

## Dual-Mode Universities: A Possible Answer for South Africa's Higher Education Crisis?

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**ABSTRACT** Violent student unrests over the escalating costs of and a scarcity of places in South African higher education institutions necessitated research into the conversion of single-mode, face-to-face universities into dual-mode universities as a possible solution for the higher education crisis in South Africa. The objective of this literature study is to highlight issues that may impede or promote the expansion of dual-mode universities, such as the perceived cost-effectiveness of dual-mode universities, the changing role of academic and administrative staff in dual-mode universities, the need for institutional support, and the role played by a specialised distance education unit to facilitate the dual-mode provision of higher education. The study found that there is resistance among academics and administrative staff to embrace dual-mode universities. Recommendations are made.

### INTRODUCTION

The collapse of apartheid in 1994 was followed by numerous attempts to change the discriminatory higher education landscape in South Africa. A new “transformative” higher education system entails making more spaces available for previously disadvantaged students and addressing financial barriers to higher educational opportunities (Wangenge-Ouma 2012:832). Tertiary enrolment in South Africa has increased by 15 percent over the last 20 years (Kotecha 2012). Despite an increase of almost 55000 available places at South African universities over the past decade (Savides et al. 2015), the system “remains small, and competition for places ... is high” (Kotecha 2012). The newspaper report by Savides et al. (2015) mentions, for example, that only 10 percent of applicants at the Universities of Kwa-Zulu-Natal and Johannesburg were accepted for enrolment in 2015. More than 51000 applied during the same year at the University of the Witwatersrand, which could accept only 6255. Notwithstanding the fact that some of the applicants did not fulfil the minimum requirements to enter the programmes for which they applied (Savides et al. 2015), the above information illustrates that the demand for higher education in South Africa far exceeds the supply. Owing to an increase in funds for previously disadvantaged groups, including the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) introduced in 1996, enrolments in South African higher education by the aforementioned group expanded. The growth in enrolments in the 1995-2004 period required gov-

ernment to set aside large sums of money to finance this growth. The growth in enrolments was not financially sustainable and from 2001 onwards, state allocation to higher education started to decrease. Related to declining state funding is the practice by South African universities to annually increase tuition fees to compensate for insufficient public funding and NSFAS's failure to effectively support poor students (Wangenge-Ouma 2012). The current funding context that excludes many poor students from entering higher education, and the lack of spaces for the ever increasing demand for higher education has resulted in numerous violent student protests in South Africa (Wangenge-Ouma 2012; Makoni 2015; Nicolson 2016). The announcement by Blade Nzimande, the South African Minister of Higher Education, that there will be an 8 percent increase in tuition fees for the 2017 academic year was the impetus for the violent “Fees Must Fall” student uprisings at nearly all South African higher education institutions during the latter half of 2016 (Lyster 2016; Nicolson 2016). The destructive student unrests highlight the need for South African higher education institutions to investigate ways international education systems cost-effectively address the ever increasing demands for affordable higher education. Using an international comparative perspective, this paper will examine the feasibility of transforming (some) South African universities from single-mode to dual-mode institutions as a possible answer to the current higher education crisis.

The need for change in the South African higher education system is emphasised by Habib (2016: 15):

*South Africa's higher education system must be flexible enough to allow institutions to progress from one institutional variety to another. ... Societies' needs change over time, and institutions must be given the right to evolve in order to become responsive to these needs. Moreover, allowing institutional evolution enables university executives to be more pragmatic in their current decision-making since their institutions are not forever limited to being one or other institutional type.*

Furthermore, in reaction to student unrests in South Africa, Moore (2016:65) writes:

*Why in the twenty-first century ... is a relatively poor country spending money on such a backward, medieval solution for education as herding people on to a campus, mimicking the model of higher education in older richer countries, stuck with a legacy of sleeping accommodations, dining rooms, and entertainment and leisure facilities, instead of ... reinvesting resources in a system that would give a superior experience of learning, probably linked to work, to greatly increased numbers of students, delivered through technology to their homes and workplaces?*

In recent years, public institutions of higher education in Europe, North America and Africa have faced reductions in investment and other resource allocations provided by their governments. These reductions in income have coincided with greater demands being made on these institutions in terms of an increase in the number of students deciding on tertiary-level training (Ravjee 2007; Tau 2008; Fyle et al. 2012; King 2012; Muyinda 2012; Simango 2016). This has resulted in single-mode universities transforming into dual-mode institutions in a number of countries as a way "to make up for this loss of income" (Fyle et al. 2012). King (2012:13) mentions that the need to survive financially in a competitive higher education milieu flooded with "for-profit distance education entrepreneurial companies", often motivates Australian universities to change from a single to a dual-mode form of delivery. Rumble (2012:43) advocates a dual-mode approach to higher education in countries where the "aim is to massify the provision of higher education, and/or to reduce costs through the economics of scale".

The greater demand for tertiary education and the consequent need to expand tertiary education and financial imperatives are not the only

reasons for the expansion of dual-mode universities. Dual-mode universities' off-campus programmes, such as at the University Sains in Malaysia (Lentell 2012) and at the Makerere University in Uganda (Muyinda 2012), are committed to catering for working people who have not had the opportunity to study full-time. Most of teachers training colleagues in Zambia, as well as the University of Zambia converted from single to dual-mode institutions (Simango 2016). The majority of the students at the Zambian institutions are teachers trying to improve their qualifications in pursuit of promotion and/or salary increases. Dual-mode universities in Australia (Lentell 2012) and Namibia (Bezuidenhout 2015) are also required to serve geographically isolated students. In addition, Oladejo and Gesinde (2014) list the following benefits for universities adapting a dual-mode approach: through DE, universities can accommodate low enrolments over a long period of time; make the best use of a limited number of lecturers available; deal with political, cultural and religious considerations; meet the needs of populations affected by violence, war and Diaspora; and make learning possible, even when group assemblies are banned. King (2012:17) furthermore found that universities opt for the dual-mode form of delivery because it enables universities to become internationally competitive. According to him, dual-mode universities can become "a transnational alternative to on-campus recruitment whereby students from less wealthy backgrounds could enrol in Australian programmes without leaving their home countries".

The above account has highlighted the reasons why higher education institutions all over the world have transformed from single-mode to dual-mode institutions. Whilst acknowledging the uniqueness of each of the abovementioned countries' higher education systems, similarities with the South African situation cannot be denied. South Africa's universities need to be more cost-effective; expand the provision of higher education; and accommodate potential students who are working full-time, living in isolated or rural areas or wishing to improve their qualification. It is therefore appropriate to investigate issues all over the world that may either impede or promote the transformation of single-mode universities into dual-mode universities. Lessons learnt from the international higher education landscape may ease the higher education transformation process in South Africa.

Dual-mode universities are not uncommon nor a new phenomenon in the South African education landscape. The numbers of DE students enrolled at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria – traditional face-to-face universities – increased by almost 500 percent between 1993 and 1999 (Ravjee 2007). A key provision of the South African Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) DE policy document (DHET 2014:6) reads that the DHET supports “a well-managed growth in quality distanced education provision, including institutions other than UNISA” (a single-mode DE university).

Guri-Rosenbilt (2001) found that in countries with a long history of DE, such as the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, the former Soviet Union and South Africa, the conversion of face-to-face universities into dual-mode universities seems to run smoother compared to practices in Central European countries, where the concept and practice of distance teaching at university level were new until the 1970s.

### Concept Clarification

To understand what is meant by dual-mode universities, it is important to make a distinction between distance education (DE) and dual-mode universities. According to King (2012:10), DE encompasses:

*The totality of arrangements made by a university for a student cohort that is separated geographically from its teachers, for whom some teaching resources and administrative arrangements have to be prepared in advance of actual interactions with them, with the understanding this might require special systems and processes that exist as a subset of the normal institutional procedures ... distance education typically requires well-organised support systems including the appropriate timing of interactions with them. This requires the organisation to attend to the logistics of communication – whether for recruitment, administrative, teaching, support or evaluation purposes – in other than face-to-face settings.*

The distinction made by Fendler et al. (2016: 110) between face-to-face and distance modes of delivery reads as follows:

*In traditional courses, the teacher is central to the learning process; regardless of the instruction style, much of what a student learns depends on the teacher. In online education,*

*course design is central to the learning process: the choice of textbook, the design of problems, exercises, multimedia guides and examinations; and the functionality of the learning management system significantly impact student learning.*

According to King (2012:10), dual-mode universities are conventional institutions that “at some point commit to delivering programmes to students who cannot, or choose not, to attend on-campus”. Processes and systems are consequently put in place that acknowledge the needs of these students. Dual-mode universities are thus universities which offer programmes either as distance or face-to-face or both modes. Usually, the curriculum for a programme being offered in both modes is the same. The same admission requirements apply to both categories of students. The duration for the completion of the programme may be longer in the DE programme. The same quality assurance measures are applicable for both programmes (Guri-Rosenbilt 2001; Muyinda 2012).

### Objective

Notwithstanding the numerous positives highlighted in the preceding discussions of the reasons for transforming single-mode universities into dual-mode universities, there seems to be a resistance by some universities or faculties or departments within universities to embrace this change. This paper aims to answer the following research question: “Are dual-mode universities an answer to the South African Higher Education Crisis?” In search of answer to the question, the paper will highlight issues that may impede or promote the expansion of dual-mode universities, namely the cost-effectiveness of dual-mode universities; the changing role of academic and administrative staff in dual-mode universities; the need for institutional support; the role of a specialised DE unit to facilitate dual-mode provision of higher education; the student; parity; and the development of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. Insight into these issues may either support or refute the argument that the present demands for more spaces and “affordable” higher education in South Africa may perhaps be answered by transforming single-mode universities into dual-mode universities.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this paper, a literature study was utilised as method for collecting information. The search engines ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), Google Scholar and Ebsco Host, as well as books on higher education were consulted to collect information on the global developments of dual-mode universities. An international comparative perspective was used to shed light on a problem in South African higher education.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### The Cost-Effectiveness of Dual-Mode Universities

The financial sustainability of universities in a highly competitive higher education milieu is often cited as a reason why universities adopt a dual-mode approach (Ravjee 2007; Tau 2008; Fyle et al. 2012; King 2012; Muyinda 2012). Rumble (2012), however, found that despite large numbers of universities engaging in dual-mode provision since the latter part of the nineteenth century, little has been done by universities to separate the cost of on-campus and off-campus programmes. Rumble (2012) found that even though it is quite easy to separate the direct costs of the two modes, such as material production and replication costs, postal services, and marking costs, through establishing separate budgets for the different activities, it would be challenging to allocate the cost of academic staff to each mode (this would entail asking academics how they spend their time) and to allocate the costs of overheads to each mode.

Rumble's (2012) literature review highlights the fact that studies of DE tell us little about the costs of DE. According to Rumble (2012), the literature has shown that mass-media DE could have been cheaper than face-to-face education during the previous century. However, changes in DE, especially regarding the growth of online learning and the "gradual diminishment in the importance of mass-media approaches" (Rumble 2012:41) to DE, suggests that the costs of DE are increasing, due to the fact that online learning requires more academic staff time to teach online and respond timeously to individual students' queries than it does to teach face-to-face. The importance of what may be called

"social presence" in DE is highlighted in a study by Gómez-Rey et al. (2016:149). They found that students perceive DE to be of high quality if "there is always someone behind the screen". To address negative perceptions regarding the quality of DE will thus inadvertently increase the cost of teaching and learning at dual-mode universities.

### The Changing Role of Academic and Administrative Staff in Dual-Mode Universities

As early as 1992 Renwick presented principles that could guide the position of academics working at dual-mode universities. These include:

*Teachers in the university's teaching departments should be the primary resource for writing and revising the academic content of course materials for distance education programs. ... all university teachers should be expected to participate in distance as well as campus programs, contracts of appointments should be written accordingly, and applicants for teaching positions should be fully informed of the range of teaching duties they should be expected to perform. ... The contribution that a university's teachers make to its distance education programs should be planned and administered as a regular part of their teaching duties (Renwick 1992: 149).*

Twenty years after Renwick's publication the discourse on the role of academic staff at dual-mode universities continues. Whereas Renwick (1992) placed the core responsibility of DE squarely on the shoulders of the academic staff, Lentell (2012) emphasised the need for cross university teamwork at dual-mode universities. Teamwork should involve cooperation among staff involved in academic planning, marketing, and quality assurance, as well as among academics, administrators and academic support staff (instructional designers, student support, library services and learning technologies). Lentell (2012: 28) writes that the development and delivery of DE courses at universities

*...prioritise project management and more equitable work cultures, whereas in conventional teaching the autonomous lecturer jealously guards their control over course design and delivery and there is a defined hierarchy and division within and between academics and academic related staff.*

Lentell (2012) found that the need for closer cooperation between academic and administra-

tive staff and the changing roles of academic and administrative staff are often resisted by academics and administrators alike. This change from a face-to-face to a dual-mode of delivery places additional responsibilities on academics and administrative staff: In DE academics are called upon to write and develop learning materials and to tutor groups of students (possibly online) and develop personalised feedback on tasks set, rather than only on lectures in the conventional way. They may also be required to appoint and manage groups of tutors who may be part-time. Administrators would have to be able to answer queries and communicate with students, knowledgeably and promptly. Employees in dual-mode institutions thus need to be “hybrid academics and administrators” (Lentell 2012: 28).

Lentell (2012:28) writes further that there is “a deeply ingrained cultural resistance to the changes distance learning necessitates from both academic and administrative staff. This culture is resilient but staff concerns are not groundless”. According to Lentell (2012:28), there is little incentive for staff to change practice, because “the established teaching model has served well enough and teaching ... is perceived to be a secondary consideration to a research record in promotion”. Hope (2006) believes that resistance from academic staff is the key factor impeding the transformation of single-mode universities into dual-mode universities. In his study on the conversion of the University of Botswana from a conventional face-to-face to a dual-mode university, Tau (2008:205) similarly found that the university’s unit for DE could not convince the academic departments to offer programmes through the DE mode. A study among lecturers at the University of Namibia established that the academics prefer to teach in a conventional face-to-face way and found DE “stressful and time consuming” (Bezuidenhout 2015: 250). Bezuidenhout (2015) argues that the involvement of ICT has enormous implications for academics involved in DE. Unrealistic demands by online students, cloud-based learning and students, administrators and academics’ accessibility by way of the internet may, according to Bezuidenhout (2015), unintentionally result in work overload. Gous and Roberts (2015) likewise found that DE lecturers purposefully shy away from ICT, because of “time and workload constraints”. Hope (2006)

and Simango (2016) found that concerns about additional workload, the perception that the status of DE students is inferior to that of face-to-face students, together with the view that the design and development of DE programmes carries little weight in terms of promotion, thus impeding academics’ willingness to embrace DE. Guri-Rosenbilt (2001) additionally found that the fear that DE might impact on academics’ academic freedom results in an unwillingness by academics to become involved in DE. Countries that place a high priority on academic freedom, such as Germany, Israel and Spain are opposed to teamwork and quality control mechanisms that are inherent to DE (Guri-Rosenbilt 2001). Guri-Rosenbilt (2001:489) found that the cherished values of elitist research universities, such as “institutional autonomy, individual academic freedom, and selective elite orientation, are opposed to the notion of inter-institutional collaboration and open-door policies underlying the operation of many distance education endeavours”. Moreover, the absence of a formal policy regarding academics’ involvement at most universities that converted to a dual delivery mode meant that there was no requirement for academic departments to convert their programmes to the DE mode. Maritim (2009:245) aptly notes that DE remains “an annexure” for academics working in dual-mode universities. Expanding on the negative attitude of academics towards DE, Maritim (2009:245) writes that academics often see DE as purely income-generating ventures. This perception is supported by the fact that dual-mode universities seldom hire regular lecturers as service providers for DE. Instead, regular lecturers are paid on an ad hoc basis for services provided.

### **The Need for Institutional Support**

Academics’ support is not enough to ensure the successful delivery of DE programmes at dual-mode universities. Mugridge (2006:132) argues that without widespread and continuous support from the institution as a whole and from different departments, quality DE is doomed to failure. According to him, this means that dual-mode universities should see DE as “a vital component of institutional activity” and is “not less than or subsidiary to face-to-face teaching”. This implies, according to Mugridge (2006), that faculty participation in DE course development

should receive the same recognition for the development of DE as face-to-face programmes.

Tau (2008) furthermore found that the absence of a formal university policy regarding DE hinders academics and support structures, such as library services, financial services and student affairs to come onboard. If they do not know what their responsibilities are regarding the special needs of DE, they will not become sufficiently involved.

### **The Role of a Specialised DE Unit to Facilitate Dual-Mode Provision**

Tau (2008) found that many universities have followed a piecemeal approach in which the introduction of DE has not been adequately planned, either structurally or operationally. According to Mugridge (2006), this can be prevented if universities establish a DE unit to spearhead the change of a face-to-face university into a dual-mode university. It is therefore generally accepted by leadership at dual-mode universities that it is necessary to set up a specialised and committed central unit that can work with departments and faculty to ensure that they are freed from the technical aspects of DE, so as to focus on course content and learning objectives and outcomes (Mugridge 2006). The DE unit's specialists are expected to work with faculty to familiarise them with and to guide them in the use of effective course design and delivery methods (Mugridge 2006). Calvert (2001) found that academics often do not have the skills to work effectively in an ever-changing world of technology. Support and development opportunities are therefore essential.

The DE unit should play an important role in the preparation and development of programmes earmarked for dual-mode delivery. Fyle et al. (2012) write that in conventional tertiary-level institutions, the process of planning instruction is less explicit than in single-mode DE learning provision. This is due to, among other things, an acknowledgement of the academic independence of lecturers. Instructional design in dual-mode universities should, however, be more than something that can be replaced by technological solutions and/or included into the everyday work of university academic departments (Fyle et al. 2012). Within the context of dual-mode universities, the instructional design for DE courses involves

*systematically preparing and developing a unit or programme of learning and teaching that encapsulates and coherently integrates the presentation of content (skills, knowledge, and attitudes) supported by a suite of feedback and assessment activities. It also involves mapping and developing the appropriate administrative, tutoring and technological structures that would support the unit or programme of teaching and learning during its presentation* (Fyle et al. 2012: 54).

Without close cooperation between the DE unit and the other subsystems, the conversion of a single-mode university into a dual-mode institution that delivers quality face-to-face and DE programmes is sure to fail (Tau 2008; Bezuidenhout 2015). It is important that members of the unit and academic staff work together “to match the right technology with the right curriculum and learning objectives” (Gómez-Rey et al. 2016:149). Lack of cooperation and a separation between the DE unit and faculty may result in academics “losing control” over the quality and thus the integrity of programmes (Bezuidenhout 2015: 251).

### **The Students**

The escalating demand for access to more and affordable higher education in South Africa (Kotecha 2012) cannot be separated from the students' right to be successful in their studies. This implies, within the context of the current study, that DE and face-to-face students should have the same opportunities to be successful in their academic endeavours. The DHET's (2014: 8) policy document on DE clearly states that DE should not only provide “opportunities for success but also a reasonable chance of success”.

Government funding of public universities in South Africa (DHET 2014), as is the case in countries, such as New Zealand, is performance-based. Learner retention and completion are thus key indicators of “university success” (Shillington et al. 2012:65). Historically, the success rates of DE students, who are mostly more mature and part-time students, are much lower than those of full-time, face-to-face students (Shillington et al. 2012; Simonson et al. 2012; Thistoll and Yates 2016). Thistoll and Yates (2016) identified a lack of social interaction among students; institutional issues, such as lack of passion and the approachability of academic and

administrative staff and flawed curricula; student motivation; and a lack of time and support for studies as reasons for DE students' failure to succeed in their studies. Simonson et al. (2012:69) furthermore found that "the delivery system affects no inherent difference in achievement" between face-to-face and DE students. This implies firstly, that the reasons for the differences lie beyond the mode of delivery, and secondly, that dual-mode universities should expand student support to incorporate DE students. Shillington et al. (2012) recommend that possible interventions to enhance DE students' success could focus on the identification of vulnerable students, thus ascertaining whether or not students have made the appropriate course choices, continuous proactive support from the university, and exploiting external support from family and friends (Shillington et al. 2012). In a study on students' satisfaction of DE, Gómez-Rey et al. (2016:149) moreover highlight the importance of student support by academics and technical staff alike, as well of the importance of student accessibility of learning content, regardless of their connection capabilities and/or disabilities.

In Calvert's (2001) discussion of Deakin University, a dual-mode Australian university, an interesting perspective is given about student support at dual-mode universities. She notes that while face-to-face interaction between students and lecturers is assumed for on-campus students, the mere class size in some programmes impedes face-to-face student support for on-campus students. She therefore argues in favour of online student support for both off- and on-campus students studying at dual-mode universities. Bezuidenhout (2015:247) similarly highlights the positive influence connectivity between DE students and their lecturers in a virtual world on students' academic success. She writes that the role of lecturers has changed "from mainly being a content creator, to acting as discussion leader to becoming a critical friend and co-learner".

An array of personal, social and institutional issues may have a negative impact on DE students' success rate compared with that of their face-to-face peers. The conversion of universities from single- to dual-mode institutions consequently necessitates a holistic approach that addresses students' needs and makes provision for innovative institutional reforms.

### Parity

Muyinda (2012:33) warns that DE students in dual-mode universities "have often been treated as second-class students who are attended to, in all respects only after attending to conventional students". It is therefore important to take note of King's (2012) view that there should be parity between DE and on-campus delivery at dual-mode universities in a number of academic matters. This means that between modes there has to be an anticipation of the same student outcomes; that assessment should vary only in the arrangements made for the submission of work; that the same content would be covered as far as possible within the limitations of different delivery arrangements; that students' workload would be the same; and that the value (credits) of a DE module within a programme should be the equivalent of its on-campus counterpart. Students accordingly, should have "parity of status within the institution irrespective of the study mode" (King 2012:12).

### The Development of ICT Infrastructure: An Institutional and National Imperative

Whereas cost-effectiveness of DE is perceived to be one of the most important reasons for using a DE mode to provide tertiary education (DHET 2014), DE infrastructure requires considerable investment and commitment by the government and university to invest in ICT. Technology should be accessible, available, reliable and cost-effective to both the service providers and the students. The adoption of highly technological delivery systems may continue to marginalise students living in remote rural areas.

### CONCLUSION

Violent student unrests over the escalating costs of higher education and a scarcity of places in South African higher education institutions have necessitated this study which explores the conversion of single-mode, face-to-face universities into dual-mode universities as a possible answer to the higher education crisis in South Africa. International research has shown that the possibility of the lowering of per capita costs and the expansion of the number of places are but two of many positives for the conversion of single-mode universities into dual-mode insti-

tutions. This study has found that there is, despite the positives of dual-model universities, a resistance among academics and administrative staff to embrace dual-mode universities. Fear of a loss of academic freedom among academics may result in academics dumping what should have been their responsibility, namely ownership of the content, learning objectives and outcomes of programmes/modules, onto DE units. Academics' unwillingness to embrace DE may result in administrative and technical staff taking responsibility for developing all aspects of programmes and modules, including the academic content of such programmes and modules. Academics' aborting their responsibility, places a serious question mark on the integrity of programmes that are primarily developed by non-academics. Academics' disdain for DE may also be found in the perception that DE programmes are entrepreneurial endeavours to fill the coffers of universities. Research findings on the cost-effectiveness of DE compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery are, however, lacking or inconclusive (contemporary research even suggests that the DE mode of delivery may even be more expensive than the face-to-face mode). The lack of institutional policy on DE and inadequate institutional support furthermore strengthens academics' view that DE is not their or their university's core business. They therefore believe that they have no professional obligation to become involved. The lack of involvement of academics in the development of DE programmes strengthens the perception that DE programmes and students enrolled in these programmes are inferior.

Until academics are fully committed to the development and the delivery of DE programmes; that the academic quality of DE programmes is beyond reproach; and that DE programmes are not perceived to be entrepreneurially motivated, elitist research universities will not be committed to change from single- to dual-mode universities. The lack of irrefutable proof that the DE mode of delivery is more cost-effective than the face-face-face mode may hamper both top research and egalitarian universities to commit to change. The transformation of single-mode universities into dual-mode universities will be a solution to the present higher education crisis in South Africa, only if questions regarding the academic quality and cost-effectiveness of dual-mode universities can be answered.

The research question for this paper, namely "Are dual-mode universities an answer to the South African Higher Education Crisis?" should be answered against the backdrop of the 2015 and 2016 student unrests.

One of the core demands of students during the 2015 and 2016 unrests was free higher education. To adhere to this demand will place an unbearable demand on taxpayers' money. One of the key reasons for universities worldwide to transform into dual-mode institutions is the claim that dual-mode universities are cost-effective. Yet, this paper has highlighted the rising costs of DE. The rising cost of DE in an ever expanding, virtual world should however, be weighed against the costs of establishing new universities in remote, rural areas of South Africa and/or the expansion of existing universities when deciding whether to transform conventional universities into dual-mode institutions.

The paper exposed numerous factors impeding the conversion of face-to-face universities into dual-mode universities: The lack of ICT infrastructure and institutional support structures; students' perceived lack of success at DE institutions compared to face-to-face universities; perceived lack of parity in the quality of modules and/or qualifications offered by conventional or distance mode of delivery; and academic elitism and an unwillingness of academics to become involved in DE. These impediments should not be insurmountable when taking into account the cherished dream that thousands of young South African citizens have shared since 1994, namely accessible and affordable higher education. The cost of denying the citizenry this dream has, as illustrated by the 2015 and 2016 student unrests, detrimental effects for political and economic stability in the country. Higher education planners and policymakers in South Africa should therefore investigate dual-mode universities as a workable solution to the ever increasing demand for higher education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The key stumbling block to the conversion of single-mode universities into dual-mode universities seems to be academics' unwillingness to embrace the DE delivery mode. It is therefore recommended that DE should be seen as part of the core responsibilities of all academics work-

ing at dual-mode universities or universities transforming or planning to transform to a dual-mode of delivery. The excellence of academics as developers and presenters of DE programmes should be recognised by the university. The university's policy should recognise DE as an important, intrinsic part of institutional activity and not as a stand-alone entrepreneurial activity. Such recognition will enhance the status of DE students and motivate academics to become involved in DE programmes. DE units should not function as a stand-alone unit, but involve academics, administrators and ICT experts, as well as library and student services in the identification, planning and development of DE programmes and/or modules. All students – DE and face-to-face – have the right to be successful. Support structures should be put in place to support all at-risk students. Government and universities should be willing to invest in ICT. Extensive and in-depth research on the cost-effectiveness and university success rates (student retention and completion rates) of DE, as well as comparative studies between cost-effectiveness and university success rates of single- and dual-mode delivery modes is recommended.

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