Business, Marketing and Management in Today's Challenging Global Environment

18 – 21 July, 2016

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

7th Biennial Conference of the Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development

Gabriel Ogunmokun
Rony Gabbay

Conference Proceedings

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Managing, Marketing and Financing Organizations in Today's
Environment of Slow Economic Growth

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Message from the Executive Conference Director and Program Chair

On behalf of the Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development (AWBMAMD), I am delighted to welcome you to the 2016 Conference in Cracow, Poland.

Since 2004 (more than a decade ago!) the Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development Conference has been held in different countries around the world in the month of July, except in 2014 when it was held in August.

This year's Conference in Cracow, Poland has academic participants from 21 nations and territories including: Australia, Barbados, Canada, China, Finland, France, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Hungary, Kenya, Kuwait, Macao, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America and the Virgin Islands. The participants come from more than 35 universities and colleges of higher education. We also have a number of non-academic delegates from various organizations.

As the Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development Conference is a high standard, double blind, peer reviewed Conference, although about 200 papers were submitted, our reviewers accepted less than 40% of the submissions. Papers that failed to address reviewers' comments were also not accepted. Not all of the authors whose papers were accepted were able to attend due to various reasons, including visa constraints and personal circumstances.

The theme "Business, Marketing and Management in Today's Challenging Global Environment" was chosen for the 2016 Conference because, to achieve the best level of performance in today's global environment, organizations must be innovative and competitive in their marketing and management practices (including their accounting, finance, IT and Research & Development practices). They must be prepared to acquire and utilize multi-dimensional skills that are essential for managing, marketing and financing organizations successfully.

Contemporary research findings and theories presented at this conference will shed light into the policies and strategies that are vital for achieving effective growth and enhance organizational performance.

I would like to thank the Cracow University of Economics in Poland, in particular the Vice-Rector for Research, Professor Alesky Pocztowski, and the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida USA for hosting this conference. These two Universities are great examples of universities dedicated to excellence in research, teaching and international relations. It is my pleasure to also acknowledge and thank the Associate Program Chairs, Professor Piotr Stanek and Professor Lucyna Kornecki for their hard work and dedication in helping to make this conference a resounding success. It has been a great pleasure working with them! I would also like to express special appreciation to Krakow Airport for sponsoring the 2016 Welcome Reception Cocktail Party.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the following people and organizations for their excellent contributions to the success of this Conference:

- The Authors of the Papers in the 2016 Conference Proceedings;
- The Track Chairs and Reviewers;
- The Co-editor of the Conference Proceedings Editors;
- The Guest and Keynote Speakers;
- The Advisory Committee Members and
- The Administrative Staff of the Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development.

I am pleased to inform you that the next Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development Conference will be held in July 2018. The Hosting University and venue is yet to be decided so feel free to give your suggestions and/or make an application to the President of the Academy.

Thank you once again for being part of this year's Conference. I wish you the very best in all your endeavours!

Professor Gabriel Ogunmokun, PhD (Monash)
Executive Conference Director and Program Chair

Track Chairs and Reviewers

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FOSTERING INSTITUTIONAL EXISTENTIALISM IN THE SEARCH FOR LEGITIMACY

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ABSTRACT
Educational and training institutions functioning in today's globalized economic landscape find themselves in a situation where they face competition but also interrelatedness and interdependency with other global institutions. This naturally drives these institutions towards the pursuit of legitimacy, which would see its qualifications (and by extension its students) recognized as equal to its/their compeers. Within the field of organizational communication management, a body of literature focuses in on this pursuit of legitimacy, and frames it within an institutional mindset; formally as within institutional theory. Institutional theory, however, when practiced in educational organizations, has the potential to be functionalistic in nature – isolating and manipulating organizational elements to work towards achieving a desired state. In this paper, the institutional mindset of educators and students at the University of South Africa is empirically explored, in order to unpick the functionalistic nature thereof and to suggest alternative ways in which to interpret and implement institutionalism within this context. Herein, the four pillars of institutionalism is conceptually and empirically discussed, offering up considerations as to a more existentialistic approach in their effecting. From this, this paper proposes ways in which institutional existentialism has the potential to balance the perception of globalized legitimacy with contextual validity and authenticity.

INTRODUCTION
In more ways than one, organizational and corporate communicators of the contemporary age have been privy to some of the most fundamental developments in the discipline of organizational management since its inception. By and large, this is due to the fact that organizations today are functioning on a global scale – no longer impeded by geographical or formalistic constraints. Indeed, it can be argued that the globalization of the economic environment has been surpassed only by industrialization in terms of its influence on organizational functioning and management.

The implied progressiveness of globalization naturally also holds various challenges to organizational management. Chief among them is the fact that organizations have to take an integrative view of management that emphasizes the interrelatedness and interdependency of business environments not previously encountered. In the management of education and training institutions, this aspect is intensified, where the considerations of the globalized economic environment does not only extend to the organization, but to the products of the

organization – its students – as well. Educational institutions need to ascertain, foster and/or maintain a level of legitimacy in the globalized world which sees its qualifications (and by extension its students) recognized as, at the very least, equal to its/their compeers.

The field of organizational management offers up a body of literature that focusses in on this aspect, where it deals with institutional theory. The institutional theory, according to Burns *et al.* (2011:469) is a management perspective which "emphasizes that organizations face environments characterized by external norms, rules and requirements to which they must conform in order to receive support and legitimacy". Simply put, from an institutional theory viewpoint, organizations rely on social constructs in its environment to aid in defining its structures and processes. Incorporating these social constructs (in the form of organizational norms, rules and requirements) leads to endorsements of validity and legitimacy (Hanson, 2001; Lammers & Barbour, 2006; Meyer, 2008; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987). Herein, the organization conforms to social and environmental characteristics, as the perception exists that if the organization does not conform, it will not be perceived as legitimate. In the lexis of this theory, these characteristics often amount to *rational myths* and is ensued by conformity termed *isomorphism* (Hanson, 2001; Lammers & Barbour, 2006; Meyer, 2008; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987; Tolbert & Zucker, 2005). An example that might be used to simplistically explain the idea of conformity for legitimacy in an educational context, is 'traditional' ideas as to what modules should form part of a curriculum – for example that an MBA should have as part of its curriculum a module on accounting science, and if not, the qualification is seen as less legitimate than those that do. Although not a new phenomenon, it cannot be ignored that the notion of conforming for the sake of legitimacy is intensified in educational organizations by globalization. Notwithstanding the host of inherent quandaries that this kind of conformity heralds, one specific aspect that it touches on is acceptance of alternative methods of assessment and teaching.

At the advent of the socially connected world, educational organizations have been challenged with implementing what is termed *alternative teaching and assessment*, which, per definition, makes use of new technologies, media and methods to educate. The inclusion of these alternative educational practices is seen by its proponents to drive education and education management into the present and future – making sure that it remains extant. On the other hand, however, these alternative educational methods have not been universally accepted as legitimate, but contested as not being as valid as 'traditional' educational methods. This leaves those managing educational organizations within the globalized world in a cleft stick: conforming to institutional ideals means managing these perceptions, and making decisions regarding its inclusion, or not.

This paper will focus on unpacking this phenomenon, by empirically exploring aspects of the institutional theory mindset of educators and students at the largest University in Africa – the University of South Africa (Unisa). The qualitative and quantitative exploration will work to unpick the substance and significance of an institutional orientation, looking at ways in which it could be modified to maintain legitimacy without compromising contemporary validity or authenticity. The section directly following will discuss institutional theory and the theoretical underpinnings of this research, followed by an explication as to the empirical methodology followed for gleaning the findings; which is discussed last.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
Since the publication of Mayer and Rowan's (1977) seminal work, institutional theory and the institutional viewpoint has been jostled to the foreground of organizational management literature. Notwithstanding, or perhaps even resultant of its consequence in literature, no

single, concise and concrete definition of institutional theory can be offered that comprehensively encapsulates its multifacetedness. Herein, institutional theory has been classified in many different ways. Inter alia, for example, Scott (1987) classifies the many faces of institutional theory as: institutionalization as a process of instilling value; institutionalization as a process of creating reality; institutional systems as a class of elements; and institutions as distinct societal spheres, whereas Tolbert and Zucker (2005) discusses sociological analyses of organizations and formal structure as myth and ceremony against Meyer's (2008) categorizations of realist institutionalisms; sociological institutionalism as it concerns social organizational versions; and sociological institutionalism as it concerns phenomenological versions.

As an adjective, the term *institution* has multiple meanings as well – further convoluting understanding. Even so, Lammers and Barbour (2006:358) comments that, framed within organizational management, the "term refers to arrangements that are fixed, established, or enduring, as in institutionalized practices". Seen within this light, Scott (1995:33 – *see* also Hanson, 2001) offers the following definition: "Institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior". However it be deliberated, two dominant movements in institutional theory is distinguished: old, or historic institutionalism and new institutionalism. The latter is distinguished from the former by its rejection of the rational-actor models previously prevalent, for more cultural and cognitive explanations of organizational endeavors (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 1995; 2008).

The motivation behind institutionalization – as with many organizational management strategies and theories – is survival. As per Scott (1995) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) organizations must conform to the rules and belief systems prevalent in its environment as this conformity earns it the support and legitimacy it needs for continued survival. This conformity leads to the sociological notion of isomorphism, defined as being the "bridging process" in institutionalism which has the result of organizations becoming more homogeneous in its structures, processes and endeavors (Dacin *et al.*, 2002; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987; 1995; 2008). The three general mechanisms of isomorphism, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983) (*cf.* Hanson, 2001; Meyer, 2008; Tolbert & Zucker, 2005) is coercive isomorphism; mimetic isomorphism; and normative isomorphism. Table 1 below offers definitions of each, succinctly.

Table 1: Three types of isomorphism

Dimension:	Definition:
Coercive isomorphism	The, often compelled, adoption of a particular organizational structure, process or endeavor because of the dependency of an organization on another.
Mimetic isomorphism	One organization's emulation of another based on uncertainty avoidance and/or perceived best practice of the mimicked organization.
Normative isomorphism	An organization's adoption of practices deemed appropriate or superior by trade, industry, and professional associations.

Sources: DiMaggio and Powell (1983); Lammers and Barbour (2006)

Evident from the above three types of isomorphism is Offe's (1993) notion of institutionalization through the presence of a 'third party'. Herein, the conception is put forward that:

> "Institutions depend for their viability and survival upon the knowledge and at least tacit consent of third parties that are not directly involved in the particular interaction the institution regulates […] what those involved in an institutional interaction can and cannot expect from each other is itself expected by third parties or outside observers" (p.7 – See also Lammers & Barbour, 2006).

Concretizing this sentiment, and cognizant of the three types of conformity through isomorphism, this paper looks to Hanson (2001) who offers three pillars of institutionalism that can be made directly applicable to educational organizations and their management, supplemented by a possible fourth pillar, as gleaned from DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (1987; 1995). By names, these four pillars are regulative institutionalization, normative institutionalization, cognitive institutionalization and procedural institutionalization.

Pillar 1 – Regulative institutionalization: This type of institutionalism plays a stabilizing role in educational organizational management by prescribing organizational endeavors through formal and/or informal rules that establish, monitor, and sanction activities. For example, national governing bodies (like the National Qualifications Authority) or professional standards regulating the actions of educators and education institutions (Burch, 2007; Hanson, 2001; Jepperson, 1991; Palthe, 2014).

Pillar 2 – Cognitive institutionalization: This type of institutionalism shapes the perception through which educators view their ontological and epistemological reality (what this reality is, and what meaning can be given to it) (Burch, 2007; Hanson, 2001; Jepperson, 1991; Palthe, 2014). For example, educators who believe that 'some students will never be able to graduate, no matter how much effort is put into the teaching' versus those who believe 'each student that fit enrollment criteria can achieve different levels of merit through proper teaching'.

Pillar 3 – Normative institutionalization: This type of institutionalism emphasizes values and norms about how educators pursue educational ends through "legitimate means" (Burch, 2007; Hanson, 2001; Jepperson, 1991; Palthe, 2014). For example, values regarding academic integrity and plagiarism in academic writing.

Pillar 4 – Procedural institutionalization: This final type of institutionalism, in many ways, encapsulates elements from all three preceding pillars, inasmuch as it influencing educators and educational organizations "to do things in certain ways" (Burch, 2007; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Palthe, 2014; Scott, 1987) to gain legitimacy, often times leading to the establishment of 'rational myths' in the organization.

Although all three types of institutionalization has the potential of establishing 'rational myths', these myths are often procedural in nature (for example forming standardized operating procedures) and thus closely linked to the last pillar. Bayma (2012) comments that rational myths, (as sociological construct in the vein of Meyer and Rowan (1977)), has not yet been consistently defined as it suggests various organizational meanings. Predominantly, however, rational myths within this consideration refers to the adoption of features, processes and norms for the symbolic value of providing legitimacy, without regard to their consequences for efficiency or autonomy, where it is viewed as being 'the rational thing to do' (Bayma, 2012; Scott, 1981).

The isomorphism that results from fostering these rational myths is perceptibly functionalistic in its nature, as it concerns itself with isolating, in a reductionist manner, the elements that

constitute the running and management of an organization, in order to manipulate them to serve a desired outcome (*cf.* Mumby, 2013; Neher, 1997). The desired outcome, in this case, being legitimacy within the global environment. Framed within this functionalistic institutional approach, educational institutions have had varied reactions to the introduction of alternative assessment practices, more often than not, based on their perceptions as to its influence and effect on legitimacy. It is important to understand this phenomenon as it impacts on, not only the management of educational organizations, but also the product of its functioning. Exploring this phenomenon empirically will offer new vantage points from which to view and approach the management of educational institutions as it relates to alternative assessment, thereby soliciting implications for education from this organizational communication management domain.

RESEARCH METHOD

Towards exploring this phenomenon empirically, so as to solicit a form of understanding of its impact on educational management, a data-triangulated investigation at the University of South Africa (Unisa) was initiated. Unisa as choice of organization for the study was based on a theoretical sampling method in which the unit to be researched was selected according to the researchers' knowledge of, and opinion regarding its appropriateness (David & Sutton, 2004).

Unisa is the largest Open and Distance University on the African continent, and rates as one of the world's ten largest universities. Notwithstanding this palm, the University (as is the case with many Open and Distance institutions) does not fit the traditional mold of 'legitimate' universities, as it does not offer physical residential education, but teaches through correspondence. Herein, the University labors and endeavors for legitimacy, seeking to establish itself as such within the global educational landscape. Intrinsically, therefore, Unisa offers the unique empirical landscape to explore aspects of institutionalism for legitimacy, vis-à-vis alternative education methods, as it simultaneously seeks to foster the former within an educational landscape that positions itself optimally for the inclusion of the latter. Put simply, Unisa – as a university which makes use of correspondence-based teaching – should be prone to the implementation of alternative education methods, as these are mostly based on, or aided by technological and Internet-enhanced interaction (promoting an ease of communication as it regards correspondence). This intuitive suitability, however, has the potential to stand diametric to the university's strive for legitimacy, as framed within an institutional mindset. To explore within the unique empirical landscape of Unisa, access was granted to lecturers and students of its College of Human Sciences, and following a two phase-concurrent mixed method study, insights could be gleaned regarding an institutional mindset as it regards the inclusion of alternative educational methods. This two-phase concurrent mixed method study specifically took the form of qualitative focus groups with assessors/academics and a quantitative and qualitative survey to students within this college.

As it relates to the first stage – the focus groups with assessors/academics – a stratified sampling method was made use of (after Keyton, 2006; David & Sutton, 2004) for the selection of participants. This was done to ensure that all departments in the College of Human Sciences (which tallied 19 from three different schools) were represented, including all 19 departments as the strata. Within these strata, two to three units of analysis (academics/assessors) were sought; the selection of which was executed by means of volunteer sampling. Herein, academics/assessors who showed a keen interest in the topic under investigation, and were willing to take part in the study, were invited to join in the

focus group discussions. This sampling method amounted to 40 participants taking part in this phase of the empirical study.

As this sampling method is a non-random sampling method, coupled with the fact that the focus groups represented a small fraction of the research population, the findings could not be generalized to the entire population of academics/assessors in the College of Human Sciences at Unisa. Reliability and validity in this empirical methodology was maintained, however, by making use inter-rater reliability. According to Gravetter and Forzano (2006), this refers to triangulating observations of more than one observer/moderator to simultaneously record measurements of the same phenomena. For the focus group discussions, five moderators who are experts in the field of education and trained in the techniques of conducting focus group discussions, were used. The data from the focus group discussions were transcribed with the help of voice recordings and notes by the moderators. The findings were grouped and transcribed per theoretical theme, based on literature (as above), by means of a thematic content analysis (Keyton, 2006; David & Sutton, 2004).

For the inclusion of student/learner responses – which constituted the second stage of the two phase-concurrent mixed method study – a quantitative and qualitative survey, in the form of a questionnaire (which employs both closed-, and open-ended questions) was made use of. For the sampling of these students, a census survey approach was applied, whereby all Unisa College of Human Sciences students were requested to participate. Consequently, the student details and data per module were extracted with the assistance of the Student System and Assessment Development Directorate at Unisa, through which a sampling frame of 22 535 students enrolled for 149 different modules was constructed. This process was supported by a meticulous sampling plan design that ensured that students who were enrolled for more than one module, were still only included once in the final sample.

The questionnaires mostly took the form of a self-administrated web-based survey questionnaire, and students without access were included by means of a telephone assisted survey (naturally comprising the same items and questions). Based on the response rates after the initial invitation, a second follow-up reminder and invitation was issued which finally resulted in 796 students ($n=796$) participating in the survey. Given the size of the student population ($N=22$ 535), the response rate ($n=796$) is regarded as sufficient to support the exploration presented for the purposes of this paper, especially since a large portion of the questionnaire (as it relates to this research focus) was quasi-qualitative in nature, making use of open-ended questions that solicited a narrative response. These responses were grouped within the same thematic categories as the focus group findings.

FINDINGS

The themes that emerged from the literature review, and which encapsulated the data from the empirical exploration of the research were further interpreted as it correlates to the four pillars of institutionalism as discussed above. This section of the paper will report on these, offering insights into the institutionalist view, as it relates to alternative educational methods at this university. This done, acumens regarding the management of educational organizations are made, as it regards institutionalism and institutional theory.

Pillar 1 – Regulative institutionalization:

> Prescribing organizational endeavors through formal and/or informal rules that establish, monitor, and sanction activities (Burch, 2007; Hanson, 2001; Jepperson, 1991).

As is stated above, this type of institutionalism plays a stabilizing role in educational organizational management through the involvement of, typically, national governing bodies. In the case of Unisa, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA); the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 (see South Africa, 2008); and the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (see South Africa, 1997) function as the highest regulative entities. These entities very vaguely define higher education institutions as "any institution that provides higher education on a fulltime, part-time or distance basis" (South Africa 1997:s 1a; 1b) and which is "established, declared or registered by law" (South Africa 2008:s 1).

By and large, these regulative entities endeavor to not be narrowly restrictive, although they are unified in requiring education institutions to serve the specific needs and communities of South Africa, while simultaneously accelerating the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, remnant of the country's forgoing Apartheid regime (South Africa 2008:s 5.1d; South Africa 1997:s 34.3). This focus on the specific context and needs of South Africa and South Africans in education is perhaps positioned against the "desire to [function] in keeping with international standards of academic quality" (South Africa 1997: preamble).

Evident from these assertions is that there is, at the uppermost level of institutional influence, already an almost inherent dissonance between – what is termed in this paper to be – perceived international (or global) legitimacy and contextual validity. On the one hand there is the requirement of being contextually valid in serving the specific educational needs and communities of South Africa, with the implication that these educational needs would be particular and distinctive. On the other hand, however, is the requirement of institutions to function "in keeping" with international academic expectancies in order to be perceived as globally legitimate.

Unisa's vision is stated as being "the African University shaping futures in the service of humanity", perceivably with a focus on contextual validity. In the focus groups with academics, however, a sentiment was displayed which showcases the dissonance as outlined above (perceived contextual validity against global legitimacy). Said one academic:

> "W*e call this university in the service of humankind, or whatever, I do not believe that is the case. I have daily proofs that that is not happening. Sometimes it's good to look at the past, learn not to repeat mistakes and go back to some of the good things that by chance or by design happened to be there. When I was young the stamp of Unisa was quality teaching, quality learning. The English department was of the best in the world, highly respected. […] If one taught and learned at Unisa it was a prestigious thing to do, it was a prestigious thing to be a lecturer at Unisa. Is it still?"*

A different academic, in another focus group also observed on this, stating:

> "*Can I just say something about globalization? Globalization is one of those words were there are lot of things but the way that is used here is wrong, Globalization is all very well, what about the unique circumstances that we have in this country. Compare ourselves to the United Kingdom, where there are more that 15 million graduates,*

> *that's a highly literate society. You cannot compare an English lit graduate from the UK to one here.*"

With the point made in these focus groups conceded, the question here is not whether the perceived contextual validity stands diametrically against global legitimacy, but rather how this possible dissonance should be addressed or resolved within educational organization management. Within the institutional mindset, the recommendation could perhaps stand that the functionalistic undertones of the theory be replaced by existentialistic endeavors. Herein, instead of a single-mindedness in changing organizational elements and functions towards the desired outcome of legitimacy, organizations should position themselves to be existentialistic in the Kierkegaardian sense (Luper, 2000; Marino, 2004). From this, the institution should busy itself with questions regarding the condition of its existence within its context as free and responsible agent, seeking authenticity. When viewed from this existentialistic (rather than a functionalistic) point of view, legitimacy within institutionalism becomes something that the organization *is*, within its **specific** context, not something it *has*.

By extension, therefore, the challenge to organizational management is to broach and facilitate a process whereby the institution **discovers** and **uncovers** what legitimacy in their context is − as a niche, within a host of possible manifestations of legitimacy, and not as a singular, exclusive state imposed by a perceptions as to the assessment of a third party (Flynn, 2006; Luper, 2000; Marino, 2004; Offe, 1993).

Framed within this mindset Unisa would, for example, view alternative educational methods, not as they stand against "the" yard stick of legitimacy, but rather as it fits into its definition of authenticity and validity as legitimacy (after Flynn, 2006; Marino, 2004). From this point of view, the implementation (or not) of alternative educational methods would be guided by discussions as to their legitimized authenticity and validity to Unisa's character and context. Being as it is, Unisa's character is that of an Open and Distance institution and it would, presumably, therefore follow that new technologies which simplify contact and transfer across distances should be embraced. The point to be taken here is that, whatever decision is reached in this vein, if it follows from a veritable existentialistic view of authenticity it will inexorably aspire to legitimacy.

Pillar 2 – Cognitive institutionalization:

> Shaping the perception through which educators view their ontological and epistemological reality (what this reality is, and what meaning can be given to it) (Burch, 2007; Hanson, 2001; Jepperson, 1991).

Very closely related to the first pillar of institutionalism discussed above, cognitive institutionalism deals with the ontological and epistemological perceptions of educators. As it relates to the focus of this paper, perceptions of educators in this vein would focus mainly on alternative educational methods, and their applicability and perceived use within the ontological and epistemological reality of Unisa as institution. Seeing as alternative educational methods − as defined within the focus of this paper − has to do with making use of devices and accessing the Internet for study purposes (therein making use of 'new technologies'), the question was raised in the focus groups with academics whether they believe this to be a viable option in Unisa's context (as ontologically perceived).

In all four of the focus groups, doubts were raised as to the viability of making use of alternative assessment and education methods in Unisa's context, as the prevailing perception

was that Unisa students predominantly do not have Internet access, are possibly not as computer literate as they could/should be, and overall possess little eMaturity. One academic offered a very telling point and stated:

> "*You talked about access, which is an issue very close to my heart. I grew up in the rural areas; I still go there, I was there in December. You talk about suggesting that perhaps you give all registered students an iPad[1]. The little village where I come from, they don't have electricity. In order to charge a cell phone they have to go to the shop to have it charged there. What on earth can they do with an iPad? So I'm saying the issue of access don't underestimate it. It's true we can't cater for everybody, but the reality of South Africa, there are areas… to what extent is an iPad going to help that student?*"

In another focus group, a different academic stated:

> "*We still have students who still write in pen because maybe they can't use the computer. And when you say to them you must submit your assignment, they say "oh!". Is like the student isn't aware that at that level he or she must know how to use a computer*".

As a perception of the ontological reality of Unisa, this does naturally not bode well for the implementation of alternative education (methods and assessment). This shared ontological and epistemological stance innately impacts on the way in which educators view the viability of introducing alternative education methods. In order to test the validity of this ontological and epistemological perception, students were asked (quantitatively and qualitatively) about their access to the Internet for study purposes.

As can be seen in Figure 1, nearly half of the survey population (49.5%, where $n=796$) responded that they access the Internet **daily** for study purposes, and 21.1% ($n=796$) stated that they do so twice weekly, against only 8.2% ($n=796$) not accessing the Internet for study purposes at all. Further to this, and as is seen in Figure 2, students predominantly (39.9% where $n=730$) made use of laptops to do this.
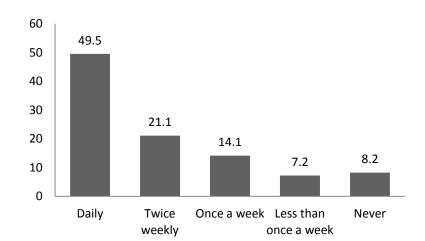
Figure 1: Frequency of Internet access for study purposes (in percentage)

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[1] Referring to a proposed program of the University at the time, where all students receive an iPad with pre-loaded Internet data, so as to aid in device and Internet access for study purposes.
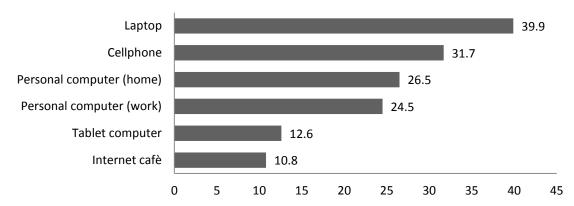
Figure 2: Devices used to access the Internet for study purposes (in percentage)

Device	Percentage
Laptop	39.9
Cellphone	31.7
Personal computer (home)	26.5
Personal computer (work)	24.5
Tablet computer	12.6
Internet cafè	10.8

This data certainly seems to fly in the face of the ontological and epistemological perception held by academics at this institution, and a further telling example is one student remarking in the qualitative section of the survey:

> "*I would like Unisa to set a specific time when we can chat with our tutor and get a response right away because I do not currently have access to the Internet so I check my mails maybe twice a week*".

For this student, it seems, having access to the Internet twice a week is what he/she would call **not** having access.

The point to make, in this instance, is that within an institutionalist mindset, decisions and actions are taken based on a perceived ontological and epistemological reality. These decisions and actions start to resemble one another, as a collective "way of thinking" starts to emerge and materialize. Although this would manifest whether the organization took on a traditional functionalistic institutional viewpoint, or an existentialistic one; an existentialistic institutional viewpoint would, by virtue of its nature, be more aligned and sensitive to discovering an authentic version of the ontological and epistemological reality. In this way, what constitutes the an authentic representation of the institution's ontological and epistemological reality would be a constant question and point on the organizations agenda. Viewed in this way, the institution could, through its organizational management, foster a cognitive institutionalism which allows for ways of thinking more accurate to the constructed reality of its specific situation.

Pillar 3 – Normative institutionalization:

> Emphasizing values and norms about how educators pursue educational ends through "legitimate means" (Burch, 2007; Hanson, 2001; Jepperson, 1991).

A natural progression from the cognitive institutionalism discussed above (which deals with the way that those within the institution think about educational aspects) is normative institutionalism, which deals with the values and norms that underlie the decisions and actions taken by those within the institution as it relates to educators perusing educational ends through 'legitimate means'. In the empirical research, this was raised and two distinct aspects came to the fore. The first aspect was the issue of plagiarism. In two of the four focus groups the issue of plagiarism was brought up as a possible deterrent to alternative assessment and education. One academic succinctly stated "*The problem behind [ePortfolios]*

is that I actually don't know who did it? Did my student actually do the portfolio or did he outsource it?". Students, on the other hand, showed a lacking understanding of plagiarism, almost universally equating it only to *"copying someone else's* [like another student's] *work"*.

In instances such as these – where there is discord between the values and norms of the institution as manifest through educators as opposed to students – the importance of institutional existentialism and being authentically valid within context is underscored. As an Open and Distance institution, Unisa's educators have very little control over acts of plagiarism, or validating that the individual whose name is on the paper is the individual who is responsible for the content of the paper. As this is part of the character of the institution, efforts should be made to link the character with its norms and values. Judging by the responses of students, a greater effort should perhaps be made to crystalize the aspect of academic integrity and plagiarism so that students are better equipped to handle it, and not *"unwittingly fall prey"* to it.

The second aspect that came to the fore is that of improving pass rates – not through improved teaching, but through administrative processes put in place by the University to unilaterally advantage students (without necessarily considering merit). On this point, one academic stated:

> *"The ethos of the university has changed. Basically they have shifted from putting a prize on learning to putting a prize on passing. To my mind if a student learns well he or she should pass with no problem at all. That is the problem; it has shifted from learning to passing. That then has set in motion a big machinery, let's have lots of passes, lots of registrations, lots of passes and make lots of money and become big and powerful. And to my mind that is useless, if you do not teach and the students do not learn. Then what are you here for, it's a façade"*.

In another focus group, the sentiment was reverberated, when a different academic stated:

> *"This to me is also unethical. To rake in the money, sorry to be crude, we allow students to go where they should never go unprepared, unequipped, then they complain because they fail. And the director* [of the University] *will say please explain to them what happened, and I will explain with great enthusiasm. I have made a list of all the things that are wrong institutionally; within the department we can do our best. We have the institution against us. I think this is not a good state of affairs."*

What is evident from the quote above (the underlying sentiment of which was expressed in all four of the focus groups) is that there seems to be a discord between what academics believe to be "legitimate means" of obtaining institutional goals, and what the institution (as manifest through managerial and administrative decisions) believe it to be. Herein, academics feel that they have to work **against** the normative institutionalism in order to be legitimate.

Framed within an existentialistic view of institutionalism, as proposed in this paper, the institution should strive towards (continually) discovering its authentic character and being true to it. By extension, this would mean that the organization needs to – concretely and distinctly – demarcate the values and norms which underlie its definition of "legitimate means" by which institutional goals can be obtained. Once these norms and values are established and demarcated, the institution is challenged with staying true to that (authentic) by making sure that these permeate though into the actions taken by it. Put informally, the

organization is challenged with 'walking the walk', rather than just 'talking the talk' of its norms and values. Further to this, for educational organizational management, this means working towards having the buy-in from employees as to the norms, values and actions of the organization, if the normative institutionalism is to function towards coherence, rather than discord.

Pillar 4 – Procedural institutionalization:

> Influencing educators and educational organizations "to do things in certain ways" to gain legitimacy, often times leads to the establishment of 'rational myths' in the organization (Burch, 2007; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987).

The last pillar of institutionalism, in many ways, coalesces all three of the foregoing pillars, as seminally identified by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). Herein, an institution puts processes in place that sees academics do things "in a certain way", mostly prescribed by the view of what would constitute educational legitimacy. In the empirical findings, this aspect was raised, as it relates to alternative educational methods by both academics and students; speaking to the ways in which traditional modes of teaching and assessment might not be as valid as it once was, considering the lived reality and perceptions of students in the contemporary age. One academic succinctly summarized this sentiment (shared by many in the four focus groups) in stating:

> "*New students, I am talking about the new matriculates coming in, we need to gear ourselves towards them. They don't learn that way* [in a traditional way, making use of books, for example] *they would prefer to go on a YouTube video*".

Specifically speaking to computer-mediated assessment, one student poignantly underscored the intensity to which these 'new' generation of students regard newer ways of assessment, as opposed to older ones, in stating:

> "*Generally I am very happy with* [automated, computer mediated assessment] *assignments &* [sic] *exams mainly because I trust the computer marking more than… human markers*".

In this sentiment, the underlying notion of rational myths is brought to the fore. Rational myths sees educators adopt features, processes and norms for the symbolic value of providing legitimacy, without regard to their consequences for efficiency or autonomy – for example 'old' ways of teaching and assessing. Along with this, the respondents and participants to the empirical research also broached the idea that rational myths impede on efficiency or autonomy, in instances where the procedures are adopted in the organization for their perceived legitimacy, as opposed to whether or not they actually work to better the processes and products of the organization. According to Bayma (2012), this leads to 'red tape' within educational organizations, which makes the accomplishment of institutional goals harder, if not impossible.

On this point, both students and academics commented on how the administrative processes put in place by the University is often more of a hindrance than help. Students recurrently commented on the fact that the administrative 'red tape' of University processes took away from their studying time and effort – with one student even commenting on the fact that he/she abandoned a module half way through the semester, as the administrative processes

took up too much time, and little was left for actual studying[2]. Academics were very vocal on this point as well, and it was raised as an issue in all four of the focus groups. One academic – speaking to the aspect of procedural institutionalism getting in the way of being an academic and a scholar stated:

> "*I'm supposed to be a scholar, an academic, I'm supposed to teach all that I have learnt which is a lot, I'm supposed to do research, I'm supposed to think, I'm supposed to be creative. I am none of those things ever. I just do admin.*"

The rational myths that manifest through procedural institutionalism can be credited with being remnant of the bureaucratic origins of institutional theory. Bureaucracy as organizational management concept literally translates to mean the *rule of the office* and speaks to the features of a large, formal and inflexible organization (Mumby, 2013; Van Dyk *at al.*, 2015). Herein, rational myths are typified by the seminal bureaucratic notions (identified by Weber, 1978) of official *jurisdictional areas*, ordered by rules or administrative regulations; *written documentation* as the basis of record keeping; *full working capacity* being expected of officials in bureaucracy, irrespective of the length of their working hours; and the principle of *general rules*, which is a set of inflexible and relatively exhaustive rules that are stipulated for management of the bureau.

The rigidity of these forms of management seem to go against the character of an educational institution, where various authors (see, for example Goffee & Jones, 2009) suggest a different approach in managing employees such as academics (to allow for more freedom, flexibility and openness). In this instance, it is yet again seen that institutionalism, when effected with a functionalistic slant can work to the detriment of the organization, as from an existentialistic approach, the character of the organization (being that of an **academic** institution) would feature more convincingly in its endeavors, norms, rules, processes and therefore by extension, its management practices.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper the issue of institutionalism, as manifest in the management of an educational organization, was raised through conceptual and empirical evidence. It was seen that institutionalism, and the institutional mindset abounds within the setting outlined in the paper as it almost inherently forms part of the organization's strive towards legitimacy in the globalized educational landscape. The notion was raised that, although institutionalism is detrimental in many ways to the authentic management of educational organizations, this is only the case when the institutionalism is effected from a functionalistic approach. When an existentialistic approach is taken to the idea of institutionalism, the notion of legitimacy is reshaped to be more reflective of the authentic and contextual validity of the institution. Herein, it is seen that institutionalism can be a positive force within educational organizational management, although only when effected with the forethought and prudence necessarily intrinsic to existentialism. When effected in this way, institutionalism busies itself with questions regarding the condition of its existence within its context as free and responsible agent. Within this meta-framework, organizational managerial decisions (like implementing alternative educational methods, or not) should be effected – not as they would influence perceived legitimacy, but as they are compatible with the organization's character

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[2] This sentiment should be read, bearing in mind that most of Unisa's students study part-time, as they are mostly employed full-time, leaving little time for studying, which is mostly done in the student's 'spare time'.

and context. This gives way to institutional legitimacy becoming something that the organization *is*, within its **specific** context, rather than something it *has.*

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