from most of the participants during interviews and from open-ended questionnaires. Most of the participants felt that Unisa staff from library services should come and train them on how to use the library catalogue so that they can access relevant articles and order books. Some participants remarked that Unisa should include CDs with library information process in their study material package so that they can familiarise themselves with library processes. Lack of mobile library services at Correctional facilities exacerbated their challenges as discussed above. Some participants pointed out as follows:

*Elias participant 8: "Not yet I have not use Unisa library online."*

*Jabu participant 13: "I do not use library online. Most of us we do not use. When we ask for a book it takes a month to reach us therefore, I prefer hard copies. Most people decided not to order books online."*

#### **4.3.2.4 Theme 4: Online learning support offered for offender students at correctional facilities**

Department of Correctional Service and Unisa collaborated and signed a three-year Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) from 2018-2020 to establish dedicated Unisa computer centres or hubs at identified Correctional facilities across all provinces to offer academic and administrative support to offender students who registered at Unisa. Unisa provided laptops to be utilised by offender students for any online academic activities. To have limited internet access strictly for academic related use. It is evident that the academic support provided by both institutions is inadequate to meet the academic needs and demands of offender students. Hours

allocated by the DCS for computer centres are insufficient as it was mentioned by most of the participants in paragraph 4.3.2.1 above. Various interventions were suggestions by offender students to improve learning support provided by both institutions. Responses were as follows:

*Sipho participant 2: "For me it will be easy for online module to have internet access 24 hours, but officials should monitor us. Personal computer is recommended, and they must look after us for 24 hours."*

*Temba participant 5: "CAD161S, we rely on Unisa to access this software for this module you need to be supplied in a disc format, flash drive that will help students not to go pirating. You end up failing because not to say you don't know but the software is not doing exactly what is expected. DSC and UNISA tried to give us computers but they not helping because the existing lab laptop cannot download the software for this module."*

*Terror participant 9: "registered for online module must have computer to utilise in his /her private cell. We do not have internet and it is alleged that we use internet for wrong reasons. Full time access on internet will help."*

*Florence participant 10: "I would beg lecturers, that we do not have free internet access like students outside, they should give us extensions, when we missed deadline for assignment. It is circumstances beyond our control, we want to study, and be a better person when we go out to outside world. They must understand the access issues."*

*Cathy participant 11: "DCS must allow us to use the modem and computers/ laptop. DCS to be more lenient to students who are studying. Support on printing facilities."*

*Jabu participant 12: Ehh!! Online module is not based on hard copy; it is a soft copy online. Access to a computer fulltime that is what is needed for online module. In prison we do not have access to printers, it is only online. Prison is regarding computer as security risk. Only students with private computers that they managed to do their work effectively during private time."*

*Linda participant 13: "We do need a personal computer; allocation of modems will assist us."*

Though both institutions DCS and Unisa assist offender students with laptops and established computer labs, offender students still felt that the current resources provided to them are inadequate. Due to Correctional service restrictions certain devices are prohibited because of security risks therefore offender students should comply. Some participants felt that online learning support should been provided to them 24/7 under strict supervision unlike depriving them access.

*One of the participants said "Unisa should emphasise that personal computers including modems be allowed to registered students. Students are accommodated in individual cells therefore safety of such items is guaranteed."*



### **4.3.3 Interpretation of themes from observation**

#### **4.3.3.1 Theme 1: Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities**

Some of the themes like this one is repetition of what has been discussed in paragraph 4.3.2.1 above. As the researcher was observing, she noticed that the internet is reserved for studying and limited by the time allocated to open the computer lab. Offender students are not allowed to have internet access in their private cells. Participants can only have access to online study material during the day when the lab is open.

#### **4.3.3.2 Theme 2: The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment**

Various service interruptions were identified by the researcher through observation, for an example, poor internet connection contributes to limited hours and study time allocated for computer usage as discussed in theme 4.3.2.1 above. The policy guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009) state its goal which encourages effective involvement of individual in the society and attain full potential, therefore, offender students need to be provided with learning opportunities and exposed to conducive learning environment.

The environment at Correctional facilities is not conducive for learning. Through observation the noise level manifested, the researcher and offender students at computer labs were thus affected by the noise levels caused by maintenance service providers who utilised noisy equipment to drill the walls. When Correctional facilities schedules service providers for fumigation and other maintenance services, evidence shows that the notice of these events is not well communicated to the relevant stakeholders as some of them were taken by surprise. E.g. the scheduled date for the interviews with participants had to be re-scheduled due to Correctional facilities maintenance activities.

The researcher, Correctional officials and offender students had to vacate the computer labs as the noise levels happened across male and female sections. Loud singing from a church service that came from the female section could be heard from the male section. The sound in the background is very clear on the tape recorder but it is not constant because there are different activities on different days, therefore you will not hear same things daily. One of the participants attest that the environment is not conducive for learning:

*Linda participant 13 said "Sometimes it is noisy we cannot concentrate."*

#### **4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Online learning support offered for offender students at Correctional facilities**

Through observation the researcher saw the type of technological gadgets that the offender students were given by Correctional officials. Offender students go to computer labs and sign for laptops which are in a lockable safe that only Correctional officials have keys for. Most of the participants on open-ended questionnaires raised a concern of internet connectivity and poor

bandwidth. In the five days spent with offender students, the researcher noticed that indeed they are struggling to connect on *myunisa* portal due to lack of stronger bandwidth.

As discussed in 4.3.1.1 above, there is inconsistent time allocated to offender students which is influenced by the type of activities that are happening during the day. Challenges experienced by offender students include power connectivity. Some of the offender students were able to assist one another.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter mainly interpreted the demographical information of the participants and themes that emerged from the interviews, open-ended questions and non-participative observation done by the researcher with offender students at the Correctional facilities. These themes gave the researcher an understanding on exclusions and experience of offender students who registered for online modules and are at Correctional facilities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses mainly on discussing findings of this study and provides recommendations and conclusion as well. Themes interpreted in chapter four are used to discuss the findings and how they merged with the main research question and sub-questions. Some themes revealed exclusion of offender students by different learning styles and exposed that the correctional services environment is not conducive for online learning. It is evident that offender students are offered online academic support that is regarded as beneficiary to them though security compliance within correctional services environment prohibits freewill usage of online resources. Students outside correctional facilities are more privileged to access online resources and have internet access anytime, anywhere as compared to offender students.

#### 5.2 Themes addressing research question and sub-questions

##### 5.2.1 Data displayed on table

Table 5.1: Questions and themes correlation

Research Question/s	MERGED THEMES		
	Interviews	Open-Ended questions	Observation
<p><b>Main research question below:</b> What are the experiences of offender students who registered at Unisa for online modules at correctional facilities in Gauteng?</p> <p><b>Sub questions:</b> 1. What are the challenges of offender students who registered at Unisa for online modules at Correctional facilities in Gauteng?</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inconsistent time allocated on online studies for offender students.</li><li>• Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities.</li><li>• Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff.</li><li>• Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students.</li></ul>

2. What academic support is given to offender students registered for online modules at Unisa in Correctional facilities in Gauteng?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Online learning support offered for offender students at Correctional facilities.</li> </ul>
3. Which intervention strategies are needed to support offender students registered for online modules at Unisa at Correctional facilities in Gauteng?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Online student's discussion forums and relevant devices that are regarded as beneficial for online module support.</li> </ul>
4. Which inclusive strategies may be used to support offender students registered for Unisa online modules at Correctional Centres?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accommodation of offender students' learning styles and software updates.</li> <li>● The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment.</li> </ul>

**5.3. Themes merged from offender student's responses to interviews, open ended questions and observations are discussed as follows:**

- Inconsistent time allocated on online studies for offender students.
- Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities.
- Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff.
- Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students.
- Online learning support offered for offender students at Correctional facilities.
- Online student's discussion forums and relevant devices that are regarded as beneficial for online module support.
- Accommodation of offender student's learning styles and software updates.
- The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment.

### **5.3.1 Inconsistent time allocated on online studies, leisure time and limited access**

This section and the subsequent sections that follow (5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4) in this chapter address the research question and sub-question 1 as discussed in Chapter 4 of the study and illustrated in table 5.1 above. The findings of the study revealed that there is inconsistent time allocated on online studies, leisure time and limited access to utilise the resources provided for online learning. Computer lab access is constantly under supervision and dependent on the availability of the DCS officials. Most of the participants said that it is difficult for them to access any online learning material in the absence of the DCS officials, subsequently access hours and time allocated to them remains unreliable. The ODL demand is increasing rapidly, therefore, for better improvement timeous effective assessment of online distance education that aligns heightening of online learning delivery is needed for learner outcome (Thiele 2003). If offender students are not given appropriate time to utilise their online learning material effectively there is a possibility that, some students will be left behind and possibly the potential to develop stress and anxiety. When offender students experience these challenges the Wellness Model as discussed in Chapter 2 state that emotional wellness may assist offender students to control their feelings and be aware when emotions are challenged. It is evident that offender students are affected by the limited time and other distractions such as scheduled rehabilitation programmes, leisure time, Correctional activities and lock up time therefore time management is important to enable them to catch up with time loss. Researchers such as Schunk (2005) and Zimmerman (2008) state that time management has a great influence on goal settings of an individual to achieve planned goals effectively without hindrances; such as studying environment; furthermore, there are numerous influences that can affect time management in online settings. Therefore, based on unforeseen distractions at Correctional facilities that may affect allocated online access, time management for offender students is a crucial feature for self-regulation in this regard.

### **5.3.2 Limited internet access for offender students at Correctional facilities**

Offender students argued that poor bandwidth lead to weak internet connectivity and limited internet access that compromises their learning. According to UNESCO (2009) ICT refers to various latest technologies that may be influential to enhance online learning on communication, organise information, access internet by using computer hardware and software, telephone and audio visuals. Subsequently, all the above-mentioned tools in online environment are important to have full access for effective learning. The challenges mentioned by offender students include downloading of study material online and submission of assignments as discussed in Chapter 4. These challenges concur with the barriers of online learning that Underson (2008) outlined as follows:

- (i) Online learning can be less flexible than thought even with the ability of asynchronous communication.

- (ii) Access to the internet can be a concern in less-developed nations.
- (iii) Access to the internet can be problematic for people with physical disability.

Online learning at Correctional facilities is less flexible because of certain risks and security factors that require offender students to adhere to. Furthermore, access to the internet is a great concern and problematic to offender students because the study material and submission of assignments are strictly online. Which then means, offender students must download study material and upload assignments online. If internet access is limited and restricted in South African Correctional facilities it then means offender students are unable to access their study material immediately after registration and in their private cells. In some states computers and certain devices are permitted for use in private cells (Summer 2009). In Norway prison internet is accessible to all inmates even in their private cells (James 2008). Though internet access is allowed, existing devices are inhibited in some other states such as Canada, inmates are not allowed to access internet of which this notion hinders inmates to connect the outside world let alone the study programmes. Therefore, South African Correctional facilities are not the only ones facing constraints on allowing offender students full internet access.

According to European conference on Prison Education and Training that was held in February (2010), one of the suggestions extensively acknowledged was that prisons are damaging inmates, therefore, to prevent possible further damage offenders must be afforded educational opportunities when they are incarcerated. In Chapter 4 the percentage of colleges that offender students are registered for is indicated on figure 4.5. The study revealed that most of the participants are studying undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications through Unisa. Although some of the participants are registered in different colleges internationally to enhance their knowledge. Furthermore, this may have potential improvement for offender students to be absorbed and regain entry into the society as Walklin (2000) suggests that inmates should be given appropriate skills to pursue further training on release for them to live a 'good and useful life'. Participant's preference is to have private internet that would contribute to their studies and use internet as a convenient tool to enhance learning. The South African government in 2013 launched the National Development Plan 2030 with the aim to address living lifestyles and various gaps among other aspects (NDP 2030, 2013). The improvement plan focuses on school infrastructure and provision of full access on fast bandwidth and human capacity. The schools and laboratories in correctional facilities are not given much priority to improve online learning and infrastructure of which the current situation contradicts with the NDP 2030. The findings of this study complement the study conducted by Takavarasha, Cilliers and Chinyamurindi (2018) where they attest that, there has been a determination from South African government to strive

on improving Information Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility which has not yet covered some of the individuals in various communities

and the millennial that must acquire basic computer literacy under difficult conditions. Furthermore, they alluded that lack of infrastructure has contributed, material and learning support at educational level. Contrary to that UNESCO (2003), emphasizes that information retrieval, individualised learning, group learning, and collaborative learning would be significantly enhanced in education through effective use of internet.

### **5.3.3 Poor administrative support services by Unisa and DCS staff**

The findings revealed that visibility of Unisa and DCS administrative staff has a negative impact on learning performance of offender students as they raised it as a great concern. Lack of frequent face to face interaction with administrative and academic staff from Unisa is perceived by the offender students as hindrance to learning. The offender student's views compliment what Ryan, KayHodson-Carlton and Ali (2005) stated that administrative support is the vital foundation to a sound online educational program. Subsequently administrative support entails assistance in a form of removing the obstacles that hinder guidance. Administrative support is based on notion of providing and adjusting training timely so that the requirements for services provided in online environment is adequately fulfilled (Restauri, 2004). Although the MoU was signed between the two institution Unisa and DCS to be valid for three years the purpose and obligations stipulated contradicts with what has been raised by offender students. The paragraph 4.1.4 of the MoU as discussed in chapter four is binding Unisa to give administrative support to the students at the DCS centre whereas paragraph 4.2.1.8 is stipulated as an obligation for DCS to provide computer literacy training to inmate to enable them to use online technology. Unisa in this MoU claim to provide career guidance, application and registration information to the inmates of which offender students believed that there is a poor administrative support services provided to them by both institutions. The findings complement what Hughes (2004) suggested that administrative information support should be available to students, such as registration orientation, technical support services, study skills assistance, career guidance, library services, and constant student formative and summative assessment. Currently one of the admission requirements for BEd Intermediate Phase qualification at Unisa requires an applicant to attain a clearance certificate from South African Police Services (SAPS) to disclose the type of the offence committed. Sensitive crime like rape may prolong or prohibit the offender to get expunged therefore career guidance from Unisa during application phase is critical so that offender students are aware of the changes that may restrict them and find it difficult to become educators after qualification completion when they are on parole. Lack of administrative support for on online learning and information sharing sessions with offender students may trigger and increase the emotional stress and anxiety as Briggs (2005) in chapter two alluded.

#### **5.3.4 Lack of training on online library services resulting in limited access to relevant articles for offender students**

Gone are the days where learners depended solely on library hardcopy textbooks. These days technology is more user friendly and systems to access articles, journals, eBooks, etc., online. In the findings it emerged that offender students struggle to use the online library catalogue to access articles, journals and to request books online. Participants indicated that the lack of training on how to use the library catalogue is hindrance for them. The views of the participants are supported by McPherson and Nunes (2004) who state that accessibility to technology resources is not enough if the training for students is not adequately addressed to prepare them to use these online resources efficiently hence training is crucial. Library training for offender students should not be overlooked on the digital platform. Unisa officials from library department should frequently visit the correctional facilities to provide training for offender students and empower them on how to use online library system effectively.

In the findings it emerged that offender students at correctional facilities are currently using laptops provided by Unisa for academic purposes and administration support. The availability for use of these laptops is entirely controlled by correctional officials and can only be utilised by offender students at certain times under supervision. The fact that cell phones at correctional facilities poses security risks and are prohibited by DCS, makes provision for Unisa mobile library services to deliver and collect textbooks requested online by offender students at correctional facilities. The above mentioned contradicts with the MoU signed by Unisa and DCS on 09 June 2017 where paragraph 4.2.2.6 indicates that “Unisa should provide training to identified DCS officials and students mentioned on applications related to Unisa Learning Management System. Whereas paragraph 4.2.2.5 of this MoU pledged to facilitate the dispatch of study material to identified DCS-Unisa Hubs to expedite delivery of learning material to students”. These mobile libraries are minibuses that have been converted into libraries. Offender students may use the opportunity to have access to request articles and textbooks, which will allow them to return textbooks on the next trip of the mobile library. This move may improve the interaction and relationship between offender students and Unisa library personnel.

According to a study conducted by Biko and Papadimitriou (2014), the initial mobile libraries were horse-driven carriages that were utilised to distribute books, which performed as mobile loaning libraries and ensure that books are available to people across local communities in remote rural areas.

This has shown the importance of mobile libraries that need to be made available to students. Mobile library services may meet offender students’ needs and diversification demands. The findings revealed that most of the participants depend on physical textbooks due to lack of training on how to use online library platforms. This is alarming amidst universities worldwide embarking



on online learning to mitigate the textbooks delay conundrum encountered by most students who buy and/or order those textbooks online. The study conducted by Hopkins and Farley (2015) complement these findings.

### **5.3.5 Online learning support offered for offender students at Correctional facilities**

Findings revealed that correctional service offered online learning support for offender students. It is evident that Information Communication Technology (ICT) can improve quality of content and pedagogy provided it is used appropriately to support teaching and learning enhancement (Anderson, 2008). It is alarming to discover that at this stint of technology restrictions on private laptops and internet access prohibits the support given for online learning in correctional facilities. Hughes (2004) augured that learners from distance learning institutions are more concern with easy ways of using online learning tools for services and available at their convenient time. Most of offender students revealed that they need private laptops and modems available and be used in their convenient time under the supervision of DCS officials to enhance their online learning, subsequently knowing the learner and learners' needs is crucial in online platform. Most of the offender students acknowledge that education may assist them to become empowered knowledgeable citizen and enable to alleviate their socio- economic needs. This notion complements with Wellness Model as discussed in chapter two. Furthermore, lack of resources for an example, printing facilities and scanners at correctional facilities is one of the challenges faced by offender students. This trend is not unique or either new in South African correctional facilities many studies revealed the concern of inadequate resources for learning programmes in correctional schools (Sanford and Foster 2006: 607). It is evident that one of the key lessons thus far is that, the issue of the offender students within the online learning university is a multifaceted challenge which cannot be solely resolved by technological interventions only. The users of these technologies require time, resources, encouraging learning environment, energy and self-motivation to engage it.

### **5.3.6 Online student's discussion forums and relevant devices that are regarded as beneficial for online module support**

Participants interviewed in this study shared the benefits of joining online group discussion forums that compliment and promote social, emotional and intellectual wellness of the offender students as discussed in chapter two and engaged with other students through online discussions. The study revealed that some of the participants did not see any value in participating in online discussion. Unisa uses formal discussion forums called *myunisa* Learning Management System (LMS) for students to engage, interact and communicate constructively. Students use online discussion forum as an opportunity to exchange ideas on course content and discuss online assignments and engaged with their lecturers. Discussion online forums are active student platforms and occur anytime that suites the student's availability and location to participate effectively. The most beneficial factor on online discussion forum is the adoption in traditional

learning environment complement face-to-face teaching that enhances educational strategy in higher education. The online discussion forums are used as an indicator of student's performance to interact freely with other peers anytime indeed, this has been affirmed by Moore and Kearsley (2012) highlighting the learning benefits on face to face and virtual where student's interact without any restrictions and have an autonomy to study anywhere on their own time. Subsequently the expectations of these online discussion forums are to impart constructive knowledge and be beneficial to learners through enhancement of critical skills and ability to analyse their work without any interference from the lecturer, though learners expect guidance and support from the lectures (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

Indeed, various technical challenges that prohibits offender students in connecting on internet and time allocation constrains affect devoted time spent on these discussion forums as discussed in chapter four. Offender students opted to form WhatsApp group to interact with their peers and discuss course content. Through this virtual platform offender students interact with other peers outside correctional facilities. The course content discussed in these groups is not counted as a year mark therefore students are losing to engage in WhatsApp platform though it is very effective for them. From findings it emerged that the participants used alternative ways to engage in WhatsApp group which they said during the day in correctional facilities they do not have ample time to utilise interact effectively with other peers because of various reasons discussed in chapter four. The *myunisa* discussion forum requires internet connectivity that is giving them challenges of poor connectivity or not to connect on internet for few days therefore they miss some of the online interactive discussions. Participants indicated that they do not have an access on *myunisa* in the evening because the laboratories in correctional facilities are closed. This practise contradicts with what Moore and Kearsley (2012) who believe that distance education can be independent of time and place that is one of the key strengths of distance learning environment.

### **5.3.7 Accommodation of offender student's learning styles and software updates**

According to offender students interviewed during the study, reading study material online on laptop screens is quite challenging for them, therefore, some of them prefer to print the study material and make some notes. It is evident that learners have different learning styles that usually focus on different learning approaches. Therefore, it means that learners are not the same and cannot be treated the same. Fleming (2001) defines learning styles as a person's choice of defining the gathered information, arranging and thinking about information. Such behaviour relates to psychological, intellectual being, and effective spheres of relations with learning settings. Aragon, Johnson and Shaik (2002) attest that learning style evolves learners' ideal way to have, certain approaches and to recall instructional information which is associate to motivational information-processing habits of the learner. If the learners are struggling to read study material online on laptops screens that are provided by correctional officials when they are

available which means their study styles and performance is compromised and be conserved slightly poor. Of which it contradicts with what the Department of Basic Education (2014, p.20) that emphasises on inclusion of all learners with different learning style, needs and ability.

The study conducted by Richmond & Cummings (2005) shown the important relations between the student learning style, study behaviours and performance in online learning have offered an understanding into the different style of delivery or output. Subsequently the result of their study has been asserted that there is a substantial relationship between learning styles and average scores as learning performance. In this case the offender students only, access laptops provided by correctional officials to access their online study material on limited time and hours allocated to them per day. This means that connection between their learning styles and their performance is severely affected. Mitchell (2000) alludes that learning styles may be an important indicator of how effective different strategies can be applied for different types of learners enrolled in online modules.

This is the reason offender students registered online modules request to have private laptops and modems to use in their own private time under supervision of correctional officials. The more hours and ways of study they have on online modules can improve the relationship between their learning styles and their performance. This concur with the findings of the study conducted by Richmond and Cumming (2005) that can be observed as an evidence that learning styles can influence the indicator for success for online modules that are carried out through an online synchronise system in Distance Learning (DL) courses.

More often computers and laptops require software updates to enhance compatibility. These updates contain certain changes to improve capabilities and stability of any applications running on computers. Most of the participants raised concerns that the laptops and computers in their laboratories are not frequently updated as a result it is difficult for them to download and open referred links. This is in contrary with the MoU signed by both institutions in 09 June 2017 where DCS and Unisa obligates to work closely with DCS Government Information Technology officer (GITO) in providing Information Technology (IT) services and ensure effective operationalization of the Unisa LMS. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that different learning styles of the offender students may not necessarily be accommodated based on litigations in DCS.

#### **5.3.8 The exposure of offender students to conducive learning environment**

Findings revealed that the DCS established computer learning centres for offender students in different Correctional centres. These learning computer centres are equipped with laptops as discussed in chapter four. Though these learning computer centres are established the environment at Correctional facilities is not conducive for learning due to various conditions and

security risk factors. DCS strategic plan 2015/2016–2020 document acknowledges the challenges faced in the Correctional services environment in South Africa result in significant residual risk of death, violence and escapes despite various mitigating measures furthermore, limited personnel, conditions of overcrowding, old facilities contributed to expose offender students in hostile environment. Inclusiveness suggests accommodating conducive learning environment and learning programmes to address inclusion on special needs for all learners by certifying that all individuals has a right to belong to certain communal settings, furthermore it promotes equity and access to quality education (United Nations, Economic and Social Commissioner for Asia and Pacific 2000). Department of Education (2000) and Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009) complement access to quality education as discussed in chapter two of this study. Therefore, learning environment in South African Correctional facilities should be flexible to diversity and provide conducive learning environment for offender students of which it is contrary to above mentioned policy.

Learning environment in South African correctional facilities should not solely rely on government rather let the politicians, alumnae and businesspeople and community at large be involved to improve the learning environment of the correctional facilities for the betterment of education system and civil rights for offender students. Council of European (2006) affirms that it is the duty of prison services, politicians and policy makers to guarantee that offenders' rights are met. Therefore, in Norway access to education is a fundamental civil right including offenders. Indeed, Norway has a good economic standing of being the "dreamland"; its welfare society well known as rich in oil, high quality education system and the state provides for health, childcare and emphasises on cultural equality and safety of the community. Subsequently Norway is already low crime rate and recidivism below 20%. Compare to United States where crime rates emerge at approximately 75% (Council of European 2006).

Furthermore, Norway introduced a model that is known as a system that connects people in prison that belong to the same welfare organisations and introduced a unified sentence with the believe that and individual belongs to the same community before and after the imprisonment and should be treated with respect. The DCS in South Africa promotes Social Integration by involving the community to form an integral part of the rehabilitation of offenders on parole with the aim of reintegrating them as law-abiding citizens.

#### **5.4 THE USE OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study examined Moore's Transactional Distance theory and assisted the researcher to understand how some of the primary concepts pertaining distance learning programmes, distance between learner and teacher and learner's autonomy are addressed in correctional facilities.

Thirteen interviewed participants were Unisa students who registered for online learning modules. As alluded in Chapter 4 of this study, participants suggested various online learning programmes and gadgets that may be useful if utilised at correctional facilities, however because of the restrictions and security measures that prohibits full access to the internet and use of these online gadgets. Subsequently, the transitional distance theory was adopted to determine the extent in which the theory justify excellence in a specified learning programme. However, the researcher viewed and concur with the findings of the study conducted by Aluko, Hendrikz and Fraser (2011) stating that transitional distance theory should look beyond distance learning programmes and include support provided to learners such as orientations after registration in Unisa context, tutor support systems, mobile library support and career guidance. The findings of this study revealed that the distance between the learner and the lecturer poses various learning challenges and as a result, offender students felt excluded and frustrated when they lack academic and administrative support. Furthermore, this theory promotes autonomy of the learners from different spaces whether they are behind bars or outside correctional facilities. However, this study assisted the researcher to understand that offender students do not have the privilege of autonomy as they need to adhere to rules and regulations of the correctional facilities.

Furthermore, the transitional distance theory helped the researcher to understand that though its primary emphases is on distance learning and the gap between the learner and the instructor, offender students may not be fully supported to utilise online learning technologies to interact with their lectures via Skype, Microsoft Teams and any other relevant technology because of the correctional environment that is not suitable for learning and internet poor connectivity. Alternatively, this contradicts with the Correctional Service Strategic Planning Report (2018) where section 3 stresses on DCS to match the rate at which technology is evolving in general. Furthermore, the report encourages DCS to leverage on the initiatives of the 4th Industrial Revolution and use technology for the betterment of the citizens. Contrary to DCS that prohibits offender students to have full access on internet and other technology devices, 4th Industrial Revolution may take many years to be incorporated at correctional facilities.

Given the move by Higher Education intuitions towards online mode of education, it is critical that offender students be accommodated in this new dispensation by attending more online webinar workshops as an academic support for offender students to bridge the gap of face to face interaction. Thought the policies are in place but the practice seems to be violating DCS policies and restrict online learning by limiting internet access, this theoretical framework was used as a mean to analyse data.

The second theoretical framework that was incorporated to this study was Bill Hettler's Wellness Model of 1976 which focuses on six dimensions such as physical, emotional, occupational,

spiritual, intellectual and social. These six dimensions constitute on how a person become aware of interconnectedness by applying the model and contribute to positive healthy living and enable offender students to cope despite of the correctional service hostile environment. Therefore, the theory assisted the researcher to understand that offender students, by the virtue of being incarcerated at correctional facility sentenced for many years may aggravate many feelings of, despair, fear doubts and dislocation and use their emotions to act differently therefore it is necessary for one to be spiritual connected to the natural forces that exist in the universe. As alluded in chapter two most of the offender students attends church services to revive the inner self. Offender students indicated that during their leisure time they play games some go to the gym and exercise to keep fit this contribute to physical wellness as it encourages building of physical strength. The intellectual dimension recognises one's creativeness, expansion of knowledge and skills hence the offender students are studying to enhance their knowledge and read magazines and books. The researcher learnt that the wellness model is important to one's life. One need to build friendship and have family members for support hence some of the offender students rely on their family members to encourage and support them. As alluded in chapter four of this study family members assist them to bring study material and printed articles for studying. Furthermore, intellectual and emotional support gives the confidence on offender students by showing interest to study through higher learning institutions. Furthermore, the socio-economic aspect encourages offender students to have an opportunity to earn living for themselves and their families

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitations of this study are as follows:

- The study was conducted in one of the Correctional facilities in the country which may differ from those in remote areas.
- The scope of this study was limited to offender students registered for online modules at Unisa excluding correctional officials.
- The researcher being limited by having no access to the female section laboratory.
- Service providers at the Correctional facility disrupted the planned schedule for data collection; due to maintenance in the male section which led to postponement of the session; as a result, some inmates did not show interest the following day.
- Internet connection was very slow to open *myunisa* and *mylife* account.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The aim of this study was to explore experiences of offender students who registered for online modules at Unisa from Correctional facilities in Gauteng. The study revealed that offender students experienced various challenges in Correctional facilities.

- Further research should be done to determine the relevant online gadgets to be used at correctional facilities without contravening correctional security.
- The question raised by this study is that, is the different learning styles of the offender students accommodated by online learning?
- Further research with more focus on extending hours allocated to offender students to access online learning material.
- DCS should allocate staff the role of being responsible for the process of studying by offenders.
- Latest technology gadgets such as HUAWEI 5G CPE Pro as an addition to the gadgets supplied to offender students for easier learning material access should be considered as it makes internet connection faster and easier.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion the researcher echoes the same sentiments as those echoed by offender students regarding the number of challenges, they experience through studying online modules. The aim of the research was to explore experiences of students who registered online modules at Unisa from the Correctional facilities. The identified challenges experienced by offender students can only be resolved through commitment from the concerned parties since the 4IR is here, and ODeL is the preferred manner of teaching and learning.

DCS and Unisa need to set out a workable solution in addressing the issue raised by the offender students relating to time allocated to studies, contact between tutors and students, and access to internet. The students are negatively affected by the inconsistent allocations of time and internet access owing to makeshift arrangements that rest entirely on correctional officers. The dire nature of all the challenges experienced by offender students when intending to improve themselves can't only be address by the staff at DCS but a combination of Unisa, department of education and DCS staff.

The study successfully achieved its broad aim and addressed the main question and sub-questions. The researcher hopes that there would be further research to aid the situation at correctional facilities relating to studying.



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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

How many hours allocated to you to have access to a computer?

1. Do you think these hours allocate for your studies are enough? Explain
2. Do you have access to internet?
3. Which time is best for you to study?
4. How do you spend most of your spare time?
5. Why do you think studying alone or as a group is important?
6. How do you submit your online assignments?
7. What are the challenges do you experience to access your online study material?
8. What are the technical challenges experienced when logging onto myUnisa and mylife account?
9. Share your experience on how you access articles for your studies
10. What kind of challenges do you encounter when you access library online?
11. How effective is your involvement with other students on discussion forum?

List interventions you recommend supporting students registered online modules

**Appendix B: Open-ended questionnaire**

**1. Express your own views which strategies may be used to support offender students on online module/s.**

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**2. Elaborate on support that may be provided to offender students studying in Unisa**

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**3. Share your own experience on challenges experienced when you miss the due date to submit online assignment.**

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**4. In your experience elaborate on interventions that should be recommended to support offender students in Correctional facilities who registered online modules**

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**Appendix C: CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the audio recording of the interviews for research data collection

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print):

Pindiwe Christoleen Seloma

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## **Appendix D: A LETTER REQUESTING AN ADULT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

29 Landrose Mare  
Unisa regional office  
Polokwane  
0699  
8 January 2018

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Pindiwe Christoleen Seloma, I am doing research under the supervision of Prof Meahabo Magano, a Professor in the Department of Psychology towards a Master's in Education at the University of South Africa. I do not have funding for this study. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled experiences of offender students who registered for online modules at Unisa - a case study of Gauteng Correctional facilities.

This study is expected to collect important information that may be beneficial to students who are under correctional supervision. The reason for the invitation is that you are currently registered with Unisa as a student. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic.

I obtained your contact details from Correctional Service educators. The permission was obtained by requesting an approval from the Research Committee of Department of Correctional Services. Your personal information will be protected and not be disclosed in this study. Only twelve participants will participate in this study.

The study involves semi-structured interviews. Face to face, interviews will be conducted with participants.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

The benefit of the study to the participants may have an influence on Unisa academics and Unisa assessment policies to adjust the method of assessment on online modules. The study may have a potential to influence Correctional Service policies to adjust policies on computer internet access for students who are under correctional supervision that are currently registered online modules. Students who are under correctional supervision may have an opportunity to have more alternative ways to complete online module assignments and examinations.

No potential risk is anticipated however, in the event that participants need counselling because of the interview discussions, such participants will be referred to the available counsellors within the Correctional facilities.

Your name will not be recorded anywhere, only a number, code or pseudo-name will be used. No one apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Furthermore, no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to

in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. The supervisor and I are the only individuals who will have access to the recorded tapes.

The personal information of the participants will be recorded and stored confidentially, under no circumstances will the information be disclosed. However, the findings of the study may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings.

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at home in Gauteng for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software programme.

There will be no remuneration for the participants for this study. Students who are under correctional supervision are within the Correctional facilities therefore no travelling cost involved for the participants.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of, Unisa Ethic Research Committee. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Ms. Pindiwe Christoleen Seloma on (015) 290 3408 or email or email [pseloma@unisa.ac.za](mailto:pseloma@unisa.ac.za) . The findings of this study will be accessible for a period of five years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact my supervisor Prof M D Magano, [maganmd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maganmd@unisa.ac.za)

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my supervisor Prof M D Magano, [maganmd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maganmd@unisa.ac.za), and at 012 429 4115

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

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Ms Pindiwe Christoleen Seloma



## Appendix E: Observation Schedule

Site location:	
The time allocated to offender students while using computer.	
To observe if offender students have access to internet	
To observe the interaction with other offender students while using computers	
Access to technological tools	
Types of gadgets used	
Purpose of using the technological tool	
Supervision by DCS personnel when technological tools are used	

**Appendix F: Data analysis coding (Data analyses for interviews with offender students)**

Question	Participant 1 Thabo	Participant 2 Sipho	Participant 3 Thato	Participant 4 Zweli
2. Do you think hours allocate for your studies are enough? Explain	five hours and inconsistency inadequate to have enough time.	No hours are not enough	we do other rehabilitation programmes For studying it's not enough.	it is not enough
3. Do you have access to internet?	Yes, from computer centre	It is limited,	Yes, we do have an internet access challenge again it is not guaranteed	No internet
4. Which time is best for you to study?	study at night and in the morning	to study anytime.	it's when the prison is closed	In the evening.
5. How do you spend most of your spare time?	I have to detox , exercise, Participate in book club, I facilitate, I teach	Play cheers, when I am in my cell I watch movies,	Studying	I go to gym.
6. Why do you think studying alone or as a group is important?	you need to use both method.	to study as group.	Both it is important	Both
7. How do you submit your online assignments?	It is online via myunisa	I submit them online here in the lab.	submitted online	I use this hub to submit
8. What are the challenges experienced when you access online study material?	not having an opportunity to subscribing to other private sources.	I do not see any problem	we have limited access. unable to download, when you download	We do not have problem.

	system is complicated to access on your own.		the system will kick you out. access to personal computer	
9. What are the technical challenges experienced when logging onto myUnisa and mylife account?	mylife account is working okay	I don't have problem logging on myunisa or mylife account	Logging-in no challenges. On mylife not much challenges	During the day it is very much difficult because of the network.
10. Share your experience on how you access articles for your studies	it is difficult to access them online. navigating on the process/ system, it takes time to access them	No problems I can open time is limited	one will not have enough time	It is difficult, same problem of network.
11. What kind of challenges do you encounter when you access library online?	needs training	I buy hard copies	not successful, I think for me it was difficult.	Poor Connectivity
12. How effective is your involvement with other students on discussion forums	we do not have private email	We have WhatsApp group with students doing the same module	here we have limited time.	we engaged and use cell phone.
13. List interventions you recommend supporting students	let them not to register more than three modules	to have internet access 24 hours.	Have material in a soft copy and videos of the same content so	The policy of the prison they say we are allowed to study until 10:00 pm,

registered online modules			that they can listen.	
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Participant 5 Themba</b>	<b>Participant 6 Thabang</b>	<b>Participant 7 Elias</b>	<b>Participant 8 Terror</b>
2. Do you think hours allocate for your studies are enough? Explain	Not enough this online module is a difficult one.	We need more hours.	The hours are enough	No hours are not enough
3. Do you have access to internet?	have access in the lab but it is slow	Yes, but not enough it is not conducive	Yes, they established this hub we received lab tops from Unisa	Yes, I use the hub lab
4. Which time is best for you to study?	At night, or in the evening it is quiet	I normally study in the morning	From 6pm, because I am relaxed.	I prefer during the night, during the day there are too many activities.
5. How do you spend most of your spare time?	Studying, gym, Prison rehabilitation programmes	I go to gym attend rehabilitation programmes	Reading newspaper and singing in church choir	prioritising my study
6. Why do you think studying alone or as a group is important?	Study as a group is very much important	I prefer both	Studying alone you can focus, while studying as group you can discuss and share ideas	I prefer studying alone
7. How do you submit your online assignments?	I submit my assignments in the lab online	I submit my assignments in the lab online	I submit online unless the system is offline	I submit here at study centre

8. What are the challenges experienced when you access online study material?	I cannot open the provided link. To download this software is a nightmare	To access study material is not a problem.	The problem is network it is very slow	Printing facilities, I cannot read on the screen.
9. What are the technical challenges experienced when logging onto myUnisa and mylife account?	system is too slow and sometimes you come here and leave without downloading. I had challenge to have private computer.	Internet connectivity, it takes time to connect	The problem is the network	Network problems you must wait for 30 minutes.
10. Share your experience on how you access articles for your studies	understandable when I access my own video	I access articles through recommended website	I access those article through recommended website	I can say, I am fortunate member of the family assist me
11. What kind of challenges do you encounter when you access library online?	I don't know how to use it. I have never access it.	I have never use library online. I buy text books	I don't use library I buy text books from the book shop	my family member buys and bring it for me
12. How effective is your involvement with other students on discussion forums	we end up having Whatsapp group	discussion is helping	I am not that much effective	Very much effective
13. List interventions you recommend to support students registered online modules	CAD161S we rely on Unisa to access this software	Certain software need to be installed in these laptops.	at list if DCS and Unisa can assist us with availability of officials on full time basis	SRC of the institution must help us they are not visible.

Questions	Participant 9 Terror	Participant 10 Florence	Participant 11 Cathy	Participant 12 Jabu
2. Do you think hours allocate for your studies are enough? Explain	No hours are not enough.	Not enough, required more time to be online.	for me four hours per day is not enough	Hours allocated for studies are not enough
3. Do you have access to internet?	Yes during allocated time in the centre only access in the hub	Yes	Yes, signal is terrible this is the fourth day without internet access.	We do have internet access, but it is limited to Unisa sites
4. Which time is best for you to study?	when prison is closed	Mornings while I am still fresh	In the evenings.	It is when its lockup time
5. How do you spend most of your spare time?	Studying and listening to music in my cell	required to read a lot of tax study material online.	dream about what I want to do when I am out of here.	I am a facilitator teach accounting during the day
6. Why do you think studying alone or as a group is important?	When I am alone.	In a study group	I think study in a group is important	study in a group is beneficial because we share information,
7. How do you submit your online assignments?	Through computer centre	Here in Unisa - Hub	I submit on myunisa and I used my cell mate's modern	We come to the hub and submit if officials are available
8. What are the challenges you experienced when you access online study material?	not all of us have access in private computer	Poor signal. Myunisa system is very slow.	the slow internet, short hours if we busy and officials want to	To access it with limited time. difficult some time we do not

		I requested my family to print for me.	go home, you have to pack your things and leave and close the centre	have access at all.
9. What are the technical challenges experienced when logging onto myunisa and mylife account?	Internet sometimes it is very slow, sometimes it is not working at all.	when the system is hanging	internet connectivity that is giving us problems it is slow	sometimes internet connectivity is down or the speed is very slow
10. Share your experience on how you access articles for your studies	You research according to the subject that is relevant	we have a bad signal, very slow, my cousin downloaded for me	If you don't have access from your family no one will offer help	internet connectivity that is giving us problems it is slow
11. What kind of challenges do you encounter when you access library online?	I tried to check one book, but I was not successful.	slow system, access slow internet connection, spend 30 minutes trying to connect	No challenges, I use unisa catalogue, the system is user friendly.	I do not use library online.
12. How effective is your involvement with other students on discussion forums	I am active on discussion forums.	Yes!! it is helping me it also gives you a chance to discuss with other students	we don't have enough time to interact with others it is time consuming.	We form WhatsApp group and discuss with other students
13. List interventions you recommend to support students registered online modules	Computer to use it in our private cell.	beg lecturers, that we do not have free internet access like students outside.	DCS must allow us to use modems and computers/ laptop.	Access to a computer fulltime and access to printers

	Full time access on internet will help			
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Participant 13 Linda</b>			
2. Do you think hours allocate for your studies are enough? Explain	Not at all			
3. Do you have access to internet?	Yes, sometime the network is not accessible. not allowed to have private internet.			
4. Which time is best for you to study?	it is better to study at night it is quiet time			
5. How do you spend most of your spare time?	I study all the time go to gym			
6. Why do you think studying alone or as a group is important?	I normally engage with other students			
7. How do you submit your online assignments?	using hub to submit them.			
8. What are the challenges experienced when you access online study material?	it is noisy we cannot concentrate			



9. What are the technical challenges experienced when logging onto myunisa and mylife account?	I never experience any problem			
10. Share your experience on how you access articles for your studies	to access journals, no one has a knowledge on how to access it.			
11. What kind of challenges do you encounter when you access library online?	they responded very late			
13. List interventions you recommend to support students registered online modules	lecturers are forcing us to join discussion group forums			

**Appendix G: Data analysis coding (Analysis Open Ended Questions for offender students)**

Questions	Participants 1 Thabo	Participants 2 Sipho	Participants 3 Thato	Participants 4 Zweli
1. Express your own views which strategies you may use to support offender students on online module/s	send tutors to give orientation offer, training to students on how to use online library	Give students 24 hours access for internet in our cell	through use of videos interaction and optional recording to send the disc for library process online. officials that deals with students need support	Need enough time to access internet
2. Elaborate on support that may be provided to offender students studying at Unisa	to offer some training to students	DCS, must provide access for internet while in our cell	We use radios which is less risk to Correctional system we can have MP4.	conducive space to study online
3. Share your own experience on challenges experience when you miss the due date to submit online assignment	never missed	Never experience	Never experience	For three days waiting for hub, it was closed
4. In your experience elaborate on interventions that should be recommended to support offender	own modems used under the supervision	allow us to use internet in our own time	Unisa, to provide someone	DCS policy

Questions	Participant 5 Themba	Participant 6 Thabang	Participant 7 Theo	Participant 8 Elias
1. Express your own views which strategies you may use to support offender students on online module/s	upgrade internet connectivity Make necessary software available.	Appoint more educational officials to assist. more time to access the internet	provide good internet and hard copies for study material	Unisa SRC needs to engage with students. feel isolated
2. Elaborate on support that may be provided to offender students studying at Unisa	Face to face intervention during registration period by Unisa staff	more time to access the internet	tutorial video they might be useful.	Staff and SRC of Unisa needs to consult students demanding
3. Share your own experience on challenges experience when you miss the due date to submit online assignment	never experienced	stressed but accepted the situation. lost year mark	never had such experienced	never missed
4. In your experience elaborate on interventions that should be recommended to support offender	Make relevant software available	official available to assist	Downloading needs a software	The SRC of the institution need to intervene
Questions	Participant 9 Terror	Participant 10 Florence	Participant 11 Cathy	Participant 12 Jabu
1. Express your own views which strategies you may	full time access to computer usage.	Allow computer after lock-up time	Tutors to come to prison to assists students	limited time granted to use Unisa hub

use to support offender students on online module/s	Allow private laptop in our cells.			
2. Elaborate on support that may be provided to offender students studying at Unisa	Balance between prison programmes and academic studies	one on one consultations with professors	Printing services Mobile library services	full access on computer
3. Share your own experience on challenges experience when you miss the due date to submit online assignment	never missed	not yet missed	when an official is sick or leave	submitted late
4. In your experience elaborate on interventions that should be recommended to support offender students	to have personal computer	Tutors to come see students	need visits from Unisa staff	right to have personal computer 24 hours
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Participant 13 Linda</b>			
1. Express your own views which strategies you may use to support offender students on online module/s	Unisa should effectively interact with prison official personal computers including modems			
2. Elaborate on support that may	Unisa should constantly send			

<p>be provided to offender students studying at Unisa</p>	<p>staff to the hub at prison to monitor access</p>			
<p>3. Share your own experience on challenges experience when you miss the due date to submit online assignment</p>	<p>It is frustrating to miss a due date. particularly because of year mark is an expectation</p>			
<p>4. In your experience elaborate on interventions that should be recommended to support offender students</p>	<p>personal computers including modems. Effective communication with lecturers. Officials must refrain from consistent half day</p>			

## Appendix H: Approval letter from DCS



### correctional services

Department:  
Correctional Services  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poynter's Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie De Bruyn Street, PRETORIA  
Tel (012) 307 2770

**Ms PC Seloma**  
**29 Landrose Mare**  
**Unisa Regional Office**  
**Polokwane**  
**0699**

Dear Ms PC Seloma

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES ON: "CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY OFFENDER STUDENTS WHO REGISTERED FOR ONLINE MODULES AT UNISA. A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES"**

It is with pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services on the above topic has been approved.

Your attention is drawn to the following:

- The relevant Regional and Area Commissioners where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- Your internal guide will be **Ms M Johnson: Director Skills Development, Head Office.**
- You are requested to contact her at telephone number (012) 305 2424 before the commencement of your research.
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times.
- Your identity document/passport and this approval letter should be in your possession when visiting the correctional centres.
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".
- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits, however the audio recorder is allowed.
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the DCS REC Administration for assistance at telephone number (012) 307 2770.

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully

**ND SIHLEZANA**  
**DC: POLICY COORDINATION & RESEARCH**

**DATE:** 06/08/2018

## Appendix I: Ethical Clearance Certificate



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2018/03/14

Ref: 2018/03/14/36859605/21/MC

Dear Mrs Seloma

Name: Mrs PC Seloma

Student: 36859605

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2018/03/14 to 2021/03/14

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs PC Seloma  
E-mail address: pseloma@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 72 923 3643

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof MD Magano  
E-mail address: maganmd@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 12 429 4115

**Title of research:**

**Challenges experienced by offender students who registered for online modules at UNISA: A case study of Gauteng correctional facilities**

**Qualification:** M Ed in Inclusive Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2018/03/14 to 2021/03/14.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **2018/03/14** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
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www.unisa.ac.za

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2021/03/14**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2018/03/14/36859605/21/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



**Dr M Claassens**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
 mcdtc@netactive.co.za



**Prof V McKay**  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
 Mckayvi@unisa.ac.za

 Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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## Appendix J: Editing Certificate

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### Bancon Independent Editors

REF: EDITING OF MINI-DISSERTATION

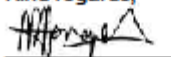
DATE: 04 / June / 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to confirm that Pindiwe C Seloma (Student Number: 36859605) submitted her Master of Education mini dissertation entitled "CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY OFFENDER STUDENTS WHO REGISTERED FOR ONLINE MODULES AT UNISA: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES" for language editing to the undersigned. Hence, the document has been duly proofread and edited for grammatical and technical errors. It is hoped that if all the editorial aspects addressed and recommended therein are to be meticulously attended to, the target readers of this work will find the document free from error, enjoyable to read and easy to understand.

FOR ANY ENQUIRIES RELATING TO THE ABOVE, PLEASE CONTACT US DURING OFFICE HOURS

Kind regards,



Mafeye Morapedi (Director of Bangwadi Consultant)  
*(MA English Studies, Editing: Principles & Practice, BAH Applied Language & Multilingual Studies, BA Contemporary English & Multilingual Studies)*

Reg No: (2018/091620/07)

## Appendix K: Turnitin report

