

# Determining the nature of student engagement in Public Administration programmes: the case of first year students at the North West University

**C Le Roux**  
**22831134**

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts-Public Management and Governance* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Prof HG van Dijk

October 2016

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude towards the following people and institutions for providing me with guidance and assistance in the completion of this dissertation.

- My study leader, Prof HG van Dijk, for her guidance, commitment, knowledge and immeasurable assistance in this task.
- My parents who provided me with support and the opportunity to pursue this endeavor.
- The North West University for providing me with the resources and knowledge required to undertake this study as well as allowing me to conduct research on its campuses.
- Dr M Diedericks and Mr TK Pooe for providing access to their undergraduate students and for letting me conduct interviews with them.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study sets out to determine the nature of student engagement in Public Administration Programmes, focusing on the case of first year students at the North West University's (NWU) Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses. This study argues that the academic performance and the success ration of the higher education institution is directly influenced by the students' level of engagement with the module work, their campus environment, fellow students, lecturers, educational experiences and interactive and collaborative learning processes both inside and outside of scheduled class sessions.

Two separate literature studies were conducted for the purpose of this research. The first focused on the development of learning theories, the idea of student engagement and the instruments that are used to measure it. The second literature study focused on the role of higher education and how Public Administration has developed as an independent discipline and continued at reviewing how it was presented at the NWU. The mixed method of research conducted included personal interviews with lecturers and questionnaires for first year students. The study has found that while the levels of engagement are adequate at both campuses there are certain shortcomings, especially in terms of the differing views held by the students and the lecturers.

This study provides recommendations for the improvement of student engagement at the NWU and identifies potential areas of the research that can be expanded in the future, that if implemented will provide a more generalised and inclusive view of student engagement in the NWU's PA programme.

### *Keywords:*

Public Administration, students, aptitude, skills, outcome, Public Administration Programme, NSSE, degree, engagement.

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>                                  | i    |
| <b>ABSTRACT</b>   | ii   |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES</b>                                   | vii  |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>                                  | viii |
| <b>CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY</b>  | 1    |
| 1.1. INTRODUCTION                                       | 1    |
| 1.2. ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY                           | 1    |
| 1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT                                  | 6    |
| 1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES                                | 13   |
| 1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS                                 | 13   |
| 1.6. CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT(S) AND/OR HYPOTHESIS | 14   |
| 1.7. METHODOLOGY  | 15   |
| 1.7.1. Research approach and design                     | 15   |
| 1.7.2. Population and sampling                          | 17   |
| 1.7.3. Instrumentation                                  | 18   |
| 1.7.4. Data analysis                                    | 20   |
| 1.7.5. Limitations and delimitations                    | 21   |
| 1.8. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY                          | 22   |
| 1.9. CHAPTER LAYOUT                                     | 22   |
| 1.10. CONCLUSION  | 23   |



|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>CHAPTER 3: A REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN TERTIARY</b>        |            |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>   | <b>54</b>  |
| <b>3.1. INTRODUCTION</b>   | <b>54</b>  |
| <b>3.2. CONTEXTUALISING HIGHER EDUCATION</b>                           | <b>55</b>  |
| <b>3.2.1. Traditional views and development of higher education</b>    | <b>55</b>  |
| <b>3.2.2. The legal and policy framework enabling higher education</b> | <b>60</b>  |
| <b>3.2.3. Current conditions</b>                                       | <b>63</b>  |
| <b>3.3. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION</b>       | <b>65</b>  |
| <b>3.3.1. Development of the academic discipline</b>                   | <b>65</b>  |
| <b>3.3.1.1. <i>Origins of Public Administration</i></b>                | <b>66</b>  |
| <b>3.3.1.2. <i>Historical development of the discipline</i></b>        | <b>68</b>  |
| <b>3.3.2. Public Administration programme at NW</b>                    | <b>75</b>  |
| <b>3.4. CONCLUSION</b>   | <b>83</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: CHALLENGES IN FACILITATING FIRST YEAR STUDENT</b>        |            |
| <b>ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MODULES</b>                     | <b>86</b>  |
| <b>4.1. INTRODUCTION</b>   | <b>86</b>  |
| <b>4.2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE</b>  | <b>86</b>  |
| <b>4.3. LEVEL OF CHALLENGE</b>   | <b>93</b>  |
| <b>4.4. INTERACTION BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS</b>                     | <b>111</b> |
| <b>4.5. EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES THAT ENRICH CLASSROOM</b>              |            |
| <b>EXPERIENCE</b>  | <b>125</b> |
| <b>4.6. CONSTRUCTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT</b>                            | <b>136</b> |
| <b>4.7. COLLABORATIVE AND INTERACTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES</b>           | <b>147</b> |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>4.8. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS</b>  | <b>170</b> |
| <b>4.9. CONCLUSION</b>  | <b>173</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>  | <b>175</b> |
| <b>5.1. INTRODUCTION</b>  | <b>175</b> |
| <b>5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN<br/>FIRST YEAR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MODULES</b> | <b>175</b> |
| <b>5.2.1. Level of Challenge</b>  | <b>175</b> |
| <b>5.2.2. Interaction between staff and students</b>  | <b>176</b> |
| <b>5.2.3. Educational experiences that enrich classroom experience</b>                                    | <b>177</b> |
| <b>5.2.4. Constructive campus environment</b>   | <b>178</b> |
| <b>5.2.5. Collaborative and interactive learning processes</b>  | <b>178</b> |
| <b>5.3. CHAPTER SUMMARIES</b>   | <b>179</b> |
| <b>5.4. CONCLUSION</b>  | <b>182</b> |
| <b>LIST OF REFERENCES</b>   | <b>184</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX A: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE</b>   | <b>209</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>  | <b>215</b> |

## **LIST OF TABLES**

|            |   |    |
|------------|---|----|
| Table 1.1: | Public Administration Programmes at the NWU | 12 |
| Table 2.1: | Public Administration Programmes at the NWU | 76 |
| Table 2.2: | Compilation of First Semester Curriculums   | 79 |
| Table 2.3: | Compilation of Second Semester Curriculums  | 80 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 4.1: Gender profile of respondents   | 87  |
| Figure 4.2: Age profile of respondents  | 88  |
| Figure 4.3: Race profile of respondents   | 88  |
| Figure 4.4: Place of residence of respondents   | 89  |
| Figure 4.5: Total registered modules of respondents   | 90  |
| Figure 4.6: Curriculum of respondents (Potchefstroom campus)                                    | 90  |
| Figure 4.7: Curriculum of respondents (Vaal campus)   | 91  |
| Figure 4.8: Performance level of respondents  | 92  |
| Figure 4.9: Percentage of respondents who started their studies at the NWU                      | 92  |
| Figure 4.10: Previous higher education institution attendance of respondents                    | 93  |
| Figure 4.11: Memorising module material   | 95  |
| Figure 4.12: Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations        | 96  |
| Figure 4.13: Analysing an idea, experience or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts | 97  |
| Figure 4.14: Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source                         | 98  |
| Figure 4.15: Forming new ideas or understanding from various pieces of information              | 99  |
| Figure 4.16: Reached conclusions based on own analysis of information                           | 100 |
| Figure 4.17: Examined a real-world problem/issue with module information                        | 101 |
| Figure 4.18: Evaluated what others have concluded from information                              | 102 |
| Figure 4.19: Identified key information from reading  | 103 |
| Figure 4.20: Reviewed notes after class   | 104 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 4.21: Summarised what was learned in class or from module materials     | 105 |
| Figure 4.22: Assigned reading per week   | 106 |
| Figure 4.23: Level of challenge  | 107 |
| Figure 4.24: Assignments written (Potchefstroom campus)                        | 109 |
| Figure 4.25: Assignments written by respondents (Vaal Triangle campus)         | 110 |
| Figure 4.26: Talked about career plans with a lecturer                         | 113 |
| Figure 4.27: Worked with a lecturer on activities other than coursework        | 114 |
| Figure 4.28: Academic discussions with a lecturer outside scheduled class time | 115 |
| Figure 4.29: Discussed academic performance with a lecturer                    | 116 |
| Figure 4.30: Lecturer clearly explained module goals and requirements          | 117 |
| Figure 4.31: Lecturer taught the module in an organised manner                 | 118 |
| Figure 4.32: Lecturer used examples/illustrations to explain                   | 119 |
| Figure 4.33: Feedback on drafts  | 120 |
| Figure 4.34: Feedback on completed tests/assignments                           | 121 |
| Figure 4.35: Quality of student faculty interactions at Potchefstroom campus   | 123 |
| Figure 4.36: Quality of student faculty interactions at Vaal Triangle campus   | 124 |
| Figure 4.37: Academic discussions at Potchefstroom campus                      | 127 |
| Figure 4.38: Academic discussions at Vaal Triangle campus                      | 128 |
| Figure 4.39: Participated in an internship/field research/student teaching     | 130 |
| Figure 4.40: Hold a formal leadership role in a student organisation           | 131 |
| Figure 4.41: Participate in a learning community                               | 132 |
| Figure 4.42: Work with faculty member on a research project                    | 133 |
| Figure 4.43: Community based project (Potchefstroom campus)                    | 134 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 4.44: Community based project (Vaal Triangle campus)                  | 135 |
| Figure 4.45: Spending significant amounts of time studying                   | 137 |
| Figure 4.46: Provide support for academic success                            | 138 |
| Figure 4.47: Use of learning support services                                | 139 |
| Figure 4.48: Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds   | 140 |
| Figure 4.49: Providing opportunities for social involvement                  | 141 |
| Figure 4.50: Providing support for overall well-being                        | 143 |
| Figure 4.51: Helping manage non-academic responsibilities                    | 143 |
| Figure 4.52: Average Hours per week of Non-Academic Responsibilities         | 144 |
| Figure 4.53: Attending campus activities and events                          | 145 |
| Figure 4.54: Attending events that address important issues                  | 146 |
| Figure 4.55: Asked questions and contributed to class discussions            | 149 |
| Figure 4.56: Prepared two or more drafts before submission                   | 150 |
| Figure 4.57: Asked another student for help                                  | 151 |
| Figure 4.58: Explained material to other students                            | 152 |
| Figure 4.59: Discussed or worked through module material with other students | 152 |
| Figure 4.60: Worked with other students on assignments/projects              | 154 |
| Figure 4.61: Gave a presentation   | 155 |
| Figure 4.62: Attended a seminar/information session                          | 156 |
| Figure 4.63: Combined ideas from different modules for assignments           | 157 |
| Figure 4.64: Connected theory to societal problems/issues                    | 158 |
| Figure 4.65: Included diverse perspectives in module discussions/assignments | 158 |
| Figure 4.66: Examined the strengths and weaknesses of own views              | 159 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 4.67: Tried to better understand other viewpoints  | 160 |
| Figure 4.68: Learned something that changed the way in which a student understood a concept/issue | 161 |
| Figure 4.69: Connected ideas from PA to prior experiences and knowledge                           | 162 |
| Figure 4.70: Practical skills development (Potchefstroom)   | 164 |
| Figure 4.71: Personal development (Potchefstroom)   | 166 |
| Figure 4.72: Practical skills development (Vaal Triangle)   | 168 |
| Figure 4.73: Personal development (Vaal Triangle)   | 169 |
| Figure 4.74: Educational Experience   | 170 |
| Figure 4.75: Re-attendance ranking  | 171 |

## **CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

There is a Native American proverb that reads “Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I may not remember. Involve me and I’ll understand” (Huggins, 2000:1). The most crucial component in learning and development during higher education experiences is student engagement or the quality of effort students put into their work and supporting activities to contribute to the outcome that is desired (Hu & Kuh, 2002:555). The goal of this research is to critically examine student engagement in first year Public Administration Programmes, with specific focus on the Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses of the NWU. In this chapter an overview of the study is provided with a discussion of the problem to be investigated. The central theoretical statements are described in order to provide a theoretical basis for the study. The research approach and design as well as the instruments used in the data collection are explained with an emphasis on the sampling technique used for the purpose of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the research as well as a the proposed chapter layout for the study.

### **1.2 ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

Whereas engagement is defined as being involved with something in order to understand it, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (OALD) (2010:485), defines a student as a person studying at a university or college or a person who has a particular interest in a field of study. Student engagement is defined as the degree of interest, curiosity, optimism, attention and passion shown by students when they are learning new information in an educational situation, which influences their motivation to progress and learn the material (Abbott, 2014:1). Barkley (2010:6) defines student engagement as the product of active learning and motivation, being a product rather than a sum due to engagement, not taking place if either is missing in the equation.

Newmann (1992:2-3) defines student engagement as students making a psychological investment in learning, by genuinely attempting to learn what is offered and by taking

pride in not only passing, but by comprehending, incorporating and applying the material in their lives. Chapman (2003:2) describes student engagement as the willingness of students to participate in activities associated with educating, such as submitting required work, attending classes and following the instructions of their educator.

Fletcher (2005:5) defines student engagement as student learning that is meaningful throughout the learning process and includes participation concerning classroom management, school building climates and the design of the curriculum in a programme. Markwell (2007:18) adds to these definitions by stating that student engagement also refers to students participating in extra-curricular activities in campus life with educational benefits, enabling students to focus upon their curricular studies. Thus, student engagement focuses upon two aspects, namely the involvement or engagement of the student with his or her academic environment and the involvement of the institution in enabling the student to achieve success in that academic environment.

Student engagement is highly influenced by the time and energy spent by the student and the institution respectively on educational activities by the former and the development and use of effective educational practices by the latter (Strydom & Mentz, 2010:v). Kuh *et al.* (2011:4) find that the combination of the time and energy spent by students leads to outcomes and experiences that will result in the success of the student. Student success is then more broadly understood as not only encompassing obtaining a qualification successfully, but also while engaged in the academic endeavour developing as a person who will take an active role in his or her society.

With public and private sectors requiring more skilled persons it is important to engage students effectively through tertiary programmes at universities, colleges and other institutions of learning (South Africa, 2007:3). In understanding the nature of student engagement, Kuh (2001:12) argues that there are several key factors that contribute to success in tertiary studies, including time spent engaged in academic activities, the degree of the challenge posed by academic activities and the level of participating in various activities that relate to the academic programme to advance knowledge in that area. Several countries have developed measurement instruments through which student engagement is determined, including the National Survey of Student

Engagement (NSSE) (United States of America), the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) and the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE).

While Kuh (2001:12) argues that most university rankings are based solely upon reputation and the resources that the institution has at its disposal, the NSSE (for instance) measures output quality by focusing upon how students and staff utilise these resources and apply good practices that have been identified. The measurement instruments make use of five benchmarks to determine the nature of student engagement, including level of challenge, interaction and communication between faculty and students, educational experiences that enrich students, a constructive campus environment and collaborative and interactive learning processes (Kuh, 2001:13).

The level of challenge as the first benchmark is determined through various variables including the time spent preparing for class per week, frequency of hard work to meet the requirements or expectations, the amount of reading material, the amount of written papers or reports and the emphasis the institution places upon engagement. This benchmark also looks at the extent to which the course emphasises ideas, theories, experience, the organisation of ideas and information, the value of judgements, arguments and methods and the application of theory to practical problems or situations (Carini *et al.*, 2006:24-25).

Interaction and communication between students and lecturers, as the second benchmark, refers to discussions between the two parties concerning grades or assignments, career plans or ideas gained from the reading material or classes outside of scheduled times (Kuh, 2010:29). The frequency of which the two work together outside class with activities such as committees, orientation or various student life activities and feedback on a student's academic performance are also important for interaction as a benchmark, as well as working on a research project outside of the programme's requirements (Carini *et al.*, 2006:26).

There has been a strong association between enhanced student learning and formal and informal contact between faculty members and students. Often these interactions

had an effect upon the intensity of interaction and engagement between the faculty members and the students, and they became the most indicative of persistence by students in their studies (Umbach & Wawrzyński, 2005:156). Various factors of the faculty culture such as satisfaction, behaviours, experience and student contact that are facilitated at an institution have an effect upon engagement (Umbach & Wawrzyński, 2005:157).

The third benchmark, namely educational experiences that enrich students, concern topics such as the use of electronic communication mediums, engaging in co-curricular activities, studying abroad, community service, independent study and internships or field experience. This benchmark also looks at interaction and communication between students that have different opinions, racial backgrounds, viewpoints, values, religious views and the institution's emphasis upon contact between students with different economic, social and racial backgrounds (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25-26).

The fourth benchmark, a constructive campus environment, is concerned with academic support, the extent to which the institution supports the student's social growth and the extent to which it helps students cope with academic responsibilities. This benchmark also looks at the quality of the relationships between students, lecturers and administrative personnel at the institution (Carini *et al.*, 2006:26). Institutions must understand who their students are and where they are coming from, what they are prepared to do academically and what their expectations are of the institution and of themselves (Kuh, 2004:88).

Although it may vary from institution to institution, successful first year orientation programmes could lead to lower attrition rates, higher levels of social and emotional development, increased academic performance and overall a more positive outlook on the institution. Failure to maintain a constructive campus environment leads to lower levels of retention, which leads to personal and financial loss for both the student and the institution (Gas *et al.*, 2003:34).

The fifth benchmark, collaborative and interactive learning processes, examines how often students ask questions, give presentations, work with other students on projects

inside and outside of class and the frequency at which ideas and work are discussed with persons outside the programme. Furthermore this benchmark reviews frequency at which students tutor other students and their participation in community-based projects (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25).

In addition to the above, AUSSE (2012:2) adds Work Integrated Learning as an additional benchmark in order to determine the level of integration of employment-focused work experiences into academic programmes. While the SASSE uses the same benchmarks, they are categorised as follows (SASSE, 2013:1):

- academic challenge referring to how students learn, reflect and apply their knowledge;
- learning with peers;
- experiences with staff;
- campus environment; and
- high-impact practices which refer to education enriching opportunities that strengthen the academic programme including practical work experience, student societies and research with staff.

This research will make use of the five benchmarks described above to determine the level of engagement by the NWU's Public Administration (PA) first year students. This research will look at how students approach the programme, how students, the institution and staff interact with one another, how students find other ways to increase their performance and learning in the programme and how the institution is prepared to facilitate engagement through institutional support structures.

One of the areas of concern highlighted by the NSSE is the lack of interaction between first year students and faculty members. Another area which presents itself is a severe lack is students not preparing for classes and interaction sessions, indicating that many problems lie with day-to-day behaviours associated with campus culture (Kuh, 2001:13) rather than academic policy in institutions such as the NWU.

Engagement is an important part of the learning process. Students must be engaged in

their programmes in order to gain not only the ability to recall information, but to process it and incorporate and apply it to actual situations throughout their lives, as productive members of society. Engagement is often underestimated and few people realise that without it the purpose of higher education is lost. The following segment looks at the changing role of higher education institutions as well as PA as a programme.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

For higher education institutions to produce graduates capable of contributing to society and the economy in a productive manner, they should be able to identify and address the need for empowerment and critical thinking (Van Dijk, 2013:86). Any higher education institution including the NWU must consider the importance of lifelong learning, which consists of an individual improving his or her knowledge and skills throughout his or her lives in both informal and formal learning opportunities (Van Dijk, 2013:85-86). Due to the significance of lifelong learning, universities must realise the importance of learning within the workplace and should opt to include the community, including students, in the development, delivery and review process (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:488). Higher education institutions should be responsive in the sense that they ensure economic growth by producing well prepared students who will become productive workers within the economy (Badat, 2010:16-17).

Higher education is also changing at a staggering pace due to the effects of globalisation, the agendas of participation, increased access and equality, the marketisation of higher education and higher education's entrance within the wider society system (Barnett, 2007:62). In the South African context the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (South Africa, 1997) states in section 1.13 that higher education should be increased to not only broaden participation, but also to ensure a degree of responsiveness towards the needs and interests of society.

According to Van Dijk (2013:87) the more responsive a higher education institution is, the easier it will be for the institution to engage its students in the process of lifelong learning, as well as engaging the society by producing productive graduates. Higher

education institutions should be regarded as zones of engaged learning where productive and efficient graduates capable of learning and growing so as to remain employable are produced, while they also focus upon striking a balance between job ready graduates with a future that is shrouded in mystery (Van Dijk, 2013:88).

PA is a discipline that endeavours to prepare students to work within government, particularly in working with the executive and public policy implementation environment (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1997). Public within this context is defined as firstly for everyone, meaning it is a service or goods provided by the government, and the second definition refers to something that has a connection to the government (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010:1184). Administration is defined, firstly, as activities conducted in order to plan, organise or run something, secondly, as the process or act of organising the manner in which something is done and thirdly, as the personnel who organise and run a business or institution such as a government (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010:18). Thus, PA programmes focus upon equipping students to work within the broader government sector, able and capable of delivering public functions responsive to the needs of society.

According to Jones (2012:125) one of the purposes of PA is to teach students the managerial skills such as human resource-, policy- and financial management, since these skills seem to be lacking in the Public Service. Jones (2012:126) views public administration as concerned with public institutions, decision-making procedures, policy formulation and implementation, structures and an analysis of the people involved in the public sector. Raadschelders (1999:288) states that public administration exists to govern society, thus, making government and governance the central concepts to be understood in PA programmes.

According to Kroukamp and De Vries (2014:160) there are a number of factors which influence the success ratio of any undergraduate programme, including PA, in the South African context, *inter alia* deteriorating facilities and libraries, increased enrolments and student-staff ratios and the overall decline of professional and intellectual life in the country. Further complicating matters are classes too big to be participatory and crammed syllabi preventing in-depth discussions. As an academic programme PA is

lacking focus due to the greater focus upon tertiary teaching, with the lecturer simply relaying information in bulk to students, rather than on having students learn as well as understand (Kroukamp & de Vries, 2014:160).

Jones (2012:125) argues that these skills are better demonstrated in other public sector areas such as social work, local government and various community services, since many alternative programmes, including some programmes such as Psychology and Social Studies, at the NWU, include subjects such as politics, policy studies and public sector management, which lead to many students, who do not fall within the PA programme, completing these courses as part of the undergraduate classes (Jones, 2012:126).

Due to the differences and the policies of the past, many South African students are unprepared for the challenges, lacking in mathematical and language skills, with only 35% of those enrolled in the programme being first language English speakers and many having a limited foundational knowledge basis to rely upon. The decision as to which subjects and modules to include in PA programmes is also not based upon information gathered via a skills-needs analysis of the Public Service into which graduates progress upon completion of their studies (Kroukamp & de Vries, 2014:161-2).

The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that PA modules are included as service or elective modules in other academic programmes, which means that there is a moving away from PA being taught as an independent course (Fenwick & McMillan, 2014:199-200). This means that the PA modules are used as additional modules in other programmes and the majority of the students could end up leaving the PA modules by their second or third year.

This raises the issue of whether these modules are simply being used as buffering or filler modules for other courses and whether undergraduate students are aware that PA exists as an important and free standing programme (Jones, 2012:127). This could lead to dwindling class numbers past the first year of the programme, with fewer students receiving a complete education with regard to PA, which in turn could lead to less

research and reduced development of the programme.

According to Jones (2012:128) one of the leading issues with PA courses comes down to recruitment issues due to lack of knowledge about the subject and its very existence leading to students opting for 'safer' and more familiar courses. An additional issue with PA comes down to the terminology itself, with the name becoming increasingly unattractive to scholars making it difficult to market for undergraduate studies (Fenwick & McMillan, 2014:200).

According to Fenwick and McMillan (2014:200) PA is not a brand to prospective students and their advisors, meaning it is not easily marketable and it is not the kind of programme for which students would borrow large amounts of money for benefits that are unclear. To some the term Administration is less fashionable than the more appealing Management, which gives a sense of control and distinction (Fenwick and McMillan, 2014:200).

According to the NWU (2014a:1) its PA programme titled Public Management and Governance on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle Campuses, is the study of how practice and theory intertwine to address the needs of the communities of South Africa, by producing students capable of effectively and efficiently delivering services that are public in origin. These services are provided by the government and its judicial, legislative and executive institutions at all three spheres of government. PA is a subject that deals with real-life issues that are topical in nature such as housing, environmental affairs, education and security (NWU, 2014a:1).

A background in PA, which is gained through the completion of the tertiary programme, should ensure that students develop the skills and mind set to tackle many different professional challenges. The main skills required and listed include communication, organisational skills, data gathering and the ability to organise, understand and analyse new sources of information (NWU, 2014b:1).

The outcomes of the programmes as provided by the NWU (2014b:1) are provided as follows: logical thinking skills and the ability to interact and possibly even lead a diverse

group of people with varying approaches to situations and backgrounds is very important, as well as general teamwork and managerial skills. Students must also have the capacity to analyse problems critically and use their intelligence in a creative manner, while making reasonable and sound decisions after considering different sides of the argument or proposal in question. Another important skill that should be acquired throughout the programme includes core PA skills such as maintaining an understanding of both the theory and the practical aspects of state structures such as municipalities and institutions (NWU, 2014b:1).

Upon completion of their studies graduates should successfully demonstrate skills reflective of values such as responsiveness, transparency, a consensus orientation, inclusiveness, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and submitting to the rule of law (Van der Waldt, 2004:11-12). Some scholars such as Van der Waldt (2008:3) are of the mind-set however that a challenge that is becoming more visible in the new millennium is not the general shortage of raw talents, but rather a lack of effective leadership skills. These skills are important for students in order to successfully undertake the programme. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the different PA programmes offered at the two campuses of the NWU.

From Table 1.1 it is evident that there are different curricula presented within different PA programmes or qualifications. The purpose of the research is not to delve into these curricular differences, but to focus upon the nature of student engagement in all first year PA modules offered on the NWU's Vaal and Potchefstroom campuses. For the purpose of the research reference will be made to PA modules which is the inclusive concept assigned for all first year modules, irrespective of whether they are called Public Management or PA modules. The research will investigate how engaged students are with the PA programmes at the identified two campuses of the NWU and the underlying structures and issues concerning the successful outcomes of the programme as a whole. The specific skills, traits, aptitude and other entrance requirements have not been analysed in terms of their development through student engagement, and this research could prove to be insightful for this reason. The research could identify shortcomings and challenges and could provide recommendations on more effective

practices for the university with regard to understanding the relationship between student engagement and academic success. While the Mafikeng campus of the NWU also presents a PA programme, it is located within the Faculty of Commerce as a BAdmin degree and not a BA degree. The PA programmes are not aligned and the PA modules presented at the Mafikeng campus have different outcomes and content. For this reason the Mafikeng campus students were not included.

| <b>Table 1.1: Public Administration Programmes at the NWU</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | Potchefstroom  | Vaal Triangle  |
| Name  | BA in Development and Management residing in the Faculty of Arts   | BA in Development and Management residing in the Faculty of Humanities   |
| Curriculum  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Management and Governance</li> <li>• Public Management with Human Resource Management (HRM) and Labour Relations</li> <li>• Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</li> <li>• Public Management and Governance with Economics</li> <li>• Public Management and Governance with Sociology</li> <li>• Public Management and Geography</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Management and Governance</li> <li>• Public Management with HRM and Labour Relations</li> <li>• Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</li> <li>• Public Management and Society</li> </ul> Public Management and Environment   |
| Programme Outcome   | Upon completion graduates should have basic training in public management and governance which will enable them to function in a problem-solving capacity within the workplace and to contribute through personal initiative and job creation. They should be equipped to perform functions and apply skills that would enable them to investigate and manage political phenomena within the work context (NWU, 2015a:94). | Graduates should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be knowledgeable about the basic political government structures within a democratic establishment and connect them with public governance which is shaped by these structures;</li> <li>• have obtained skills to function as a public manager in order to implement government policy;</li> <li>• understand the underlying legislative aspects which underwrite the governing function and which offer functional frameworks within the SA government structures;</li> </ul> Be able to describe the complex social dynamics of the development of government structures and institutions within the SA context and interpret them (NWU, 2015b:28-29). |
| Admission Requirements  | A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum achievement of 30% in the language of learning and an achievement rating of 4 (50-59%) in 4 20-credit subjects (NWU, 2010:12).<br>An APS count of at least 20 (NWU, 2015a:91).  | Students should have a minimum APS score of 20 and a level 4 (50-59%) achievement in the language of learning. (NWU, 2015b:28).  |

Source: (NWU, 2015b:28-29) ;(NWU, 2015a:94) ;(NWU, 2015a:48).

## **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

As previously stated the goal of this research will be to analyse the nature of engagement of students undertaking PA studies at a tertiary level, while specifically focusing upon the roles of students, lecturers and the institution required in order to complete the programme successfully.

The research objectives are:

- to describe and analyse the theoretical frameworks for student engagement at the tertiary level of education;
- to describe the higher education policy framework that facilitates student engagement;
- to determine the nature of student engagement in first year PA modules offered by the NWU;
- to determine the manner in which student engagement is facilitated by lecturers, tutors and/or facilitators responsible for first year PA modules offered by the NWU; and
- to provide possible solutions or make recommendations to improve student engagement in first year PA modules offered by the NWU.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions entail:

- What are the theoretical frameworks for student engagement at the tertiary level of education?
- How does the higher education policy framework facilitate student engagement?
- What is the level of student engagement in PA modules offered by the NWU?
- How is student engagement facilitated by lecturers, tutors and/or facilitators responsible for first year PA modules offered by the NWU?
- What possible solutions or recommendations can be proposed to improve PA programmes in facilitating student engagement?

## 1.6 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT(S)

The effective outcome of the study of PA is based upon the acquisition of students who have both the necessary traits, qualifications and skills to engage in the qualitative and complex practice of Public Administration. The programme is filled with extensive qualitative information and various degrees of application and thus the aptitude of the students who follow a programme in PA is very important for success, as well as systems that will attract the right students and engage them through to graduation (Jones, 2012:129-130).

The level of challenge, interaction and communication between faculty and students, educational experiences that enrich students, a constructive campus environment and collaborative and interactive learning processes are important for programmes to be successful (Kuh, 2001:13).

Students should actively engage and prepare for classes, tests, assignments and projects by asking questions, giving presentations, working with other students on projects inside and outside of class, discussing ideas, interacting with other students and lecturers, seeking academic assistance or aid if necessary and reading and learning from their prescribed books as well as gaining knowledge in their own time (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25-26).

Lecturers are tasked with providing valuable learning opportunities to students via classes and interaction by discussing ideas, evoking critical thinking and application from students, encouraging students to improve themselves, guiding those that have gone astray, and assessing the work of students in a constructive manner (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25-27).

The role of the institution is to sustain a constructive campus environment with academic support, support the social growth of their students and help them cope with non-academic responsibilities, while also ensuring good communication between faculty, administrative personnel and students (Carini *et al.*, 2006:26).

Learning theories, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter Two, are frameworks that describe how students absorb, process and retain information during the learning process. When it comes to how skills and knowledge are obtained there are a number of emotional, cognitive and environmental influences as well as previous experience (Illeris, 2003:398).

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

This section deals with how the study will commence in terms of the methodology which includes the research approach and design, delineating the population and choosing appropriate sampling techniques, identifying data collection methods and describing the strategy to be used for data analysis.

### **1.7.1 Research approach and design**

The study comprises mixed method research. Mixed method research consists of combining methods used in both qualitative and quantitative research in a systematic manner in order to conduct research (Du Plessis & Majam, 2010:456). According to Greene (2007:13) mixed method research's central meaning is to combine multiple mental models into a communal area, in order to facilitate conversation, dialogue, learning from one another and ultimately forming a better understanding of the phenomena in question. Mixed method research then involves the integration and use of theoretical assumptions, data gathering, value commitments, philosophical paradigms, methodological traditions, personalised understandings and analysis techniques (Greene, 2007:13). Mixed method research involves collecting or analysing data that is either qualitative or quantitative in nature in a single study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003:696).

The main ontological consideration for this study is rooted in constructivism. According to Bryman and Bell (2015:33) constructivism asserts that both social phenomena and their meanings are perpetually being accomplished by various social actors, such as students and lecturers in the case of this study. Thus, constructivism suggests that social properties are outcomes of interaction between individuals rather than phenomena (Bryman & Bell, 2015:33). In this case it suggests that the social properties

of engagement, which are required for success in the PA programme, are determined by the three main stakeholders, namely students, the institution and lecturers.

Mixed method research tends to answer broader ranges of questions that perhaps can't be answered by purely qualitative or quantitative research and provides more comprehensive evidence by corroborating and converging findings (Creswell, 2003:460-461). Another good reason to make use of a mixed method is that if one method has a weakness or shortcoming, another may overcome this and forge a stronger combined method (Du Plessis & Majam, 2010:464). In order to inform theory and practice more effectively a researcher might make use of mixed method research in order to gain a more thorough knowledge base. Mixed method research is found to be more practical as it grants the researcher more freedom and flexibility in their work, as well as adding insight and understanding that could have been overlooked by a puritanical research method (Du Plessis & Majam, 2010:464). Mixed method research has a habit of being time consuming and expensive and various methodological purists believe a researcher should stick to a single method. Finding a researcher with experience in both fields has proven to be an arduous task and the researcher must also learn to successfully apply multiple methods and how to interpret conflicting results and quantitative information in a qualitative manner (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:21).

This mixed method research study implements a case study of the NWU. According to Yin (2009:4) a case study is used to contribute to the existing knowledge of institutions, groups, individuals and various social, economic and political phenomena. A number of units of analysis such as an individual person, a group, or in this case, an institution are studied in detail in a case study (Yin, 2009:4). When an institution such as the NWU is studied, the case study tends to consist of on the spot field work (Fox & Bayat, 2013:69), which in this case will comprise the participation of students from the two identified campuses through a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews with lecturers responsible for the first year PA modules. The questionnaire is heavily influenced by George Kuh's NSSE questionnaire that is publicly available (Indiana University, 2013:1-10).

With a case study it is important to define the boundaries, use an inductive data

collection technique and to make use of triangulation or to use different measuring techniques (Yin, 2009:4-5). A case study is very helpful for gaining greater detail and description of a certain case, individual or topic and can lead to ideas for further research and can open many opportunities (Lanthier, 2002). The main disadvantage of a case study is the difficulty in applying the findings to the general population, as it is focused upon an individual case of circumstances and individuals. The purpose of this research is not to generalise to all higher education institutions, but rather to assist in understanding the nature of student engagement and its influence on student success, specifically focused upon first year PA modules offered by the NWU.

### **1.7.2 Population and sampling**

The population considered within the research includes all first year PA students that are registered for PA modules at the NWU's Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses. This research determines whether students are adequately engaged with their tertiary studies and if they are aware of the skills required for succeeding in the PA programmes. Probability sampling is utilised and more specifically the sub-type of random sampling is used to select a fair and representative sample for the questionnaire. To discover properties, interrelationships and relevant information, judgemental sampling will be used for the interviews. Probability sampling is where each person has an equal chance of being selected as they have a not-zero probability of selection (Sarantakos, 2012:170). Random sampling includes drawing a random number of participants who will have an equal chance to participate in the study. Since this is a mechanical process, any human bias or subjectivity in selection will be eliminated. The selection of participants is also not dependent upon their availability (Bryman & Bell, 2011:172-173). For the purpose of this study class lists were used.

The study utilised a sample of a minimum of 200 students randomly selected from the two campuses, 100 students per campus. There are 208 first year registered students at the Vaal Triangle campus and 447 first year registered students at the Potchefstroom Campus. Non-response will be eliminated by using lecturers and formally scheduled class times to distribute the questionnaire for immediate collection afterwards.

Apart from the students, two lecturers appointed to assist first year students with academic content across the two campuses were interviewed. For these participants non-probability sampling through a judgmental sampling technique will be used. Judgement sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where representative samples are chosen through the judgement of the researcher in terms of how relevant the sample and the information they provide will be to the research questions, thereby saving time and money (Black, 2010:232).

### **1.7.3 Instrumentation**

As has been identified above, the instruments for data collection include a semi-structured questionnaire, interviews and documents as sources of data. According to Jupp (2006:253) a questionnaire is a carefully constructed set of questions given to groups of people simultaneously with the goal of obtaining information related to the questions raised by the researcher. A questionnaire is practical, allows for collecting large amounts of data in a cost effective manner, has a limited effect upon validity and reliability, is easily quantifiable, has a more scientific or objective basis and can be compared to other results (University of Surrey, 2013). For the purpose of the study a semi-structured questionnaire comprising both close and open-ended questions was developed and is attached as Annexure A.

However questionnaires are sometimes seen as inadequate, since phenomenologists view them as artificial constructions, and intensity of thought of respondents is unclear and the respondent may be distracted or forgetful within the situation. People also tend to interpret questions differently, based upon their own thinking patterns, backgrounds and education, leading to subjectivity and the researcher may impose himself or herself by deciding what information is important and what is not (University of Surrey, 2013). Since numerous instruments have already been developed and tested to measure student engagement, the decision to use a similarly structured instrument adapted to focus on first year PA students is adopted. Questions pertaining to the five identified benchmarks as derived from specifically the NSSE were used and questions were contextualised within the South African and PA programmes specifically. The questionnaire is attached as Annexure A.

Qualitative interviewing refers to unstructured or semi-structured interviews guided by an interview guide that creates structure in terms of the topic. The interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, but no specific questions or order in which to ask them (Babbie, 2001:291). In order to gain useful information it is important to construct questions in a manner that will contribute to the research questions. Interviewers must make use of relevant and comprehensible language, avoid leading questions, record information on the candidate and transcribe the interview - with permission of the interviewee (Bryman, 2012:471).

There are various types of questions that can be asked including introductory questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questions, interpreting questions and of course silence (Bryman, 2012:478). With interviews it is also very important to record and transcribe the interview and the answers in order to identify themes and incorporate the results into the body of research (Edwards & Holland, 2013:69). The interview guide developed for the study is attached as Annexure B.

Qualitative interviewing carries with it a number of advantages. Certain things just can't be rationally observed without being impractical and intrusive, thus, making interviews an easier approach. Interviews also allow for scenario reconstruction, provide a more ethical approach than unknowingly observing persons of interest, reduce reactive effects from observation and are less obtrusive. Qualitative interviews have a greater breadth of coverage and have a specific focus (Edwards & Holland, 2013:90).

Voluntary consent from both interviewees and respondents to the semi-structured questionnaire was obtained by interviewees signing an informed consent letter and respondents indicating their consent as part of the questionnaire. All respondents were assured of their confidentiality, the objectives of the research and their voluntary participation therein. Interviewees consented to their involvement and disclosure of their identities. Ethics approval for the research was also granted by the NWU Ethics Committee which further protects the integrity of the research and the use thereof for academic purposes only.

Documents as a source of data refer to literature works that can be read, that have been produced for the purpose of social research, that have been preserved for analysis and works that are relevant to the research conducted by the researcher (Bryman, 2012:543). There are various types of documents including personal documents such as letters and diaries, visual objects such as photographs, official state documents such as bills, official documents from private sources such as memos and minutes, mass media outputs such as newspapers and books and lastly virtual objects or more specifically sources on the internet (Bryman, 2012: 543).

Quite a bit of research has been done on most topics, including student engagement, with new research leading out of questions formed from previous research documents found in books, journals and both unpublished and published reports (Welman *et al.*, 2006:20). In most cases it is important to replicate or rework previous research with a new angle in order to gain new insight as well as higher feasibility (Fouché & De Vos, 2007:95). A literature review is done in order to assist a researcher with their argument in terms of the significance of their research and also showcases knowledge in the area of the study. A literature review also shows a researcher as capable of reviewing and interpreting research done by others in the field. Having completed a literature review a researcher must be informed of what is known about the topic, which concepts and theories are relevant, which strategies and methods were used and must also identify controversies, inconsistencies and unanswered questions (Bryman, 2012:98-99).

The following databases have been consulted to ascertain the availability of material for the purpose of this research:

- Catalogue of theses and dissertations of South African Universities (NEXUS)
- Catalogue of books: Ferdinand Postma Bibilioteek (North-West University)
- Catalogue of books: Potchefstroom Campus Libraries Catalogue
- Catalogue of Journals: Journals & E-Books @ NWU

#### **1.7.4 Data analysis**

Quantitative data can guide the assessment of the generalisability of the more loose qualitative data and show it in a new light. Qualitative data can in turn serve by

interpreting, clarifying, describing and validating the quantitative results by modifying and grounding the research (Johnson *et al.*, 2007:115).

Qualitative data analyses may be done either with a commercially available computer programme or manually (Babbie, 2009:400-401). For the purpose of this mixed method study a combination of four strategies, as suggested by Babbie (2008:400-402) are used. Analysis reveals hidden meaning by clarifying concepts, statements and terms; synthesis also known as interpretation connects relevant and interrelated information in order to create a new statement, theory or concept by sifting through large amounts of collected data; induction shifts the data in a more general direction in order to discover patterns or relationships through scrutiny to create a more holistic view and deduction is the conclusion that is reached by reasoning from general principles from without the research (Babbie, 2009:400-402). In this mixed method study qualitative data is thematically analysed with quantitative data offered as support for further understanding the nature of first year student engagement in PA modules.

#### **1.7.5 Limitations and delimitations**

Mixed method research tends to be time consuming and expensive and many methodological purists believe a researcher should choose only one approach. It is also notoriously difficult to find a researcher with experience in both fields and the researcher must also learn to apply multiple methods and how to interpret conflicting results and quantitative information in a qualitative manner (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:21).

A further limitation of mixed method research is a researcher bias towards the research method in which they may have been trained, such as qualitative research. Mixed method research has a habit of reducing qualitative research to a mere exploratory tool instead of using it to also define problems and solutions (Moss, 2015). Bryman (2012:649) states that by using mixed method research a researcher could end up diluting the research effort in any area, considering how resources need to be spread across the entire body of research.

The main limitation of this study is the degree to which it can be generalised due to the

nature of a case study. This research will focus upon the circumstances surrounding the NWU and the findings can, thus, not be applied to a more general scope, such as student engagement throughout PA programmes at all South African higher education institutions.

## **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the PA programme is to ensure that the public sector is provided with skilled, informed and well trained officials by producing graduates capable of demonstrating skills related to project administration, organising, application and the successful administration of human and financial resources. However students often find the programme confusing and many decide not to consider it or to abandon it completely before completion, leading to a concern regarding the preparation and aptitude of students that undertake the programme, which could originate from problems in secondary schooling or possibly even the structure of the programme (Jones, 2012:130-132).

This research seeks to form a comprehensive view on how engaged first year students are in the PA programmes at the NWU and the underlying structure and issues concerning the successful completion of the programmes as a whole. The specific skills, traits, aptitude and other entrance requirements have not been analysed in terms of their relationship with student engagement and this research could prove to be insightful, as well as reviewing how the students interact with the lecturers and the institution itself. The research could identify shortcomings and challenges and could provide recommendations on more effective practices for the universities or other tertiary institutions. From an academic point of view the research could prove invaluable in informing lecturers responsible for the teaching of PA programmes of the opinions and expectations of students in ensuring their academic success.

## **1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

Chapter 1: Outline and orientation of the study.

Within this section the study specifies what the research problem and questions are,

followed by the reasons for the research and the order in which the research is presented.

Chapter 2: Student engagement: a literature review.

This section thoroughly analyses literature in order to determine the nature of student engagement in PA programmes, with a focus upon the case of first year students at the NWU.

Chapter 3: A review of PA in Tertiary Education.

This section examines the role of higher education and PA as a discipline, namely how the programme has developed over the years and how it appears within higher education.

Chapter 4: Challenges in facilitating first year student engagement in Public Administration modules.

This section looks at the PA programme and practices at the NWU and possible shortcomings and challenges concerned with the successful undertaking of the programme by students. It makes use of the five benchmarks identified earlier to assess engagement on behalf of students and faculty and gathers results from these questionnaires and interview outcomes.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.

This section encompasses the conclusions of the research and seeks to offer possible suggestions or recommendations as to the improvement of the outcomes for PA programmes.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

The goal of this chapter was to bring the research into context through the provision of background information and laying down the research problem. This chapter also provided the main objectives and questions asked by the research and provided a

framework for the methodology of the rest of the research, considered limitations and brought focus to the significance of the chapter. Throughout the chapter the concept of student engagement has been placed as focus with PA programmes as the specific locus for the study. The argument put forth in support of the study is that student success is dependent on the extent to which an institution, such as the NWU, through its academic programme, such as its PA programmes, are able to engage students in such a manner as to ensure the delivery of a graduate able and capable of taking his or her place in society as a contributing member of that society. However, students who are disengaged with their academic learning experience may experience the institution as not providing a constructive environment supportive of learning. Thus, this chapter highlights the importance of connecting the learner to the content as well as to the learning environment. The following chapter will serve as a literature review that focuses on the concept of student engagement.

## **CHAPTER 2: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will serve as the first of two literature reviews and addresses the research objective pertaining to providing a literature review for student engagement. A literature review aims to assist a researcher with his/her argument in terms of the significance of his/her research and also showcases knowledge in the area of the study. A literature review also shows a researcher as capable of reviewing and interpreting research done by others in the field. At the end of the literature review a researcher must be informed of what is known about the topic, which concepts and theories are relevant, which strategies and methods were used and must also identify controversies, inconsistencies and unanswered questions (Bryman, 2012:98-99). As such, this particular chapter's literature review will focus on demonstrating an understanding of student engagement within broader learning theories in an effort to identify which specific theoretical concepts will inform the empirical collection of data.

“Student engagement is the product of motivation and active learning. It is a product, rather than a sum, because it will not occur if either element is missing” (Barkley, 2010:6). Student engagement is a key component of any educational endeavour, including those offered by higher education institutions that focus on adult learning. With so much social and political change in the world and the way people think, older and more traditional instruction-based education strategies, curricula and techniques may become outdated and irrelevant to a generation of young adult learners whose minds function differently than that of students two or three decades ago (Kuh, 2001:10).

For many students in their first year the initial time of being students is like being in an alien environment, with many who think they are doing well suddenly taking a downward spiral despite attending their class twice a week or cramming for tests. This is however avoidable if the institution successfully facilitates engagement amongst its students, so as to help them integrate within the environment and make the students aware of what is expected of them (Kuh, 2004:86).

The goal of this chapter is to provide a literature background to student engagement in order to better understand the movement from instructing to engaging students and how it is used to analyse the success of education in higher education institutions. This chapter will analyse the various learning theories, firstly, to determine how each has affected the way in which students are expected to engage with their work. Secondly, the theory concerning student engagement will be reviewed, being divided into the different developmental theories to ascertain how students are seen as developing and how learning takes place and is followed by college impact models to describe the change that takes place within learning due to environmental factors and experience. This will be followed by a discussion of the instruments used in measuring student engagement. These include the NSSE, the AUSSE and the SASSE and their benchmarks on how engagement is measured in higher education institutions (as also alluded to in Chapter One). Finally a conclusion will be provided.

## **2.2 LEARNING THEORIES**

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010:1548) defines theory as a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained. The Business Dictionary (2015:1) defines theory as a set of propositions, assumptions or facts that have been accepted in order to provide a possible and rational explanation for causal relationships among observed phenomena. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2005:760) defines a theory as an account of the world which goes beyond what a person can see and measure, which embraces the interrelated definitions and relationships which shape concepts and the world in a systematic manner. For the purpose of the study, theory is understood to encompass the propositions and assumptions which underpin student engagement in an effort to conceptualise it within the context of the first year PA students' engagement with the North-West University.

The OALD (2010:846) defines learning as the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience or being taught. Learning is defined by Shuell (1986:413) as an enduring change in behaviour or in the capacity to behave in a specific manner by obtaining results from practice or varying forms of experience. Learning is also viewed

and defined as a process that is dependent on experience and practice and which will guide an individual towards long-term changes in potential, according to Sharma (2015:1). The definition of learning to be used for this research will be that learning is defined as an acquisition of knowledge and skills through practice and experience, which leads to long-term changes in the behaviour of an individual which has undergone the process of learning. This common definition of a change in behaviour as stated above fails to capture the more complex aspects of learning such as whether a student needs to perform academically for learning to take place or whether most, if not all human behaviour is learned (Merriam *et al.*, 2007:276).

When it comes to how skills and knowledge is obtained there are a number of emotional, cognitive and environmental influences as well as previous experience that influence students' engagement with their institution (Illeris, 2003:398). Merriam *et al.* (2007:277) argue that learning is a process that combines emotional, cognitive and environmental influences and various experiences to obtain, shape or transform a person's skills, values, worldviews and knowledge. When one views learning as a process the focus is placed on what occurs during the learning which is also what learning theories aim to explain (Merriam *et al.*, 2007:277).

Learning theories are frameworks that describe how students absorb, process and retain information during the learning process (Merriam *et al.*, 2007:276). One of the leading classical theories similar to behaviourist theories, which will be discussed later, would be the *Tabula Rasa* or Blank Slate Theory of John Locke (1632-1704), which argues that humans are born with no prior knowledge and start out life with a blank slate. People have a biological ability to transcribe information onto this slate through their experiences with their surroundings, eventually leading to more developed and complex ideas to form (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 2005:755).

Lecturers will achieve more if they have an understanding of the level of cognitive functioning of their students and also understand that not every student in any given class, group, age or field is necessarily at the same level. Students also find it easier to construct knowledge in classes where exploration of material is encouraged through activity and questions within a rich and interactive environment (Schunk, 2000:237-8).

Lecturers can also make use of incongruity by making material not too easily assimilated and copied, while at the same time ensuring that it is not too difficult to preclude accommodation. Social interaction is also a very important source for knowledge development and the views of other can be heard making students more responsive to others (Schunk, 2000:237-8). In other words institutions need to ensure that students become engaged in their work and that they can relate to it in some way based on their individual experiences and not just relay information in a manner similar to a computer. Students need to learn not only how to take in new information, but how to think and use it for themselves to construct their own ideas.

Scott (2009:41-42) argues that traditional teaching methods that are predominantly used in South African higher education institutions have proven to be less than capable of facilitating quality learning in a significant portion of the student body. The traditional approaches fail to produce effective counters to educational disadvantage and it does little to address diversity among students. According to Bitzer (2009:209) most lecturers assume a business as usual approach, making it difficult to get them to focus critically on their sometimes outdated teaching practices and to notice the broader field of higher education other than just the discipline within which they find themselves.

In the early 20th century learning was considered as something which occurs within the individual and despite whether they may participate or learn in groups it is still the individual person that learns. Most education systems have adopted this view and function accordingly, if not with actual instruction then at least with the assessment of student performance and the assignment of grades. Traditionally knowledge is seen as something that is transferred from one individual to another i.e. between lecturer and student. Knowledge is, thus, obtained by individuals and when learnt by a student it can be reproduced in the original form (Shuell, 2013:3).

The manner in which a class session would be conducted in a traditional sense would revolve around the lecturer, who controls all aspects by presenting the material and dictating which activities students will engage in. Students are expected to, through use of self-study and classroom activities, study this new information until they master it and the knowledge has been transferred between the two parties (Shuell, 2013:4).

From the 1940's and onwards however several academic development specialists and psychologists, including Holland, Watson, Skinner, Vygotsky, Bandura and Piaget have shown interest in moving towards alternative approaches to curriculums, learning and teaching that are fundamentally different from the dominant traditional views. This has ranged from problems with programme identity and "Africanisation" of curricula to more problem-based learning and constructivist approaches (Scott, 2009:30).

How learning takes place and what form it takes is, thus, influenced by how the lecturers think the acquisition of knowledge works in a person's mind, in other words whether they simply soak up all relayed information or whether they experience a process of assimilation in their cognitive development. The following will seek to analyse existing learning theories that have developed into the constructivist learning theories currently applicable.

### **2.2.1 Behaviourism and humanism**

According to Merriam *et al.* (2007:278-9) behaviourism emerged in the early decades of the 20th century, spearheaded by John B. Watson (1878-1958) and was more fully developed as a theory by Burrhus F. Skinner (1904-1990). Behaviourism as a learning theory has three assumptions about learning. Firstly, the environment is believed to shape behaviour, meaning that what is learnt is determined by the elements in the environment rather than the individual. Secondly, learning is focused on observable behaviour rather than internal thoughts, which means that learning is evidence of behavioural change. Thirdly, the principles of contiguity and reinforcement in other words the time required for a bond to form and the likelihood of repeating something are important to address in order to explain the process of learning (Grippin & Peters, 1984:56).

Behaviourism is closely linked to technical and adult education, as well as human resource development as it focuses on determining what skills are required to perform the duties of a profession and then teaching those skills and maintaining a standard of performance for that skill set (Merriam *et al.*, 2007:281). A fatal flaw as well as a large source of criticism against the behaviourist theory is that a substantial amount of the

research that has been done to develop the theory was based on animal test subjects and their behaviour and subsequently generalised to apply to much more complex human behaviour and cognitive processes placing the validity of the entire theory in danger (Boulding, 1984:483-484).

Dissident groups rejected the views of human nature proposed by behaviourism, refusing the idea of predetermined behaviour by either the environment or a person and choosing to rather believe that humans can control their own destiny, are inherently good and strive to better themselves and their environment, that behaviour is the product of individual human choice and that the possibilities for human growth are infinite (McLeod, 2007:1). This gave birth to the humanist learning theory in the early to mid-19th century under Abraham H. Maslow (1908-1970) and Carl R. Rogers (1902-1987). Humanism as a learning theory places emphasis on perceptions being centred in experiences as well as the responsibility and freedom to become what a person is capable of. Much of adult learning is dependent on this view that places emphasis on self-directedness of adult students and the value of the entire process of learning (Merriam *et al.*, 2007:282).

In the 1950's behaviourism was challenged on the basis of its research yet again on the grounds of how it based all its findings on observable behaviour, while mental processes were not observable with the naked eye. This gave way to the cognitive approach, that was developed by Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) (Asia E-university, 2002:106). The cognitive approach is supported by the assumption that the memory system is an organised information processor and that all previous knowledge plays a part in learning new information (Gredler, 1997:144; Kim, 2001:1).

In terms of adult education humanist learning theory appears to be compatible with democratic political systems and the voluntary nature of adult education, consisting of practical considerations such as striving to meet the needs of adult students to survive (Elias & Merriam, 2005:144). Humanism is also found to be easily transferable over different professions and fields, especially professions working with humans. However, due to the free will concept of the theory it becomes complicated when trying to study the effectiveness of the technique. More unique mental or personality structures are

often overlooked by humanist theories and some generalisations made about the nature of human learning are not widely accepted, such as the inherent goodness of humans and obvious bad decisions (McLeod, 2007:1).

### **2.2.2 Cognitive development and constructivism**

Insight, meaning and perception are important for cognitive theory as the human mind is not a mere information exchange system functioning on stimuli and responses, but rather interpretations of sensations and then trying to give meaning to events to form knowledge (Grippin & Peters, 1984:76). Merriam *et al.* (2007:287) summarise cognitive learning theories as being concerned with internal mental processes that are controlled by the individual. The cognitive process seeks to explain and clarify the processes involved in learning by looking towards the mental processes involved initially. This learning theory asserts that if an individual has effective cognitive processing, information can be managed and stored for longer and learning becomes easier through this, whereas insufficient cognitive processes lead to learning difficulties (Sincerco, 2011:1). Cognitive learning theories also serve as the basis for constructivist theories, which places an emphasis on the role of the individual within their own learning through creating their own view from the information provided, according to Atherton (2013:1).

Social cognitive learning theories started out as the Social Learning Theory under Albert Bandura in the 1960's and developed into its present form in 1986 (Boston University School of Public Health, 2015:1). This Theory was originally designed with an increased emphasis on social behaviour acquisition and continues to place focus on the social context within which learning occurs and the assumption that learning occurs through observation, this means that students observe the actions of others and learn through them. Bandura's original study was to determine why children exhibited aggressive behaviour, but ended up contradicting the notion of trial and error learning and the cognitive theory which states that changes in behaviour are due to the consequences of an individual's own actions (Denler *et al.*, 2014:1). Social cognitive learning theories place focus on how learning occurs amongst others within a social environment such as an institution through the observation of others. Individuals obtain skills, rules, beliefs, strategies and attitudes by observing and assessing other persons. Individuals also

notice the usefulness of certain behaviours by seeing the consequences for themselves and acting according to the framework of their beliefs (Schunk, 2008:102). Social cognitive learning focuses on five core concepts. The first is the above mentioned learning through observation, in other words repeating what has been seen. The second concept is that of outcome expectations, which entails that which an individual believes will occur if particular behaviours are performed, this can be seen in the expected result or reaction of others. The third concept is that of self-efficacy, reflecting the belief of individuals of whether they believe they can achieve the goals of the task at hand. The fourth concept consists of the setting of goals as it represents the expected or desired outcomes (Denler *et al.*, 2014:1-2). The fifth concept, according to Denler *et al.* (2014:2), is that of self-regulation, which has paved the way for students to manage and control their own learning behaviours.

For the purposes of this study many of these concepts come into play especially those which focus on how students rely on themselves and their individual actions and attitudes towards the work. Students have to establish their own personal goals of what they would like to achieve through the programme and, thus, create their own expectations regarding outcomes and setting personal goals to achieve these desired outcomes. This of course means that social cognitive theories play an active role in student engagement in higher education programmes as these actions cover the general idea of engaging with the work and the programme.

Constructivism found its origins within the work of the philosopher Jean Piaget (1896-1980), specifically his Theory of Cognitive Development (as described in more detail later on) (Atherton, 2013:1). Piaget discovered that by analysing growing children they undergo cognitive development. His Theory relies heavily on the notions that children cannot reason on certain levels before reaching a specific age, whereupon they would develop the ability to do so (Atherton, 2011:1). The process relies heavily on adaption and more specifically the sub-processes of assimilation, the stage where raw data and information are gathered, and accommodation, the process where this new information is incorporated with existing knowledge to form a new concept or understanding (Atherton, 2013:1). This Theory, thus, positions learning as the product of construction,

which has affected education to this day, by serving as the basis according to which curriculums are designed, as argued by Atherton (2013:1). Constructivism as a learning theory emerged out of the assumptions of previous theories that thinking resides in the mind rather than in interactions, that the process of learning as well as thinking are uniform across persons and that thinking is derived from knowledge and skills developed by formal instruction rather than by innate abilities and experiences (Schunk, 2000:229). According to Schunk (2000:229) the two main criticisms against these assumptions are that not only does thinking take place within contexts, but cognition itself is mainly constructed by individuals through their experiences in situations.

Constructivism as a learning theory states that people construct that which they not only learn but understand (Brunning *et al.*, 1995:194-195). Constructivism places emphasis on the interaction of persons and situations in the accumulation and refinement of their individual knowledge and skills. The aforementioned view clashes with classical information processing theories that place learning solely within the mind of a person with little to no regard of the context wherein it takes place, but also with behavioural views that overemphasise the environment (Schunk, 2000:229). Information processing theories propose that information is obtained, processed like a computer does and then stored in three stages in a discontinuous manner and assumes that the mind has a limited capacity (Huitt, 2003:1).

From a constructivist view educators or lecturers make use of materials to actively involve their class through social interaction or manipulation via activities that require observing, collecting data, generating and testing a general hypothesis and working in a collaborative manner rather than the traditional instruction and relaying of information (Schunk, 2000:229). Students are also encouraged to actively participate by setting goals for themselves and then monitoring and evaluating their own progress towards these goals and also indulging their own interests rather than simply fulfilling minimum requirements (Brunning *et al.*, 2004:139).

According to Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, cognitive development is determined by four factors, namely biological maturation, in other words the physical age and growth of a person in correlation with their mind's development, experience with the

social environment, experience with the physical environment and equilibration. Equilibration is defined as the biological drive to produce an optimal state of adaption between the environment and cognitive structures (Schunk, 2000:233). This will be discussed as it pertains to student engagement in the following section. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Theory proposed that a difference existed between what people can accomplish on their own and what they can accomplish with assistance. The ZPD Theory's main idea is that of a person who is better versed in a field carrying their skills over unto a lesser versed student, who is then in the zone of proximal development and can more effectively then learn from instruction (Chaiklin, 2003:3).

Because the student is such an integral part of the engagement process and the idea of enhanced learning is the basis thereof and the aforementioned learning theories are based on them it is required to discuss student engagement next. The following section will deal with the theoretical perspectives on student engagement.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:608) have stated that the more a student engages or is involved in academic work, the greater their rate of gathering information and cognitive development. Student engagement is defined as the degree of interest, attention, curiosity, optimism and passion shown by students when they are learning new information in an educational situation, which influences their motivation to progress and learn the material (Abbott, 2014:1). Barkley (2009:6) argues that student engagement is the product of active learning and motivation.

Newmann (1992:23) suggests that students make a psychological investment in learning, by attempting to learn what is offered and by comprehending, incorporating and applying the material in their lives. Chapman (2003:2) considers student engagement as the willingness of students to participate in activities associated with learning such as attending classes, submitting required work and following the instructions of their lecturer.

Fletcher (2005:5) continues by arguing that student engagement is meaningful when students participate in classroom management, school building climates and the design of the curriculum in a programme. Markwell (2007:18) adds to these definitions by stating that student engagement also refers to students participating in extra-curricular activities as part of campus life with educational benefits enabling students to focus on their curricular studies. Ultimately, student engagement focuses on two aspects, namely the involvement or engagement of the student with his or her academic environment and the involvement of the institution in enabling the student to achieve success in that academic environment, as was also argued in Chapter One (Markwell, 2007:18).

What becomes evident is that student engagement is highly influenced by the time and energy spent by the student as well as the institution on educational activities and the development and use of effective educational practices respectively (Strydom & Mentz, 2010:v). Kuh *et al.* (2011:4) have stated that the combination of the time and energy spent by students will lead to outcomes and experiences that will in turn lead to the success of the student. Student success is then more broadly understood as not only consisting of obtaining a qualification, but also of being engaged in the academic endeavour that develops a student into a person who will take an active role in his or her society.

Barkley (2010:6) states that engagement does not occur when students are merely motivated without results or when students are actively learning but have no interest in the material. Only when both motivation and active learning are present are students engaged in their studies. But engagement can also go further. Some lecturers at higher education institutions believe transformative learning to be an element of student engagement, while others regard it as a result of sustained engagement that takes place at a high personal intensity (Barkley, 2010:7).

Transformative learning occurs when university students are challenged in such a manner that it leads to intellectual and ethical growth, corroding their former dualistic nature of thinking and engaging in more complex stages of cognitive or intellectual development, as developed by Perry (1981) by learning to deal with relativism and uncertainty (Barkley, 2010:7). In doing so students learn that there are other arguments

and opinions and that other criterion exists against which to measure theories and information. This is known as multiplicity or realising that there may be more than one solution or no solution at all and that students' own opinions matter (Hall, 2013:1).

Relativism, as identified by Perry (1981), is where students start seeing knowledge in a more contextual light, develop their own viewpoints based on evidentiary supported sources and realise that even the experts in a field are open to scrutiny (Hall, 2013:1). Within this stage of thought students start to develop more critical and analytical thinking skills (Van Dijk, 2013:90).

The final stage of transformative learning is that point where students realise that they must make their own choices by combining both objective analysis and personal values. This is where transformative thinking takes place and commitment occurs (Barkley, 2010:7). Commitment is, thus, the combination of knowledge and personal experiences and reflection, where students make commitments and start taking responsibility for their beliefs. Commitment leads to the accumulation of knowledge being an on-going lifelong activity (Hall, 2013:1). Commitment plays into this study of student engagement by seeing how deeply students are prepared to delve into theoretical work in order to not only understand and construct the existing body of knowledge but to add to this by shaping their own ideas and asking the right questions. If a student becomes more engaged with their work, they begin to understand the information in a less dualistic nature as stated above and this leads to transformative learning occurring at higher education institutions.

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:16-60) student engagement can be divided into two categories namely, developmental theories and college impact models. The first section will discuss developmental theories.

### **2.3.1 Developmental theories**

Developmental theories focus on individual change's nature and content, where change is seen as developmental and focus is placed on how individuals behave and think. Developmental theories, inherently constructivist in nature, can be divided into psycho-

social development, typological models, cognitive structural theories and person-environment interaction theories and models (Van Dijk, 2013:89).

Psychosocial development is based on the seven vectors for identity development as proposed by Chickering in 1969. The first vector, developing competence, entails using one's mind to construct knowledge and skill by forming points of view and making use of analytical thought. The second vector, managing emotions, involves learning to control emotions such as fear and anxiety to prevent intervention with academic work (Butner & De Larrosa, 2000:2). The third vector, moving through autonomy toward interdependence encompasses the emotional separation from support groups such as peers and teachers and learning how to solve problems by oneself. The fourth vector, developing mature interpersonal relationships consists of developing a capacity for empathy and maintaining appreciation and tolerance of differences. The fifth vector, establishing identity, requires an individual to accept themselves in order to create an identity. The sixth vector, developing purpose, requires students to determine the reason for their studies such as career goals and aspirations. The final vector, developing integrity, involves developing a sense of integrity around one's personal values and beliefs, as well as respect for those of others (Butner & De Larrosa, 2000:3-4). The purpose of these vectors is to demonstrate how the development of a student within a higher education setting affects their emotional, physical, intellectual and social being, which all play a part in how well a student engages in their work and their ability to succeed and reach their own goals as well as those of the institution (Butner & De Larrosa, 2000:1). Chickering and Reisser (1993:267) found that in order to facilitate student engagement institutions need to ensure clear unambiguous objectives, policies and practices that are consistent and standardised. Institutions must also ensure that the size of the institution does not exclude students and teaching must be flexible and encourage students to actively participate in the process. Programmes must also incorporate thoughts within processes, in other words they must divulge the process through which the thought or idea was created, and establish a meaningful community amongst students and ensure that students are being developed (Van Dijk, 2013:89).

Typological models focus on characteristics and behaviours that are consistent over a

period of time within an individual. Typological models focus rather on learning or personality styles than on development, despite some models having a developmental component. Some models also concern person-environment aspects, which will be discussed later and subcultures found amongst students (Komives & Woodard, 2003:163-4). Thus, typological models focus on how individuals see the world and how they respond accordingly. The learning styles and theories of David Kolb (1976) serve as an example of how two different students from different backgrounds will view higher education in a different manner. Kolb and Kolb (2005:4) argue that students have different learning styles based on their personality and background. Kolb's learning styles are concerned with different types of learners which would mean that if a student was for instance a pragmatist as opposed to an activist, they process and learn differently (Kolb & Kolb, 2005:5). Further examples of typological models include the Myers-Briggs (1980) personality types which classifies a person into four personality groups, which together shape the individual personality and Holland's (1985) Theory of Vocational Interest (Komives & Woodard, 2003:194-5). The Myers-Briggs personality typological model was inspired by Carl Jung's psychological factors of sensation, intuition, thinking and feeling, where one is dominant over the other, influencing how a person not only thinks and acts, but how they learn (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2012:519). Holland's Vocational Preferences Model proposes six personality types and areas of interest, namely, artistic, realistic, conventional, investigative, enterprising and social (De Bruin, 2002:49). The argument here is, thus, that a curriculum should be created to change and form a person based on their personal experience with the curriculum itself.

Cognitive structural theories found their origin from the work of Jean Piaget (1964), which aims to understand the development of not only thought processes and mental states, but seeks to interpret how they affect the way in which an individual understands and interprets the world as well (Cherry, 2015:1). According to Huitt and Hummel (2003:1) there are two major aspects to the Cognitive Development Theory of Piaget namely, the processes and stages of cognitive development. In theory people rely upon reflexes when born which are replaced with constructed schemes as they age, which in its turn is replaced by structures when they become more complex. The individual undergoes this process through assimilation and adaption, the former being the

gathering of information and the latter being the incorporation of it into the existing body of knowledge. When there is a conflict of knowledge, in other words when new information is presented, there are two ways in which the process of equilibration can be applied. Firstly, assimilation is the process of fitting and shifting external reality into an existing cognitive structure, while, secondly, accommodation is the process of changing internal structures or beliefs to be more consistent with the external reality that has been provided (McLeod, 2009:1). The study argues that learning, thus, occurs when a student experiences cognitive conflict and then engages in accommodation and assimilation in order to construct or alter knowledge. Naturally this would have an effect on education and the environment in which it occurs. The four stages of cognitive development from infancy to adulthood include sensorimotor operations for infants relying on motor activity, the pre-operational stage where young children form non-logical thoughts and start developing imagination and the third stage is the concrete operational stage where adolescents start focusing on a more systematic and logical system. The final stage, the formal operational stage is present in late adolescence and adulthood, uses logical symbols related to abstract concepts and sees a brief return to the egocentric train of thought present in childhood early in the stage. This stage involves hypothetical and deductive reasoning which appears to be adopted through maturation, but requires a special environment to cultivate (Huitt & Hummel, 2003:1-2). Cognitive structural theories see individual change and adaption as producing student engagement as a reaction of students' encounters with learning (Van Dijk, 2014:90). Students in higher education institutions need to be well developed in terms of cognitive ability in order to process the information that they are provided with to make sense of a subject. The question is whether students have achieved this final stage of cognitive development and if not what is keeping them from achieving it.

Person-environment interaction theories, initiated by Holland (1997) focus on how an individual's environment will have an effect on their development, in other terms how the environment's influence came through in a student's development (Neufield *et al.*, 2006:1). The idea is that congruency between and individual and the environment within which they develop promote stability and this leads to beneficial gains from studying (Gottfredson, 1985). The physical environmental aspects such as the behaviour and

attitudes of peers, the actual surroundings and facilities and the organisation and the social climate within the environment will have an effect on the success achieved by the individual (Neufield *et al.*, 2006:2-3). Any curriculum or academic programme naturally takes place within an environment and this environment must be accommodating to the curriculum and the students involved within the curriculum in order to keep students actively engaged and involved with their development (Van Dijk, 2013:91).

Deductively the developmental theories play a part in how students become engaged in their work by recognising how the mind of a higher education student ought to have developed thus far and which processes they undergo in order to assimilate information and construct knowledge for themselves. Institutions should then not only develop programmes according to how students have developed thus far (acknowledging the active learning through which the student has thus far cognitively developed), but also in a manner which will encourage them to develop further to reach higher levels of thought, and thereby engagement. The following section will look at college impact models.

### **2.3.2 College impact models**

The second category, college impact models, describes how environmental and inter-individual experiences affect students, which is all influenced by the characteristics of the institution. Various factors come into play here, such as gender, socio-economic status, organisational characteristics including the size and selection processes and the political and social climate surrounding the studies of students (Sax & Wartman, 2010:224).

The three most important authors contributing to college impact models are Astin (1999), Tinto (1997) and Pascarella (1985). Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement concerns the quantity and quality of actual physical and psychological effort a student has put into their academic work. To Astin this goes hand in hand with the idea of student effort and is seen by him as being behavioural in nature. Simply put, a student who devotes more time through participation would fare better than a dissociative peer (Astin, 1999:518-519). Astin sees involvement as concerning the psychological and physical investment of a student in an objective, for the institution to realise that different students will view

the work that they must do differently, that one student won't see all aspects of the work equally at all times and to create an environment that has the capacity to increase the participation and engagement of students. Astin believes that a student's levels of learning and development are directly related to the level of engagement he or she shows and that involvement has both quantitative and qualitative aspects, in other words, the amount of time spent studying and whether the student grasps and understands the work or is merely repeating and rehearsing the material (Astin, 1999:519). Students should be able to not only copy the work over from textbooks and be able to recite it in order to become engaged. They should actively take time to understand ideas and concepts in order to be able to inquire and understand relationships and relevancies within the information, rather than remembering the information in the manner of simple duplication.

Vincent Tinto's (1997) Theory of Student Departure, also known as the Theory of Student Retention was aimed at trying to distinguish why students leave higher education institutions. Tinto surmises that dropouts are more often due to sociological reasons, than a lack of ability or intelligence (Long, 2012:52). Students come from diverse backgrounds, with different families, socio-economic backgrounds, social standings, peer groups, financial ability and education to name but a few and all of these have an impact on how a student identifies and integrates into a university experiences and interactions. If the student is too removed from his or her peers and institution he or she usually ends up leaving after struggling to become engaged (Mullendore & Hatch, 2000:3-4). As discussed later retention is an important factor for student engagement and the NSSE as a whole. If students feel isolated or estranged from their work they lose interest and their work suffers as a result leading to eventual dropout.

Ernest Pascarella's General Model for Assessing Change (1985) suggests that students' development are affected by the students' personal traits, the organisational characteristics of the institution, the campus culture, the different socialising agents found within the institution and the amount and quality of the effort put forth by the student (Long, 2012:53). According to this Model, learning and cognitive development are indirectly dependant on the institution's structural features such as student-staff ratio

and acceptance policies, while the quality of the student's engagement and effort is determined by the interaction and communication that takes place between the students, their peers and their lecturers and by considering the aptitude, personality and personal aspirations of the student (Perozzi, 2009:32).

A recurring theme throughout college models is that of the effect of environment on the success of students in higher education. Student's success is, thus, not only determined by how well students react to changing situations, but also how the institution's environment induces change (Van Dijk, 2013:92). According to Van Dijk (2013:92) students attend higher education institutions and select certain curricula in order to obtain a better paying career so that they can achieve success. Universities need to identify strategies and opportunities to manipulate this view to improve the performance of the institution and its students, while at the same time ensuring students of a rich and rewarding student experience at the institution. In other words they must realise that the lecturer who is able to bring subject matter to life will be able to engage their students and peak their interests in the possibility of lifelong learning and engagement (Van Dijk, 2013:93). This will ensure success for both parties. Student engagement is, thus, the interaction between students and staff, an inclusive and upholding environment and an active and synergetic learning experience, achieved through persistence and development in different dimensions including social and cognitive developments.

The idea of these theories as theoretical assumptions plays into student engagement by trying to clarify how students cognitive development work and how they should be actively engaged in their work in order to achieve their academic goals. For this study these theories serve the purpose of laying a foundation for what engagement requires of students, faculty and the institution based on how students learn and how they develop ideas and knowledge. The following section will discuss the instruments used to measure student engagement as it has been identified within this section. The different benchmarks used by the instruments will also be reviewed.

## **2.4 INSTRUMENTS**

This section will take a look at the instruments that have been developed to measure

engagement among students. An instrument may be used to measure student engagement specifically when it indicates the relationship between the environment in which learning occurs and the students within the environment (Oblinger, 2006:13). Surveys are utilised so as to determine how higher education institutions can identify practices and student experiences that add to the value of every student's development, while at the same time ensuring that the institution maintains high standards of output and success (Van Dijk, 2013:95).

The ultimate goal according to MacDonald (2007:8) is to ensure an environment that fosters integrity and intellectual growth, while building and developing knowledge and skills of the students. Kuh (2010:25) states that an instrument such as the NSSE is used as a survey to assess educational activities related to educational and personal growth and by doing so aims to assist with various research programmes at higher education institutions.

Several instruments through which student engagement is determined have been developed, but for the purpose of this study attention will be given to the NSSE, the AUSSE and the SASSE. The following section will discuss the development of these instruments and the subsequent section will look more closely at the benchmarks used by the instruments.

#### **2.4.1 Development of instruments**

The NSSE was created at a meeting of higher education leaders at the Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana in February 1998 with the goal of providing evidentiary support as to the effectiveness of learning and teaching at undergraduate programmes, in order to assist universities to improve their quality beyond what can be provided by mere statistics and ratings based on reputation and resources (Kuh, 2001:12). The NSSE's origins find root in the seven principles of good practice undergraduate education developed in 1986 by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson, joined by a handful of others at a Wingspread retreat (Kuh, 2011:12). The previously mentioned seven principles of good practice includes developing reciprocity and cooperation under students, giving prompt feedback, emphasising time spent on a task,

high standards for communication, encouraging contact between the faculty and the students, encouraging active learning and respecting diverse talents and learning methods (Chickering & Gamson, 1987:1). In February 1998, Russ Edgerton convened a small group of educational leaders and scholars at The Pew Charitable Trusts to discuss concerns about how higher education rankings in the United States (U.S.) were determined. Everyone agreed that alternative measures of higher education quality were needed, both for institutional improvement purposes and to help enlighten the public as to what really is important to tertiary institutions quality. One of the more promising ideas was an annual assessment of the extent to which institutions were using the kinds of good educational practices identified in the literature of Chickering and Gamson (Kuh, 2001:12).

Toward this end and with support from Pew, Peter Ewell convened a group of nationally known scholars on college student development with a charge to develop a short survey instrument focused on the extent to which students engage in good educational practices. By late summer 1998 the instrument was ready for field-testing and two pilot administration cycles were completed (fall 1998 and spring 1999) before the first national administration was launched in the spring of 2000 (Kuh, 2001:12).

Kuh (2001:12) states that the NSSE measures output quality by focusing on how students and staff utilise these resources and apply good practices that have been identified to promote engagement and learning. The measurement instruments make use of five benchmarks to determine the nature of student engagement, including level of challenge, interaction and communication between faculty and students, educational experiences that enrich students, a constructive campus environment and collaborative and interactive learning processes (Kuh, 2001:13).

In 2007 the AUSSE was developed by 25 institutions in Australia and New Zealand, with the objective of developing information pertaining to students' engagement with learning in the area (AUSSE, 2010:iv). AUSSE also reports on the amount of effort and time students put into activities that enhance their education and development, as well as the students' view concerning the quality of the higher education institution at which they are enrolled (James Cook University, 2015:1). This version assesses the above mentioned

benchmarks of level of challenge, interaction and communication, educational experiences, a constructive campus environment and collaborative and interactive learning processes, but adds an additional two, work integrated learning and higher order thinking outcomes that consist of general learning and development outcomes, departure intention, overall satisfaction, career readiness and average overall grade, as described in the following section (AUSSE, 2010:iv-v). The AUSSE is implemented throughout all participating universities within the Australasian region and provides institutions with innovative perspectives for managing the institution and increasing the quality of the education provided (James Cook University, 2015:1). The amount of institutions participating differs over time, with an initial amount of 25 universities participating in 2007, 53 institutions in the 2010 survey and 32 in 2012 (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2015:1).

In 2006 the University of the Free State's Student Development and Success, which is now a part of the Centre for Teaching and Learning, sought for permission from the NSSE Institute to incorporate the survey into a South African environment (SASSE, 20013:1). Several universities in South Africa including Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, University of the Free State, University of Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand and Tshwane University of Technology, among others, piloted the SASSE in 2009 with the intent of identifying what drives students to success over which universities have control and what can be done to increase the throughput of students (SASSE, 2013:1). Most of the recommendations made by the survey upon conclusion included addressing social cohesion, assessing how effective tertiary education is, improving the general quality of both teaching and learning and also reviewing the design of a four-year undergraduate degree (Strydom & Mentz, 2010:viii).

While there are particular geographic dimensions included in the three different instruments, they all share specific benchmarks which are described in more detail below.

## **2.4.2 Benchmarks as theoretical frameworks**

This section will look at the main benchmarks that will be used in this study, namely the level of academic challenge, the interaction between staff and students, educational experiences that enrich students' experience, a constructive campus environment, collaborative and interactive learning processes and work integrated learning.

### **2.4.2.1 *Level of challenge***

Challenging students intellectually and creatively is an integral part of any learning process and is done by higher education institutions by setting high expectations and by placing focus on the importance of students' effort in their work (Indiana University, 2015:1). The level of challenge is determined through the time spent preparing for class, frequency of hard work to meet the requirements of the programme, the amount of reading material, the amount of written papers or reports and the emphasis the institution places on engagement (Carini *et al.*, 2006:24). Thus, it refers to the extent to which students are active within the classroom so as to learn how to think and construct information (SASSE, 2013:1). According to Asrat (2007:12) the amount of time spent on preparation is significantly lower for first generation students, who only start to catch up after their first year. According to Pascarella *et al.* (2010:19) the level of challenge is associated with the critical thinking ability of students as well as the student's willingness to create life-long learning goals and to inquire on a more regular basis.

The level of academic challenge is positively associated with the retention rate of the institution as well as with the mean graduation rate of an institution according to Pike (2012:161-2). The level of academic challenge should provide students with the means to grow intellectually while being reasonable in terms of the abilities of students. This study will review the workload of students in the PA first year modules and how students cope in terms of time spent in preparation, engagement during class and preparation for assessments.

### **2.4.2.2 *Interaction between students and staff***

Interaction between students and the institution's staff, refers to discussions between the

two parties concerning grades or assignments, career plans or ideas gained from the reading material or classes outside of scheduled times (Kuh, 2010:29). This benchmark also refers to how students are mentored and guided by lecturers inside and outside of classrooms through discussing grades, outcomes, assessment and being exposed to various teaching practices (SASSE, 2013:1). Social cognitive theories have stated how learning occurs by interacting with and observing others helps students obtain new knowledge. Pascarella *et al.* (2010:20) has found that interaction between staff and students shows the least correlation between outcomes and attributes this to the variable circumstances of interaction between the two parties, for instance how students who require assistance receive the same amount of interaction as students that have obtained stronger academic track records.

According to Pike (2012:161) student-staff interaction has been linked to negative retention rates, but has however been linked to a higher mean graduation rate. Pike (2012:165) hypothesises that this could be due to lecturers at institutions with lower retention rates spending more time with students to ensure their academic success. Interaction between the faculty and students remains important however as it is through this medium of communication students and faculty learn what the expectations of the other party as well as those of the institution are and thereby determine how to effectively obtain these goals. Lecturers are also much better versed in the discipline and students can learn through observation. For this study student-staff interaction will be analysed taking into consideration the extent to which interaction is encouraged, types of interaction between students and staff as well as opportunities of interaction outside of classroom, including through tutoring or facilitation sessions.

#### **2.4.2.3      *Educational experiences that enrich classroom experience***

Educational experiences that enrich students' classroom experience concerns topics such as the use of electronic communication mediums and new technology to enhance class experiences, engaging in co-curricular activities, community service, independent study, studying abroad and internships or field experience. (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25-26). This also includes exposing students to more diverse environments such as lecturers, students and ideas different from their own cultural experiences (Van Dijk, 2013:93).

This comes down to the notion found within constructivism that the manner in which one thinks must be expanded through the learning of new skills in order to understand the workings of a phenomena.

Pascarella *et al.* (2010:19) found this benchmark to be the most influential benchmark, claiming that it enhances students' ability to reason effectively and solve problems, promotes intercultural effectiveness and helps the moral character of a student to grow. Educational experiences have shown to be one of the stronger factors in determining graduation rates, which offers a contrast to the common idea often held by those outside higher education that becoming involved in activities outside the classroom hinders a student's potential to graduate within the predetermined time period as this could include internships and studying abroad (Pike, 2012:165). This study will look at what experiences are in place to promote classroom experience. For this study educational experiences that enrich the classroom experience will be analysed taking into consideration the extent to which interaction among different economic, racial, political and religious groups takes place, whether students had a community based project and if students engage in activities such as internships, field research or some form of an academic programme.

#### **2.4.2.4      *Constructive campus environment***

A constructive campus environment is concerned with academic support, how the institution supports the student's growth, both academically and socially and the extent to which it helps students cope with their responsibilities (Carini *et al.*, 2006:26). Institutions must realise and determine who their students are and where they are coming from, what they are prepared to do academically and what their expectations are of the institution and of themselves and also that this is different from one student to the next (Kuh, 2004:88). This is related to constructivism in how the institution encourages interaction and incorporation of knowledge by constructing new ideas.

Constructive campus environments, much like enriching educational experiences, enhanced intercultural effectiveness and promote the personal well-being of higher education students (Pascarella *et al.*, 2010:19). A constructive campus environment is a

significant contributor towards retention rates, especially amongst first year students according to Pike (2012:162). This study will review the campuses of the institution to see how it facilitates students' growth by looking at how the campus provides support for social, political, personal and academic growth and the extent to which it attempts to balance academic responsibilities with other responsibilities.

#### **2.4.2.5 Collaborative and interactive learning processes**

Collaborative and interactive learning processes concerns how often students ask questions, give presentations, worked with other students on projects inside and outside of class and the frequency at which ideas and work was discussed with persons outside the programme (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25). The main idea is that a student should be able to think about the information that is presented to them and then apply it within their own dimensions and so take responsibility for what they have learned (Van Dijk, 2013:93). This is the core principle of constructivism and cognitive theories - how students must interpret information and then incorporate it within the existing body of knowledge.

According to Pascarella *et al.* (2010:19) this benchmark seems to have a partial connection to improving intercultural experiences. Institutions with interactive and collaborative learning processes have more engaged students in general who feel more supported. Students also reported higher levels of personal social development, practical competence and a greater general knowledge (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005:13). For this study collaborative and interactive learning processes will be analysed taking into consideration how students engage with the programme inside and outside of the class by working with other students, giving presentations, attending seminars, how students combine the knowledge of PA with other modules, how they approach perspectives and views and the extent to which they have acquired new skills since starting their studies.

#### **2.4.2.6 Work integrated learning**

Work Integrated Learning is concerned with ensuring that students are prepared for the workforce and is becoming a more widespread, this benchmark is unique to the AUSSE,

which means that it can however not be compared to any previous model used within the NSSE (McNamara *et al.*, 2012:7). The Work Integrated Scale used in the AUSSE measures the extent to which actual workplace experience was intertwined with academic learning by students. Statistics from the AUSSE have shown that the institution's staff more often than not places a degree of importance on work readiness as key for successful student engagement (AUSSE, 2010:31).

This benchmark seeks to determine how to blend academic learning with actual work experiences and, thus, more successfully develop skills, communication abilities and knowledge relevant to employability within the actual career or discipline. It also in reverse seeks to find ways in which learning can be put into the actual career and prepare students for the actual job in a more hands-on approach (McNamara *et al.*, 2012:7-8). This goes together with constructivism and behaviourism as how it relies on learning from experiencing and watching others. This study will look at how the institution connects the theory of the discipline with the practical work experience that awaits students within the field upon graduation.

#### **2.4.3.7 Higher order thinking outcomes**

Higher order thinking includes critical thinking skills, creativity and problem solving skills as means with which students engage in their work, which are often assisted in modern times by social networking tools (McNeil *et al.*, 2012:1). The main goal of education is to enhance and promote transfer and retention of knowledge, which requires students to not only receive the information but be able to make sense of it and understand it as to fully incorporate it (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001:63).

According to Nitko and Brookhart (2007:215) students reach a predicament upon wanting to reach a certain outcome and instead of automatically registering the path necessary, they must then make use of higher order thinking processes, known as problem solving skills and creativity to find the path to these outcomes. This clearly goes hand in hand with the theories of constructivism, which requires students to construct the knowledge via processing information. According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005:165-7) institutions that make use of this benchmark have seen higher levels of

progress in general education with first year students and a slight increase in practical competency amongst more senior students. This study will ascertain whether students embrace higher order thinking methods such as problem solving skills and how the institution facilitates this.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The goal of the chapter was to provide a literature background to student engagement in order to better understand the movement from instructing to engaging students and how it is used to analyse the success of education in tertiary institutions. This chapter also provides an answer for the research objective of describing and analysing the theoretical frameworks for student engagement at the tertiary level of education.

Humanism as a learning theory places emphasis on perceptions being centred in experiences as well as the responsibility and freedom to become what a person is capable of. Behaviourism states that environment shapes behaviour, learning is focused on observable behaviour and the principles of contiguity and reinforcement. Learning theories are frameworks that describe how students absorb, process and retain information during the learning process. The cognitive approach is supported by the assumption that the memory system is an organised information processor and that all previous knowledge plays a part in learning new information. Social cognitive learning theories place focus on how learning occurs within a social environment and observation of others. Constructivism emerged out of the assumptions that thinking resides in the mind and that the process of learning and thinking are uniform across persons and that thinking is derived from knowledge and skills developed by formal instruction. Constructivism states that people construct that which they not only learn but understand. Constructivism places emphasis on the interaction of persons and situations in the accumulation and refinement of their individual knowledge and skills.

Student engagement is defined as the degree of interest, attention, curiosity, optimism and passion shown by students when they are learning, which influences their motivation to progress. Student engagement is highly influenced by the time and energy spent by the student as well as the institution on educational activities and the

development and use of effective educational practices respectively. Only when both motivation and active learning are present are students engaged. Transformative learning occurs when university students are challenged in such a manner that it leads to intellectual and ethical growth, corroding their former dualistic nature of thinking and engage in more complex stages by learning to deal with relativism and uncertainty.

Student engagement can be divided into categories. The first is developmental theories that focus on individual change's nature and content, where change is seen as developmental while placing focus on how individuals behave and think. The second, college impact models, describes how environmental and inter-individual experiences affect students, which is all influenced by the characteristics of the institution. Universities need to identify strategies and opportunities to manipulate this view to improve the performance of the institution and its students, while at the same time ensuring students of a rich and rewarding student experience at the institution.

An instrument is used to measure student engagement as it indicates the relationship between the environment in which learning occurs and the students within the environment. Surveys are utilised so as to determine how higher education institutions can identify practices and student experiences that add to the value of every student's development, while at the same time ensuring that the institution maintains high standards of output and success. Several instruments through which student engagement is determined have been developed, including the NSSE, the AUSSE and the SASSE. The NSSE has 5 benchmarks, namely the level of challenge, interaction between students and the institution's staff, educational experiences that enrich students, a constructive campus environment and collaborative and interactive learning processes. In 2007 the AUSSE was developed by various institutions in Australia and New Zealand, with the objective of developing information pertaining to students' engagement with learning in the area adding an additional two benchmarks, work integrated learning and higher order thinking outcomes. Several universities in South Africa have piloted the SASSE in 2009 with the intent of identifying what drives students to success over which universities have control and what can be done to increase the throughput of students.

The idea of these theories as theoretical assumptions plays into student engagement by trying to clarify how students cognitive development work and how they should be actively engaged in their work in order to achieve their academic goals. For this study these theories serve the purpose of laying a foundation for what engagement requires of students, faculty and the institution based on how students learn and how they develop ideas and knowledge. The different benchmarks have effects on the ability of the institution to retain students and how to develop their social, reasoning and intellectual skills. For this study they will serve as the unit of measure amongst the first year students. The following chapter will review PA as a discipline at higher education institutions.

## CHAPTER 3: TEACHING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will serve as the second literature review focusing on demonstrating an understanding of the development and nature of tertiary education in the South African context. Attention will be paid to how PA has developed as a discipline and how it is presented as a programme at the NWU's three respective campuses. The chapter addresses the study objective which focused on providing a theoretical context for teaching Public Administration at higher education institutions. The teaching of PA is very integral to this study as it seeks to understand how the engagement with students in the programmes is undertaken at the NWU. For a comprehensive understanding of higher education it is important to understand not only what the role of higher education is but also how the subject has developed over the years into what is taught today.

“No practical science is ever studied where there is no need to know it” was the opinion of Woodrow Wilson (1886:197) in his 1886 article, *The Study of Administration*, describing the need for the study of PA as an independent field of study. In the last century governments, both developmental and developed, have entered into a system where the public sector, the private sector and civil society, all through their relationships with one another, have determined the institutional direction that should be administered towards society for it to function productively (Rosenbaum, 2014:81). PA had been seen as concerned with processes, stable societies and institutions, but had, in recent times, been transformed into something more complex due to changes in the practices of the public sector, and changes in other interdisciplinary fields such as Politics and Management Studies (Fenwick & McMillan, 2014:195).

The goal of this chapter is to argue what the role and status of higher education is, how PA as a discipline developed and how that influenced the teaching of PA as an academic field of study. The first section will analyse higher education, focusing on how the views of the role of higher education have developed specifically since the 1700's, the legal framework that regulates higher education in South Africa and the current state

regarding higher education in South Africa. The second section will analyse PA by reviewing how it developed as a discipline. The section thereafter will review how PA is presented as an academic programme at the NWU's three campuses. Finally a conclusion will be made discussing the relevance of the chapter on the design of the empirical study.

## **3.2 CONTEXTUALISING HIGHER EDUCATION**

This section will analyse the role of higher education through the centuries taking a brief look at the traditional views on higher education and how they have developed into the more contemporary views. The section will also analyse the legislation in South Africa that has an effect on higher education and the current conditions of higher education in South Africa.

### **3.2.1 Traditional views and development of higher education**

During the middle ages, especially between 1100 and 1200, higher education was mostly dominated by monastic schools that integrated ideas from monks, moralist preachers and the church drawn from sermons, homilies en treatises (Ferruolo, 2001:435). The University of Bologna in Italy was established in 1088 as the first university, teaching students civil and canon law and developing medieval Roman Law (Sanz & Bergan, 2006:136). Although lacking an official date of establishment, the Oxford University has been teaching students since at least 1096 and experienced rapid growth in the 12th century, with specific focus on theological and political studies (University of Oxford, 2016:1). Hostilities between scholars and townsfolk in 1209 led to an exodus to Cambridge where the University of Cambridge was established in 1226 (University of Cambridge, 2016:1).

In 1636 Harvard College was established in the British controlled American colonies, designed in the fashion of Oxford or Cambridge to train male students for the ministry (Geiger, 2014:1). In 1693 the College of William and Mary was established in Virginia to train lawyers, planters and politicians, splintering from the religiously oriented education (Geiger, 2014:11). Harvard had become more liberal over the years, while Yale College was established in 1701 (Geiger, 2014:8). Higher education prior to the 19th century

was, thus, focused on training young men to become ministers and was heavily influenced by religion, especially Christianity and only a few other fields were pursued such as medicine, law and the liberal arts with little to no female students (Kohrs, 2015:29).

The French Humboldtian model for higher education, proposed by the Prussian philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), advocated for combining research and teaching at higher education institutions in the early 1800's to minimise bias and encourage thought. The American model, also known as the post-Humboldtian model, established graduate schools separate from undergraduate institutions to create a division with undergraduates focusing on teaching and graduate schools focusing on research (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011:9).

At the end of the 19th century the role of the university was to create and diffuse knowledge and then packaging the retained knowledge into disciplines. As the 19th century came to an end many higher education institutions started becoming more specialised and experimental with the scientific method starting to dominate research while social awareness grew from the industrialisation of urban societies and the use of new innovative technology (Goldin & Katz, 1999:38). Science and the manufacturing of skills in fields such as Chemistry and Physics became the order of the day at higher education institutions throughout Europe and the U.S. Fields became more and more specialised and many new disciplines emerged at the end of the 19th century including the formal creation of PA, which will be discussed in the following section (Goldin & Katz, 1999:39-40).

The general idea since the 1800's with regards to higher education was triangular, with focus on the student, the lecturer and the content, where the information was provided by the lecturer and absorbed by the student who then reproduced the knowledge. Often this was the extent of interaction between the two parties. However this has led to a lack of sustainable development and students not being able to carry this information over and apply it in real-life situations (Steiner & Posch, 2006:879). In the past students were not engaged and information was merely relayed from the lecturer to the student as previously stated, leading to students only being able to copy information and not apply

knowledge to solve problems in an effective manner, leading to a stunt in growth for both the discipline and the students themselves with short term solutions being the norm.

As stated by Hummel (1997:375) theory only becomes useful to a practitioner if they have had a breakdown of practice. In other words, only when they can apply the theoretical knowledge in practical real-life situations is the goal of education achieved. He further argues that as long as there is no cohesion between how practitioners and academics, as well as students and lecturers experience and process knowledge, the theory will always seem inadequate (Hummel, 1997:377).

During the 1900's higher education's main function was to stimulate economic growth, with strong ties to production and development. Education served as an instrument of skills formation equalising the distribution of wealth and to prepare young people to be able to engage actively in society through work (Rahim, 2006:855).

In the final days of the 20th century higher education had undergone a transformation of sorts, with greatly increased levels of student enrolment and an increase in the differentiation in higher education systems, moving from theoretical and cognitive knowledge to more practical applied knowledge (Slowey & Schuetze, 2012:45). This new differentiation is, firstly, shaped by the structural changes found within economic and social systems, which are leaning towards scientific and technological based knowledge and, thus, creating a higher need for a qualified workforce. Secondly, education is no longer viewed as something restricted to the younger members of society and older students are engaging in lifelong learning practices. Adding to this is the increase in access and equity due to pressure from social movements and changing policies (Schuetze & Slowey, 2000:2-3). Higher education is becoming more diverse and inclusive with people from different backgrounds and fields participating. Higher education institutions now have the duty of ensuring equal opportunity and access for all parties in a representative way in order to develop the community as a whole and providing an eclectic community with the practical skills required for development (Weber & Bergan, 2005:7).

Education is, however, so much more than just providing human capital, adding to a country's potential to produce, but is rather a manner in which to engage in social activity to realise and unlock a person's potential. Increasing this potential not only improves the functional abilities of a person for employment, but also adds to new levels of freedom through that which a person is capable of doing and while shifting the focus from mere production to growth (Rahim, 2006:851-2). When considering student engagement, which is the focus of the study, it is important as discussed in the previous chapter that learning leads to thinking that helps a person to not only increase their knowledge, but to encourage the personal and professional growth of individuals.

Self-regulated learning has also become a trend in recent years within higher education. This mode of learning has led to students being more actively engaged in their own learning process and their goals relating to it (Zimmerman, 2001:5). One of the key vectors for Chickering's psychosocial development, discussed in the previous chapter, is that of students learning to become autonomous and separate themselves from being dependant on peers and teachers and thereby learning how to solve problems on their own through applied knowledge (Butner & De Larrosa, 2000:3). Self-regulated learning empowers students, which in turn leads to more socially sustainable development (Jucker, 2002:14). This leads to higher education institutions designing programmes to include more self-study and to guide students to determine what they want to achieve and how to go about doing it. The lecturer becomes more of a guide than an instructor and students are expected to dissect and interpret information by themselves (Harden & Crosby, 2000:341). For the research this is important for the core idea of encouraging both lecturers and students to become involved in their work through self-established goals concerned with what they want to achieve and how to go about doing it.

As stated by the previous chapter on student engagement, self-regulated learning is a great step towards improving student engagement and students taking an active role in their own education. For this study higher education provides the context within which students should be engaged in and the manner in which education has transformed over the years has changed how students become engaged and what is expected of them.

Thus, Steiner and Posch (2006:879) argue that higher education institutions require more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to education as well as a greater degree of self-regulated learning. This approach would lead to practitioners relying on more than one body of knowledge to find creative solutions and applications to solve problems. Knowing the theory of multiple disciplines can lead to more innovative ideas and applications (Yong, 2012:1).

Interdisciplinary approaches to education refer to shifting towards more holistic views on individual subjects instead of teaching each as if it was an isolated body of knowledge with no relevance to other bodies of knowledge (Steiner & Posch, 2006:879). Boix-Mansilla (2005:15) defines interdisciplinary research as the integration of knowledge and ways of thinking in two or more disciplines with the intent of producing an advantage and advancement in cognitive ability. In order to not only facilitate understanding of the greater interlinked picture, but to increase each field's individual power to interpret and express, it is necessary to combine the knowledge from different fields (Kleiber, 2001:55).

Transdisciplinarity originated from the rise of the knowledge-society, which makes science and effective solutions for complex societal problems available to society (Wiesmann *et al.*, 2008:435). Transdisciplinarity stems from the research on interdisciplinary approaches, with the goal of an integrated, more systematic and holistic view on the world in order to solve complex problems facing society (Bimpitsons & Petridou, 2012:912-3). Transdisciplinarity goes one step further and involves intense interaction between theory and practice, beyond mere cooperation, in order to encourage mutual learning between the two parties (Scholz & Marks, 2001:236). By encouraging transdisciplinarity, higher education institutions create a space for students to become engaged with multiple theoretical perspectives in order to equip them for complex problem solving.

Transdisciplinary research requires research to address social problems such as poverty, inequality and sexism in society and to allow the practitioners to partake in the research, with the final goal of bringing synergy, in other words innovative ways of identifying and solving problems through the fusion of disciplines (Mittelmark *et al.*,

2012:3). According to Steiner and Posch (2006:880) this approach moves the focus from studying society as an object to interaction between the two, leading to new insights on how to maintain sustainable development and higher clarity of the options available to achieve this goal. Jucker (2002:16) adds to this by claiming that the academics also benefit through this relationship by making them have a more open minded attitude towards self-reflection. Designing disciplines to be more interconnected makes students consider alternative perspectives and can assist in filling in gaps in knowledge by relying on other fields for triangulation. While the traditional role of higher education institutions was focused on transferring disciplinary knowledge to students, the more contemporary role of higher education focuses on creating a collaborative space between students and disciplines enabling them to understand and solve complex societal problems and thereby co-creating knowledge which is contextual and relevant. This changing role of higher education institutions emphasises the need for students to be actively engaged in their own learning.

The following section will analyse the higher education legal framework with the aim of establishing the extent to which legislation and policies support this changing role of higher education.

### **3.2.2 The legal and policy framework enabling higher education**

This section will review the policies and acts that are in place in South Africa governing the nature and role of higher education in the developmental democracy. In South Africa many students including those previously excluded from higher education are identified as a key priority to transform universities to reflect a new social order (Badat, 2010:2). The main pieces of legislation that had an effect on higher education was the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997) and the Education White Paper 3, 1997 (Badat, 2010:3). Chapter Two and more specifically Section 9 of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996) has made the state and its institutions, such as those focused on higher education, shift towards the achievement of equality, respect the values of human dignity and promote a non-sexist and non-racial environment emphasising the respect for the rights of groups and individuals laid down in the Bill of Rights.

Although the Constitution, 1996, doesn't directly address higher education institutions, this is a blanket policy covering all aspects of public life within the country. This would mean that all higher education institutions would be required to commit to these values and view all students equally. This comes into play with the constructive campus environment benchmark for student engagement, which would promote the inclusivity and protection of all human rights of all students.

The Higher Education Act (101 of 1997) has the main goal of creating a single co-ordinated higher education system in South Africa, focusing on transforming the institutions and programmes to be more in line with the economic, human resource and development needs of the country and redressing the injustices of the past by ensuring equal representation and access. The preamble to the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997) also tasks higher education institutions with advancing knowledge and scholarship in all fields and to maintain the academic standards of quality presented by the international community. The preamble also expresses a desire for the higher education institutions to maintain a degree of freedom and autonomy in relation to the State within the context of the country's need for scientific knowledge and advanced skills and the degree of public accountability (South Africa, 1997). This refers to the higher education system maintaining a degree of freedom in terms of what research they conduct and how they conduct it, within ethical guidelines, while still placing focus on producing graduates and practitioners that contribute to society and promote development in a sustainable manner (South Africa, 1997).

The Education White Paper 3 (Department of Education (DoE), 1997) has identified the purposes of higher education as encompassing the following goals. Firstly, higher education is tasked with enhancing and tapping into the talents and potential of people through lifelong learning (DoE, 1997:5) and thereby providing the labour market with constantly fluxing high-level competencies and expertise required for development, growth and prosperity in the modern global economy (DoE, 1997:11). Secondly, higher education is also tasked with the production, acquisition and application of knowledge and contributing to the evaluation, sharing and creation of new knowledge (DoE, 1997:6) in order to address the needs of society in terms of development and to deal with the

challenges being faced within the more holistic African context. Higher education must also contribute to the social, intellectual and cultural life of a society undergoing many fast paced changes and lay down the foundations for a society that is civilised and maintains a culture of tolerance and debate (DoE, 1997:4). All higher education institutions are bound to these pieces of legislation if they want any recognition and subsidies from the state. Higher education institutions must work within these legislative prescripts in order to grow according to the country's developmental needs and be an attribute to the entire country.

The National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001:6) states in section 1.2 that the higher education system should be developed to promote equal access and fair chances to all seeking higher education, to meet the requirements of the developmental needs of the State, to support a democratic human rights based culture and to contribute to the advancement of all bodies of knowledge. The National Plan (DoE, 2001:10) outlines the framework for the implementation of these White Paper goals by establishing targets for the shape and size of the higher education system and what is expected of institutions in terms of growth, participation and restructuring. The National Plan (DoE, 2001:10) also indicates the strategies and processes the higher education system must go through such as financing, regulations and planning in order to achieve these goals. Since 2003 the financing of higher education institutions has been determined by these approved institutional plans (DoE, 2001:10).

The Higher Education Amendment Bill of 2015 was drafted to amend the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997) and provides for new transformation goals for higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015:1). The Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:7-13) is also valuable in terms of addressing the challenges which higher education should recognise such as inequality, historical burdens of outdated policies and practices, as well as infrastructure, inadequate provision in a diverse manner, low levels of research and low levels of coherence in the post-school education system.

### **3.2.3 Current conditions of higher education**

Since the late 2000's and early 2010's many higher education institutions have been run as businesses, with a key point being the exchange of information, knowledge transfer and innovation and partnerships with the private sector in order to stimulate economic development. Some universities struggle with this new view of higher education, due to anti-business prejudice or philosophical objection from academic staff and discomfort with working outside of their comfort zones of knowledge generation. Some critics of this view go as far as to say that mass production of knowledge for commercial purposes has damaged the historical role of universities to create a civilised society focused on social needs (Blewitt, 2010:477-8). Twenty-first century universities face the challenge of having to attempt to try being everything to everybody, sacrificing academic freedom, feeling the need to reinvent themselves continually and losing traditional knowledge for knowledge sake rationale (Denman, 2005:25). This affects the relationship between students and staff and through that the level of student engagement.

Higher education in South Africa has through mergers and incorporations been reorganised to comprise 11 universities, 9 comprehensive universities and 6 universities of technology that are more equipped to deal with the needs of a developing democracy (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016:1). However differentiation continues to be an issue and this new landscape requires newly formed institutional identities obtained by developing new missions, educational and social roles, academic qualification and programme integrations and appropriate structures and practices. There is also a need to address the burden placed on higher education in South Africa through institutionalised inequities, which led to advantages and disadvantages in terms of financial, geographical, educational and material resources (Badat, 2010:11).

By 2009 statistics showed that 41.6% of 18-24 year olds were not involved in any form of education or training, nor were they employed, this according to Cloete (2009:43) being indicative of a social and economic disaster and not just a mere educational problem. The National Plan for Higher Education, 2001 (DoE, 2001:19) sets a target of 20% participation rate by 2011/2016, but has only increased by 1% between 2001 and 2008 leaving it at 16%. By 2013, the most recent statistics provided by the Council on

Higher Education (CHE), enrolment has gone up by 23% since 2008, with particular increases in the amount of African students by 34% and the general participation rate was 19.2%, 0.8% short of the set goal. In terms of gender 59% of undergraduate students were female and 94% of all undergraduates were South African nationals (CHE, 2016:1).

Growth of the number and quality of students enrolled in higher education has been held up however due to a poor school system, the government that has been reluctant to open up to the private sector and the “welfarist neo-socialist model” it has been leaning towards, according to Thandwa Mthembu (2014) the Vice Chancellor of the Central University of Technology. These conditions have led to various demands from students and disruptions and protests that have racked the higher education sector in since 2015 (MacGregor, 2014:1).

In South Africa the state has been suffering a dwindling capacity to provide society with a meaningful and strong higher education system due to various political reasons ranging from unemployment and lack of resources for education to the state losing its very legitimacy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2010:23). Despite higher education being the gateway to a brighter and more developed future, according to Nelson Mandela (2003:1), the difficulties surrounding it are hampering its potential for even further growth. With demands for equal access relentless and the system possessing limited resources this is leading to high degrees of state control in South African higher education and a lack of a clear goal for higher education institutions (Blaine, 2009:1). Facilities and libraries have also begun deteriorating and the state does little to prevent this, while the institutions themselves are incapable of doing so due to their limitations, leading to a lack of research and proper evaluation of problems in society (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2010:23). South Africa has since 2013 seen drastic and desperate events, such as violent strikes from its higher education institutions and the government’s actions or lack thereof can alter the proceedings, involving transformation and deciding the future destination of higher education completely. The argument is that South African higher education institutions are faced with the critical issue of finding a way to maintain

sufficient resources, while at the same time becoming more inclusive and affordable (Habib, 2016:1).

Dissatisfaction and transformation naturally has an effect on student engagement. If students feel unheard and marginalised, it could be indicative of a lack of interaction between the institution's staff and students, limited enriching experiences and most importantly a campus environment that is neither supportive nor inclusive. If students feel estranged from an institution engagement is difficult to achieve. This research aims to determine from students and staff whether this is true and if that is that case, whether it is due to unapproachable staff, students being bored and unfulfilled with their coursework or something else entirely.

The following section will focus more specifically on PA within Higher Education. The development of the discipline will be discussed followed by a look at how the programme is presented at the NWU.

### **3.3 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

This section will focus on PA programmes at higher education institutions. The study of PA presented at higher education institutions and the engagement of students within this programme is the focus of this study. For the purpose of this study it is important to then analyse how PA has developed as a discipline and how it is presented as a programme, with special focus on the programme at the NWU. The first section will focus on the development of the discipline, reviewing how the discipline formed over the years, while the second will look at the structure of the PA programme for first years at the NWU's three campuses.

#### **3.3.1 Development of the academic discipline**

Public managers are according to Van der Waldt (2009:3) the backbone of any public institution as it is they who execute strategies, guide employees, set the tone of the environment of work and direct the services delivered. Public management has also become a lot more focused on crisis management skills and administrative detail than change or transformation management skills (Van der Waldt, 2009:3). Clearly the

success of any administration within an organisation, institution or municipality is dependent on the skill level and aptitude of the public managers produced by higher education institutions' PA programmes, for instance, and this makes a successful outcome of the programme all the more important. This need has given rise to the development of PA as a separate field of study.

As part of understanding the development of the discipline there is differentiating between PA as a field of study and public administration as a function. Public administration as a function is defined as the bureaucratic systems and procedures that the government utilises to implement its policies and serve the primary functions of government service delivery (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 2009:614). PA as field of study or subject studies the public sector and its functions and role as a discipline and is composed of a wide combination of theory and the ever challenging practical application (Van der Waladt, 2010:2). PA is the field of study that is focused on analysing and describing policy development and the processes used in the implementation thereof by governmental bodies (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 2009:614). PA is the study or discipline examining public services provided by the government and composed of a wide combination of managerial skills and competencies, according to Van der Waladt (2010:2). PA suffers from a kind of multiple personality disorder according to Politt (2010:292) due to the multidisciplinary origins on one hand and the different directions in which it wants to proceed, on the other.

The view of the role of government has also changed over the progress of time. Cloete (1997:197) explains one view, originating from that of former U.S. president Woodrow Wilson's (1856-1924) writings, that PA should be free from politics and should be directed by the same motives as those implemented in the administration of business, which has led to the training and teaching of public managers becoming the same as that for managers in private businesses.

### **3.3.1.1      *Origins of Public Administration***

The first period is that of the ancient eras where civilisation was still being formed, which predates the actual study of PA and is focused mainly on findings concerning ancient

civilisations' ideas and notions regarding leadership and administrative organisation through what was deemed proper behaviour and then written down and passed on as knowledge in the form of the first laws in Ancient Sumeria (Rutgers, 2010:6). Ancient Rome had created a hierarchy for various governmental functions including finance and taxation, internal and foreign affairs and the law. The administrative structure consisted of subordinates reporting to the central government through ranked superiors. Ancient Egypt had well-developed local governments surrounding a central government that was based on a unitary system (Ajdini, 2014:1). During the Classic Period, before the Common Era, many novel ideas concerning administration and organisation, such as bookkeeping and merit systems, came from the Roman and Greek civilisations, however there was not yet a clear distinguished idea of PA as a discipline (Rutgers, 2010:6-7). During this period PA had yet to be developed as a discipline and rather served a practical function as more of an idea or a system of governmental organisation. This practice of public administration focuses on hierarchies of order and systems of legislation rather than attempting to establish a theoretical basis for PA research and ideas (Rutgers, 2010:7).

The first idea of a discipline in PA came from Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff's 1656 book *German Principality*. This was the first time scientific methods were applied to administration, which also relied on a different body of knowledge than the existing fields such as politics or philosophy. In 1700 the French author Nicolas Delamare's *Treatise on Polity* expressed a similar idea. This would be the beginning of a new field of knowledge. During the course of the 1700's Polity Science and Cameralism started evolving and in 1729 the first professors of Cameralism were appointed in Prussia at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder and the University of Halle, making the study more formal at a higher education level (Rutgers, 2010:7). Cameralism or *Kameralwissenschaft* is a German science of administration originating in Prussia that focused on a variant form of economics, public policy and public finance (Lindenfeld, 1997:14-18).

By the 18th century scholars such as Joseph Sonnenfels and Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi developed more theoretical approaches to the study, with the central focus still

on policy. Reasoning was done from a contract theory point of view between Kings and their people, while Greek theorists such as Aristotle were the main influence on the theoretical developments and ideas. Towards the 19th century the focus shifted more towards that of political economy and administrative law and away from feudalistic topics covering monarchs and the nobility. Many Prussian scholars attempted to establish the discipline through incorporating the ideas concerning the focus of the field such as those above, however consensus was difficult to reach and the plans never truly amounted to anything substantial. Due to this shortcoming, the lack of modern economic ideas and the rise of more practical fields such as legal studies the study of PA dwindled in the mid-19th century leading to the near extinction of the discipline in Europe (Rutgers, 2010:7-8).

The German scholar Lorenz von Stein (1815-1890) was the last who attempted to undertake the difficult task of unifying the study of PA as a comprehensive science with his work *Verwaltungslehre*. Von Stein considered PA as a science that was formed by other fields such as Political Science and Sociology in a multidisciplinary mode (Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010:99). With the American and French Revolutions in the 19th century, many of the former notions of PA were shattered as universal suffrage, equality before the law, collective and individual freedom, the curbing of the government's power, human rights and the birth of constitutions were introduced to the world (Raadschelders, 1999:282). Naturally this led to reforms about how PA was seen as these new concepts that shaped society had to be included and the discipline had to adapt accordingly. The field's focus had to become more inclusive and democratic.

### **3.3.1.2      *Historical development of the discipline***

When the notion of ethics in the public sector started developing from the moral reform movement of the U.S, administration studies gained a foothold in the U.S. early in the 20th century with Woodrow Wilson's *The Study of Administration* (1887) and Frank Goodnow's *Politics and Administration* (1900) seen as the harbingers. Wilson (1887:212) defined public administration as a "detailed and systematic execution of public law". Wilson (Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010:99) also pushed for a differentiation between PA and Politics, viewed the government as a type of business, insisted that

public servants be trained and evaluated and was one of the first to compare public institutions to their counterparts in the private sector. Wilson also promoted the idea, especially in the U.S. that PA be viewed as studying a neutral and practical executive form of government tasked with putting out public policy, free from politics (Zalmanovitch, 2014:810).

Around 1900 Harvard University considered establishing a school for public servants and diplomats, but the idea was abandoned in favour of a business school (Stone & Stone, 1975:25). By the 1920's scholars in PA had responded to the ideas of Wilson and the first PA textbooks were being produced, the first being Frank Goodnow's *Politics and Administration* in 1900 (Milakovich & Gordon, 2013:39). Among these textbooks was Frederick Taylor's (1856-1915) 1911 book *The Principles of Scientific Management*. The ideas laid down in this book came to be known as Taylorism, which advocated for method based research, training, detailed instruction and supervision and equally dividing work between managers and their subordinates which were considered to be 'best practices' (Aderibigbe & Olla, 2014:67-8). Two of the first accredited programmes in the U.S. were at the University of Nebraska Omaha (2016:1) and Syracuse University in New York State (2016:1).

The focus of the discipline shifted to a more neutral, performance orientated and responsive stance and drew a clear contrast between administration and politics for the first time. Attempts to clarify the principles of the discipline flourished in the 1920's and 1930's and the study of the discipline became widespread in the U.S. due to PA's active participation in the U.S. government that focused mainly on political science, economics, policy studies and business management (Rutgers, 2010:8-9). In this era the field also was beginning to be truly seen as a discipline in its own right and the dichotomy of politics-administration was enjoying a highly regarded stance (Roberts, 1994:221).

In the post-world war era in the 1950's the field again lost its momentum due to overwhelming critique concerning its founding principles as a science due to its lack of fitting into a positivistic epistemology by not relying a scientific methods. The field was also affected by some scholars such as Herbert Simon, who while rooting for a modern basis also refused to integrate with other fields due to his views of the scientific nature of

the study. In the newly rebuilt Europe in the 1960's American influenced scholars began undertaking studies of administration once again, but the field was the centre of segregation in both the US and Europe. The one group rooted for academics and research, whilst focusing on decision making processes and organisation studies in a positivistic manner, while another group stuck more to the ideas of Dwight Waldo and education by focusing on a more generalised view integrated with other fields such as history and political theory (Rutgers, 2010:9-10). This led to different views on what the discipline covered and what was expected of students of PA at higher education institutions.

During the 1980's a majority view of practical relevance and empirical policy making took dominance, with alternatives still developing elsewhere. PA was beginning to be accepted by scholars in the 1980's though as a specialised field gradually moving away from the normative orientation and unscientific image of the discipline, with some viewing it as something to fill the void of generic management's theory and research, which in turn provided PA with a scientific basis (Zalmanovitch, 2014:812).

In 1968 at the Minnowbrook Conference under Dwight Waldo, New PA was conceptualised, with an empirical approach to the study of public policy and organisations taking the lead and thereby further dividing the community (Rutgers, 201:10). Among the key characteristics of New PA was greater focus on change and responsiveness, a more client centred PA, structural changes in administration such as fewer hierarchical structures, the advancement of a multi-disciplinary nature of PA incorporating other disciplines and a focus on Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy (Frederickson, 2010:8-9). New PA aimed to be less positivistic, less technical and as previously stated less reliant on hierarchies (Frederickson, 2010:10). New PA appeared to provide a new hope for PA's identity crisis as it provided more clear and unambiguous principles to improve the conduct of the field.

Another shift occurred due to the change, namely that of how accountability was seen within PA. PA has moved away from the bureaucratic view dominated by legislation and shifted towards a focus on the management of performance (Newswander & Newswander, 2012:288). This brings in the idea of performance management, a

measurement of how the public sector and its employees perform their duties and reach their goals. Public management should recognise this measurement and learn how to assess it. New Public Management emerged in the 1980's as a critic on the function of public administration. There was a need to reinvent government and utilise the entrepreneurial spirit to not only transform the public sector, but also to banish bureaucracy, which had to be restructured to enhance productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness. These principles become underlying ideas to the concept of governance (Gumede & Dipholo, 2014:46).

By the 1990's the field was still suffering from an "identity crisis" when the idea of 'Governance' entered into the fray (Rutgers, 2010:10). A key trait of the governance is that of networks having a commanding role in public policy, according to Peters and Pierre (1998:225). They continue by stating how the concept of governance has led to various networks, partnerships and international markets becoming more important factors in determining the nature of the role of governments. Governments themselves have become incapable of steering the societies they manage and have been reduced to the backseat by societal actors with stronger influence on policies and basic administration (Peters & Pierre, 1998:223). Governance has taken root in modern day PA programmes. However, the discourse concerning the integral differences of the field, especially one such as managerialism, which focuses on employment, has led to many within the discipline to not make enough provision for the concept, with others seeing it as a waning fad (Van der Waldt, 2012:10). Managerialism, mentioned above is the application of managerial techniques utilised in private businesses in the running of public organisations. The key characteristics of managerialism include hierarchy, accountability and measure of performance (Collins English Dictionary, 2014:1).

Peters and Pierre (1998:226) continue by stating how this leads to the idea that where the public sector institutions fail due to a loss of legitimacy, the private sector makes itself available to overcome this issue of ineptitude. A governmental body then would appear to rely more on influencing and bargaining with private sector actors on an equal footing due to a shared dependence on resources. Ultimately this all leads to a intertwining of public and private resources, usually in the form of partnerships with a

more flexible structure due to the blended nature of the partnership. These partnerships lead to the option of more innovative instruments to deliver the services expected of the government (Peters & Pierre, 1998:226-7). Public administration makes use of contracts in the form of tenders to acquire resources from the private sector to perform its function. This changes the way in which resources, acquisition and logistics are seen in the field. This leads to the discipline being more focused on interactions between the public and private sector and a strict public sector service view to intertwine with private sector style service delivery and management practices.

At the dawn of the 21st century globalisation, breakthroughs in communication and the internet took hold of the world and effectively made the world seem a smaller place, leading to more focus on the idea of Global Governance, where the earth is governed as a single entity rather than a collection of smaller individual entities (Henry, 2015:47). Transnational organisations such as the African Union, the United Nations and World Trade Organisation together with globalisation have ushered in reforms in economies, including monetary and foreign policy (Van der Waldt, 2012:14). These modern mechanisms have also served to reduce the sovereignty of governments and give way to the rise of governance, where organisations, laws, institutions, and various arrangements such as treaties and contracts control public services and people (Henry, 2015:47-48). This means the way in which public administration is conducted changes, which changes how the discipline is organised. New relationships and variables come into the picture and PA lecturers need to ensure their students understand how these new relationships work.

Between 2008 and 2010 the world was a tumultuous place in terms of a global financial crisis and various economic disruptions, leading to high levels of national debt, unemployment and global recession. This led to Governance and to a lesser degree, PA, being re-evaluated in terms of its response to the crisis and local economic development strategies and policies being recognised as counterbalances to the effects of international issues concerning debt and trade (Van der Waldt, 2012:12). Modern day PA has become concerned with inclusiveness and participation of all parties who have an interest, leading to a very integrated science, consisting of PA paired with fields such

as Sociology, Politics, History, Law and HRM, to take form (Osborne, 2006:380). In terms of what the future holds for PA, Henry (2015:49) states that an increasing amount of students in the discipline are becoming wary of working for governments and are leaning more towards non-profit organisations.

The study of PA has become characterised for its striving to combine the academic knowledge with practical objectives and is known as an applied field. PA is to this day still prone to fragmentation and differing views due to its interdisciplinary orientation, with a key argument for its independence lying in its ability to understand public administration in a manner that no other discipline can (Rutgers, 2010:11). Due to the PA's tendency to lean towards application, the subject often does not open itself to the testing of theories and systematic inquiry and the discipline itself in many places around the world lacks a formal commitment to research and development (McCurdy & Cleary, 1984:49).

In terms of teaching PA as a discipline, one needs to understand that as an applied science PA will have a strong focus on applying the theoretical knowledge of the discipline in ways that are both relevant and useful (Tijssen, 2010:1842). This focus on relevance is linked to the goal of the institution to produce practitioners with knowledge to guide them in real-life situations and has, thus, made research more focused on best practices in recent years (Van der Waldt, 2013:74). According to Jones (2012:131) the field of PA has been enjoying considerable attention, while the actual teaching of the subject has suffered due to bureaucracy being seen as inefficient and many higher education institutions throughout the world not even supporting the discipline as a standalone field. The focus on citizens as customers has led to a de-bureaucratisation in which organisations have become agencies with a business ethos focused on increasing efficiency and responsiveness (Miller, 2012:7-8). Many institutions, especially in the U.K. feel that the field has become too similar to business and that the neoliberal public sector has become so integrated with the private sector that a distinction is no longer necessitated (Miller, 2012:10).

In the South African context PA as a discipline has shifted towards a number of characteristics. The University of Pretoria has taught PA as a separate discipline since

the establishment of the Department of PA in 1965, which transformed into the School of Public Management and Administration in 1992 (University of Pretoria, 2016:1). The University of the Free State has taught PA as a separate discipline since the establishment of the Department of PA in 1952 (University of the Free State, 2016:1). The University of Stellenbosch started teaching PA with the establishment of the Department of PA and Political Studies in 1965 (University of Stellenbosch, 2016:1). The NWU, as a merged institution, located the teaching of PA programmes with the establishment of the School for Social and Government Studies on the Potchefstroom Campus, the School of Basic Sciences on the Vaal Campus and the School of Management on the Mafikeng Campus in 1998 (NWU, 2016c:1). Thus, the term PA is according to Cloete (1997:197) little more than a more marketable or cosmopolitan terminology compared to Political Science or Business Management. However the term management seems superior to administration, which is often thought of as lowly paperwork according to Pauw (1999:16), who argues that using the terms at different times and in different settings can alter the very meaning of how the subject is viewed. Pauw (1999:16) further states that in the South African context using the term Public Management for the subject has a closer relation to the success of business schools than with the actual conceptualising of the word.

Firstly as with most academic programmes since 1998 a degree of focus is placed on the outcomes and the expectations of the programmes indicative of application, requiring skills such as critical thinking and reflection, according to Van der Waldt (2013:81). Since the 1980's PA has often been transferred over to the more Business and Economics based faculties from the liberal arts due to the more business type approach it pursued. Students in South Africa are more often also more focused on employment than the pure pursuit of knowledge due to a limited job economy (Van der Waldt, 2013:81).

With a decline in financial support from the government for higher education institutions in the 2010's many academics have been forced to become more like consultants than researchers. Due to the vague and eclectic nature of the field many institutions also provide niche subjects such as Project Management and Environmental Management,

while others tend to stick to the more traditional curriculums. Due to the condition of the transformation and maturation of democracy in the country, PA academics tend to be more focused on immediate needs through mechanisms such as service delivery, while those in more developed countries such as the U.S. or the U.K. have more time for the construction of theoretical knowledge (Van der Waladt, 2013:81-82). The NWU has three campuses who each present a variant of PA programmes. The following section will take a look at the PA Programme at the NWU's three campuses.

### **3.3.2 Public Administration programme at the North-West University**

For the purpose of the research reference will be made to PA modules which is the inclusive concept assigned for all first year modules, irrespective of whether they are called Public Management or PA modules. Mafikeng will be reviewed theoretically, but will be excluded in the remainder of the research due to the different curriculum. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the different PA programmes offered to undergraduates at the three campuses of the North-West University. Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 illustrate a breakdown of the modules included in the first year of the curriculums within the programmes for the first and second semester of the academic year respectively.

**Table 2.1: Public Administration Programmes at the NWU**

|                   | Potchefstroom  | Vaal Triangle   | Mafikeng   |
|-------------------|--|---|--|
| Name              | BA in Development and Management residing in the Faculty of Arts   | BA in Development and Management residing in the Faculty of Humanities  | BAdmin in PA residing in the Faculty of Commerce and Administration  |
| Curriculum        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Management and Governance</li> <li>• Public Management with HRM and Labour Relations</li> <li>• Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</li> <li>• Public Management and Governance with Economics</li> <li>• Public Management and Governance with Sociology</li> <li>• Public Management and Geography</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Management and Governance</li> <li>• Public Management with HRM and Labour Relations</li> <li>• Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</li> <li>• Public Management and Society</li> <li>• Public Management and Environment</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Administration</li> </ul>  |
| Programme Outcome | Upon completion graduates should have basic training in public management and governance which will enable them to function in a problem-solving capacity within the workplace and to contribute through personal initiative and job creation. They should be equipped to perform functions and apply skills that would enable them to investigate and manage political phenomena within the work context (NWU, 2015a:94). | Graduates should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be knowledgeable about the basic political government structures within a democratic establishment and connect them with public governance which is shaped by these structures;</li> <li>• have obtained skills to function as a public manager in order to implement government policy;</li> <li>• understand the underlying legislative aspects which underwrite the governing function and which offer functional frameworks within the SA government structures;</li> <li>• Be able to describe the complex social dynamics of the development of government structures and institutions within the SA context and interpret them (NWU, 2015b:28-29).</li> </ul> | The main outcome of the programme is to empower students with graduate knowledge of concepts, structures, models, theories, principles, skills, research methodologies and applied competence enabling them to pursue rewarding careers in the current economic and political climate and to provide SA with graduates who are competent in public administration.<br><br>The programme also assists students to develop their intellectual and moral capacity to understand the public sector environment and to think critically and innovatively so as to lay the foundations for further specialisation (NWU, 2015a:48). |

|                        |   |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Admission Requirements | A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum achievement of 30% in the language of learning and an achievement rating of 4 (50-59%) in 4 20-credit subjects (NWU, 2010:12).<br>An APS count of at least 20 (NWU, 2015a:91). | Students should have a minimum APS score of 20 and a level 4 (50-59%) achievement in their language of learning. (NWU, 2015b:28). | The requirements include English at level 3, mathematics at level 3 or mathematical literacy at level 4 and an APS count of 20 (NWU, 2015a:15). |
|------------------------|---|---|---|

The first noteworthy observation would be that of the programmes being offered by different faculties. The Potchefstroom campus offers it through the Faculty of Arts in the School of Social and Government Studies (NWU, 2015b:88). The Vaal Triangle campus places the programme in the Faculty of Humanities in the School of Basic Sciences. The Mafikeng campus takes a completely alternative route and places the programme, which also possess a different name than those of the other campuses, in the Faculty of Commerce and Administration, in the school of Management Sciences (NWU, 2015a:67). The concept of Governance is provided as part of a curriculum name, indicative of the curricula attempting a more practical approach to deal with challenges presented in real-life. During 2015/2016 NWU embarked on a total restructuring which will culminate in a newly established Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in 2017. The current position of programmes in faculties remains the same. Table 2.1 further illustrates the different views on PA present in even a single university in the form of the different curricula presented in the different PA programmes, as well as the very outcomes of the programme. The Potchefstroom campus outcomes state that basic training in PA in order to solve problems and perform functions within their work by applying their skills to manage political phenomena is the main goal of the programme (NWU, 2015a:94). The Vaal Triangle campus outcomes seek to make students knowledgeable of governmental structures and functions within the framework of public policy and legislation and to describe the dynamics of the governmental structures (NWU, 2015b:28-29). The Mafikeng campus outcomes list the empowerment of students through use of knowledge to pursue rewarding careers with adequate skill and competence as the main function, while also assisting students to develop their intellectual and moral capacity to create a foundation for future specialisation (NWU, 2015a:48). All three outcomes are more or less focused on educating students in PA and preparing them to be competent employees in the workplace, while focusing on training, educating and empowerment respectively.

The following tables, Table 2.2 and Table 2.3, demonstrates the first year curriculums (including all modules) in the first and second semester respectively.

**Table 2.2: Compilation of First Semester Curriculums**

| Potchefstroom (NWU, 2016a:88-94)   | Vaal Triangle (NWU, 2016b:28-36)  | Mafikeng (NWU, 2015a:67)  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Economics (ECON 111) (NWU, 2015a:76)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Economics (ECON 111) (NWU, 2015b:30).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction to Economics (ECON 111)</li> <li>○ Introductions to Computers and Programming (INYM 111)</li> <li>○ Accounting: Framework, Foundations, Cycle and Financial Reporting (ACCS 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to PA (PAYM 118)</li> <li>○ Inferential Statistics &amp; Operations Research (STFM 112) (NWU, 2015a:40).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management with HR Management and Labour Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Industrial Psychology (IOPS 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Workplace Relations (LARM 111)</li> <li>○ Descriptive Statistics (STTN 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111) / Introduction to Economics (ECON 111) (NWU, 2015a:77)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management with HR Management and Labour Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Industrial Psychology (IOPS 111)</li> <li>○ Intro to Workplace Relations (LARM 111)</li> <li>○ Descriptive Statistics (STTN 111)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111) / Intro to Economics (ECON 111) (NWU, 2015b:31).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>         |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Law (IURI 171)</li> <li>○ English for Specific Purposes (ENLS 111) / South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111) (NWU, 2015a:77-78).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Law (IURI 171)</li> <li>○ English for Specific Purposes / Intro to Literary Genres (ENLL 111)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111) / South African History (HIST 112) (NWU, 2015b:33).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance with Economics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Economics (ECON 111) (NWU, 2015a:78-79).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111)</li> <li>○ Intro to Economics (ECON 111) (NWU, 2015b:35).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance with Sociology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Sociology: Basic Concepts and Themes (SOCL 111)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Economics (ECON 111)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)/ Introduction to Key Concepts of Social Anthropology (SANL 112) (NWU, 2015a:79-80).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Intro to Economics (ECON 111)</li> <li>○ Introductory Physical Geography (GGFS 111) (NWU, 2015b:37).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Geography</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Foundations of Public Management (PUMA112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Political Studies (POLI 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Economics (ECON 111)</li> <li>○ South African History (HIST 112)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Physical Geography (GGFS 112) (NWU, 2015a:80).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |  |  |

**Table 2.3: Compilation of Second Semester Curriculums**

| <b>Potchefstroom (NWU, 2016a:88-94)</b>   | <b>Vaal Triangle (NWU, 2016b:28-36)</b>  | <b>Mafikeng (NWU, 2015a:67)</b>  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Practical English (ENLS 121)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the South African Context (SOCL 121)</li> <li>○ Themes in World History (HIST 123) (NWU, 2015a:76).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Practical English (ENLS 121)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121)</li> <li>○ Themes in World History (HIST 123) (NWU, 2015b:30).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Basic Micro- and Macroeconomics (ECON 121)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Financial Accounting (Special): Financial Reporting, Analyses and Interpretation of Financial Statements (ACCS121)</li> <li>○ Organisation of Government and Administration (PAYM 128)</li> <li>○ Introduction to Financial Mathematics (STFM 122) (NWU, 2015a:40).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management with HR Management and Labour Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121)</li> <li>○ Occupational Health and Ergonomica (IOPS 121)</li> <li>○ Functions of HR Management (HRMA 122) (NWU, 2015a:77).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management with HR Management and Labour Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121)</li> <li>○ Occupational Health &amp; Ergonomica (IOPS 121)</li> <li>○ Functions of HR Management (HRMA 122)</li> <li>○ Basic Micro- and Macro-Economics (NWU, 2015b:31).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121) / Themes in World History (HIST 123)</li> <li>○ Intro to Law (NWU, 2015a:77-78).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121) / Themes in World History</li> <li>○ Intro to Law (NWU, 2015b:33).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance with Economics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123) / Themes in World History (HIST 123)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Mathematical Techniques (WISN 123)</li> <li>○ Basic Micro- and Macro-Economics (ECON 121) (NWU, 2015a:78-79).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Practical English (ENLS 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121)</li> <li>○ Themes in World History (HIST 123) (NWU, 2015b:35).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Governance with Sociology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Intro to Sociology: Institutions &amp; the SA Context (SOCL 121)</li> <li>○ Practical English (ENLS 121)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Themes in Social Anthropological Research (SANL 122) / Themes in World History (HIST 123) (NWU, 2015a:79-80).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Practical English (ENLS 121)</li> <li>○ Themes in World History (HIST 123)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Human Geography (NWU, 2015b:37).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                     |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Management and Geography</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Locus &amp; Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122)</li> <li>○ The South African Political System (POLI 123)</li> <li>○ Themes in World History (HIST 123)</li> <li>○ Practical English (ENLS 121)</li> <li>○ Intro to Human Geography (GGFS 121)</li> <li>○ Academic Literacy (AGLE 121) (NWU, 2015:99) (NWU, 2015a:80).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |   |  |

An interesting observation is that of the various curricula at the Potchefstroom, Vaal Triangle and Mafikeng programmes. The first two campuses tend to follow the interdisciplinary approach, by explicitly including other fields such as HRM, Politics, Law, Economics, Sociology and Geography, while Mafikeng includes subjects such as Economics, Information Technology, Accounting and Statistics, all disciplines within the faculty of Commerce and Administration.

When reviewing the subjects presented in each curriculum this interdisciplinary nature seems evident. History, Sociology, Economics and especially Politics seem to be the most interwoven external subjects at the Vaal and Potchefstroom campuses. In more specialised directions subjects such as Geography, with Statistics is found in the Commerce faculty (NWU, 2016a:88-94; NWU, 2016b:28-36). The Mafikeng campus programme is different from that of the other two campuses, appearing to have a more financial and business minded approach with subjects such as Programming, Accounting and Financial Mathematics. Subjects such as Sociology, History and Politics, which is a core component of many of the other curriculums are not present at all in the first year programme at Mafikeng (NWU, 2015a:67). The only thing all curriculums seem to have in common is Academic Literacy, which is a fundamental module compulsory for all NWU students in their first year (NWU, 2016a:16).

According to the descriptions provided, the Mafikeng campus' undergraduate programme seems to be more focused on academics and research, possibly preparing the students for further studies (NWU, 2015a:48), while the other two campuses, at least according to the outcomes, seem more focused on producing capable practitioners with problem-solving and investigative skills (NWU, 2015a:94; NWU, 2015b:28-29). This forms an interesting contrast to the previous observation that Mafikeng's subjects are more geared towards a business orientated approach, while the other two campuses are more focused on academics and research.

This study will make use of these outcomes and curriculums in questionnaires and interviews to assess how students and lecturers interpret them and how this helps students create their own goals and what they expect as well as what is expected of them. Due to the vastly different curriculum presented at the Mafikeng Campus the

research in Chapter Four will not include the Mafikeng Campus.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

The goal of this chapter was to provide a literature background to public administration as a higher education programme. The general idea with regards to higher education was triangular, where the information was provided by the lecturer and absorbed by the student who then reproduces the knowledge. Theory only becomes useful to a practitioner if they have had breakdown of practice.

The chapter provides evidence that self-regulated learning has also become a trend in recent years with higher education - a great step towards improving student engagement. The main pieces of legislation that affect Higher Education are the Constitution (1996) and the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997). The direction that higher education in South Africa will take as well as the goals and aims thereof are determined by this legislation.

As was pointed out in the chapter since the dawn of the 21st century many higher education institutions have been run as businesses, with a key point being the exchange of information, knowledge transfer and innovation and partnerships with the private sector in order to stimulate economic development. Growth of the higher education in South Africa has been held up due to poor education systems and lack of resources and the state's dwindling capacity to provide society with a meaningful and strong higher education due to various political reasons.

The chapter argued that PA suffers from a 'multiple personality disorder' due to the multidisciplinary origins on one hand and the different directions in which it wants to proceed on the other. The study of PA is focused on the governance and the government of society and, thus, has a different intrinsic value based on where it is studied. Ideas of leadership and administrative organisation were written down and passed on as knowledge was the first concept of PA. At first there was no clear distinguished idea of PA as a discipline. During the 1700's Polity Science and Cameralism started evolving and by the 18th century scholars developed more

theoretical approaches to the study, with the central focus still on policy however. Lorenz von Stein attempted to undertake the difficult task of unifying the study of PA. Administration studies gained a foothold in the U.S. early in the twentieth century under Woodrow Wilson. Wilson sent PA towards becoming a discipline in its own right. The discipline was established and the debate on what it should concern started. These developments have all led to the beginning of the field of study on which this study is concerned.

Some students of PA rooted for academics and research, while others stuck more to the ideas of education by focusing on a more integrated view. New PA appeared to provide a new hope for PA's identity crisis as it provided more clear and unambiguous principles to improve the conduct of the field. By the 1990's 'Governance' had entered the picture. Modern day PA and Governance has become concerned with inclusiveness and participation, leading to an integrated science forming. This has led to differing views on what PA should contain and where the focus must lie and this study had to analyse what each of the three campuses of the NWU sees as PA and what it expects from students and what the outcomes are.

The NWU showcases the transdisciplinary nature of the field as well as the contrasting views concerning where it should go and where it originates from. The Mafikeng campus seems to take a more practical and business orientated approach, where the Potchefstroom and Vaal campuses take a more academic role. This could lead to two very different programmes being presented by the same institution, leading to different expectations and outcomes concerning different content. As previously stated this study had to determine what each campus expects and regards as important information. This means that how students are engaged could be different across the campuses.

The study of PA has, thus, become characterised for the attempts to combine theory and practical objectives and has evolved into an interdisciplinary field. It is important for PA and those who teach it to bridge a gap between theory and practice. For the purpose of this study this would indicate that for students to be able to transform the theoretical knowledge they have learned into practice they would have to become engaged in

classes in order to not only understand the theory, but to also think more creatively and be able to apply this knowledge.

The following chapter will assess the challenges in facilitating first year student engagement in PA modules. This chapter will focus on the PA programme and practices at the NWU's Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses and the possible shortcomings and challenges faced for the successful undertaking of the programme by students. It will make use of the five benchmarks discussed in the previous chapter to assess engagement on behalf of students and faculty and will gather results from questionnaires and interview outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 4: CHALLENGES IN FACILITATING FIRST YEAR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MODULES.**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

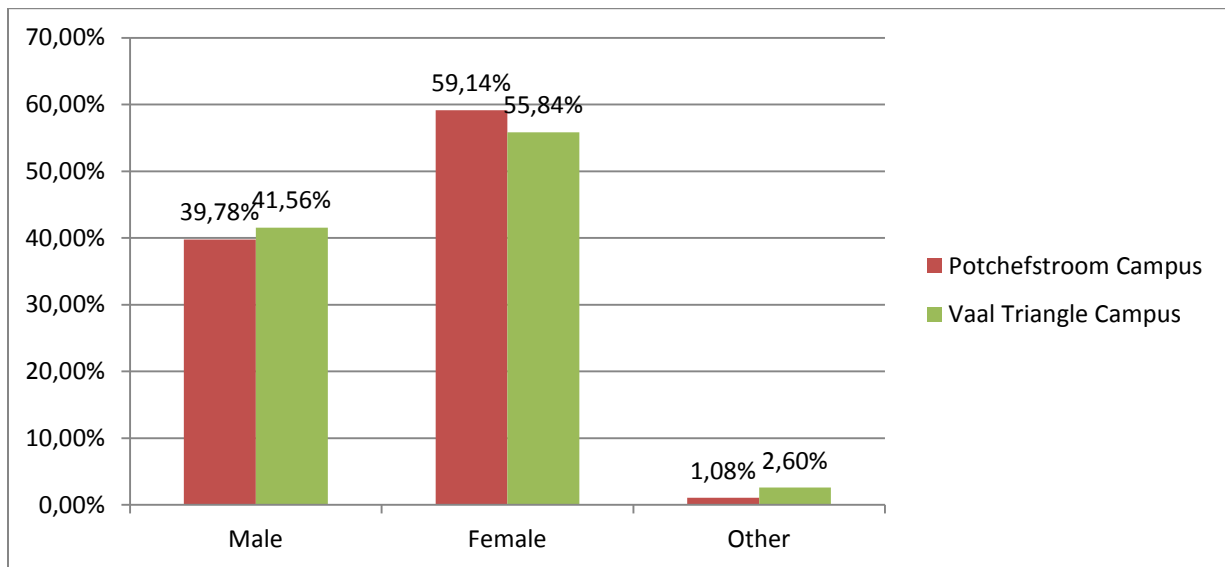
This chapter reviews the PA programme and teaching practices at the NWU's Potchefstroom and Vaal campuses and identifies possible shortcomings and challenges concerned with the successful engagement within the programme by students, as provided for in the third research objective identified in Chapter One. This study makes use of the benchmarks as originally identified by George Kuh's National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Kuh, 2001:13) and assesses student engagement based upon these categories as described in Chapter Two. This chapter reviews each campus and draws a conclusion from the data provided.

This study assesses engagement on the behalf of students and faculty and gathers data through questionnaires for students and interviews with lecturers responsible for teaching first year PA students. The study utilises a sample of 200 students randomly selected from the two campuses, 100 students per campus. This research aims to determine whether students are adequately engaged with their tertiary studies and if they are aware of the skills required for succeeding in the PA programmes. Probability sampling is utilised and more specifically the sub-type of random sampling is used to select a fair and representative sample for the questionnaire. Apart from the students, lecturers appointed to instruct students with academic content across the two campuses are interviewed. For these participants non-probability sampling through a judgmental sampling technique is used. Before commencing with a thematic discussion of the findings, the demographic profile of students who participated in the study will be provided.

### **4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

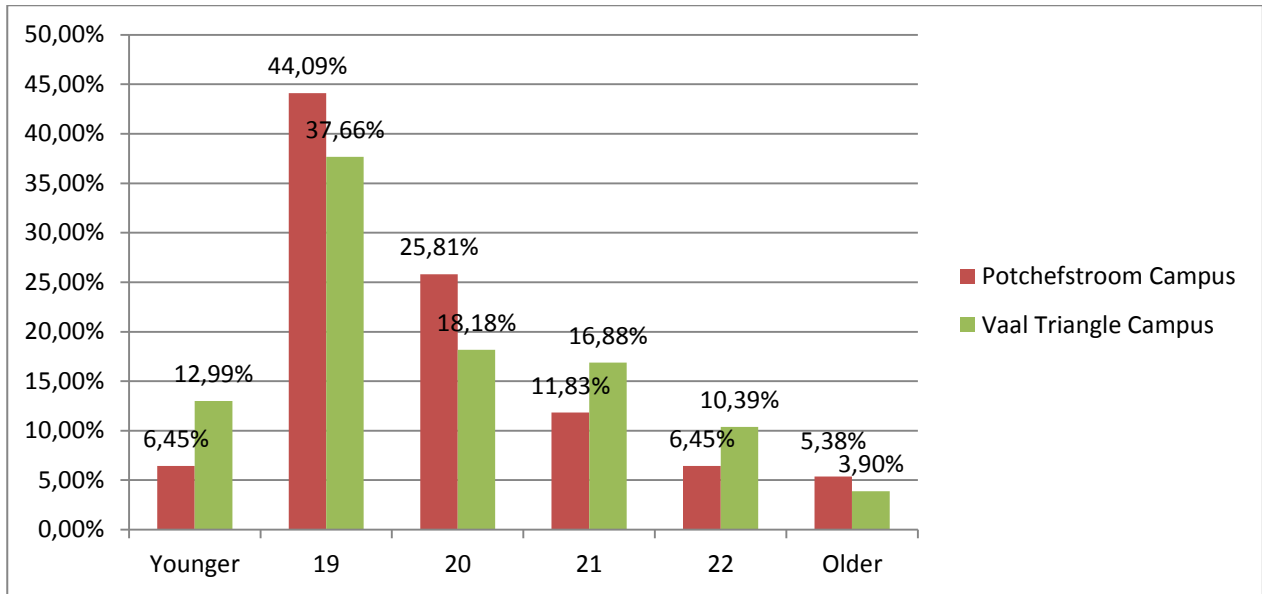
This section will review the Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses of the NWU, by the demographical information provided and then according to the five benchmarks used in Kuh's NSSE. The Potchefstroom campus has 447 students enrolled within the second

semester class, Locus and Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122) in 2016. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed amongst the PUMA class on a random basis and 93 were received back which represents a 93% response rate. The Vaal Triangle campus has 208 students enrolled within the second semester class, Locus and Focus of Public Management (PUMA 122) in 2016. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed amongst the PUMA class on a random basis and 77 were received back by the researcher representing a 77% response rate. Diedericks (2016) from the Potchefstroom campus stated that he believed that the first year class was a “true reflection” of the demographics of the area, specifically regarding the North West Province. In the first figure the gender breakdown of respondents are provided.



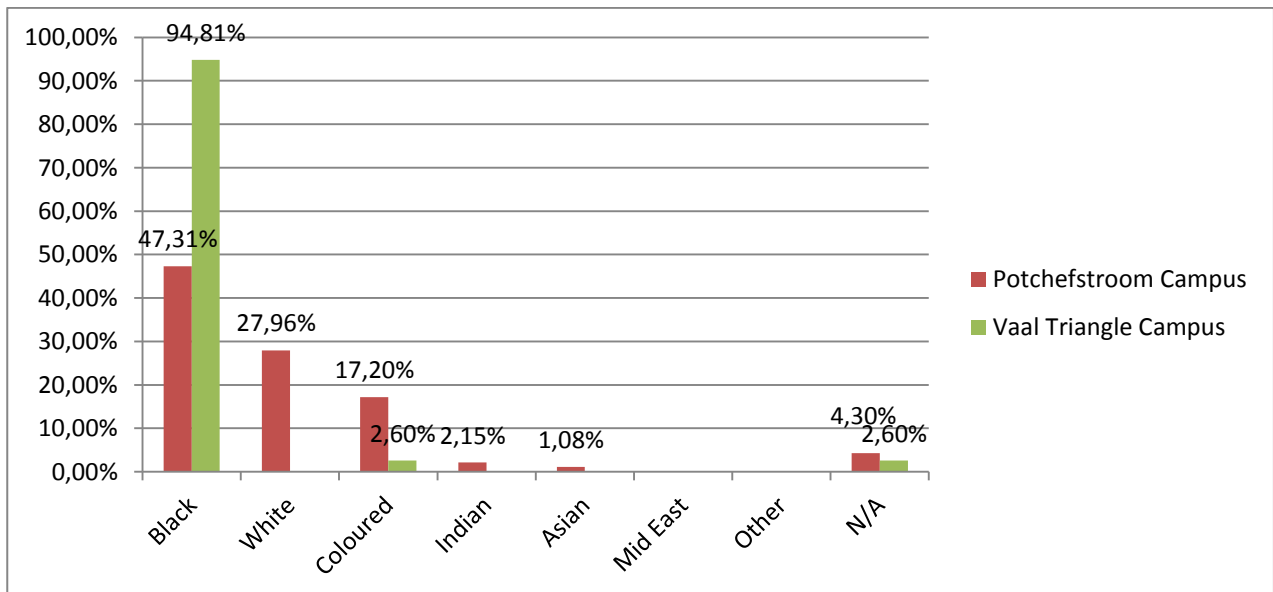
**Figure 4.1: Gender profile of respondents**

From the data (Figure 4.1) the deduction can be made that the majority of respondents on both campuses were female, with slightly less male respondents. The following figure represents the age profile of respondents.



**Figure 4.2: Age profile of respondents**

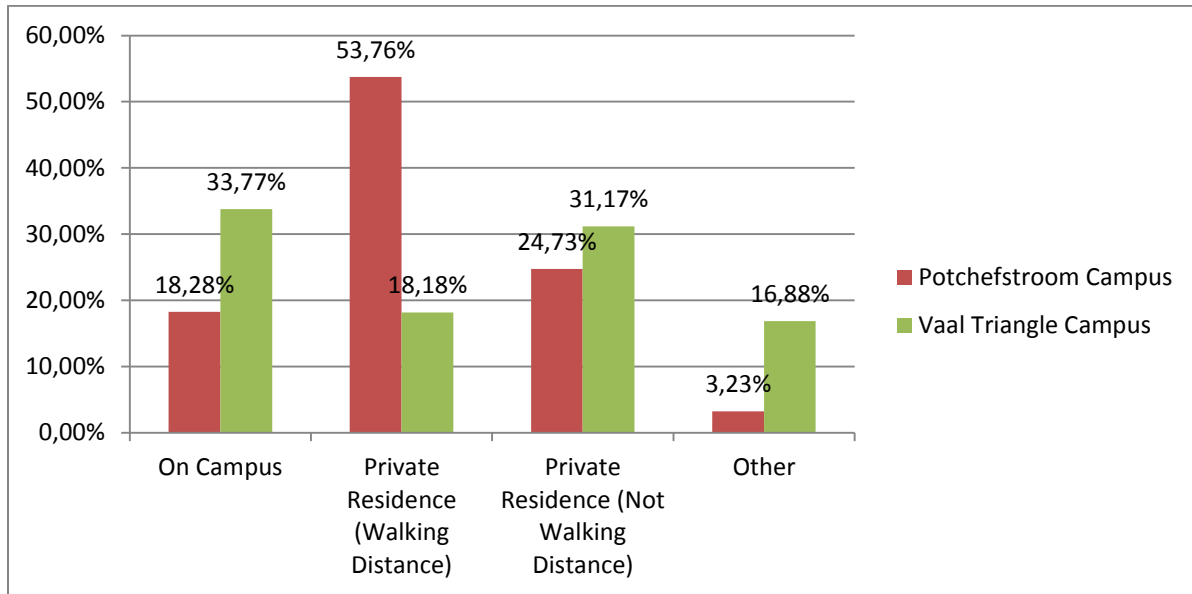
Most students at both campuses were 19 or 20 year old, the average age for first year students. The Vaal campus however had a higher percentage of older students than the Potchefstroom class. The following figure depicts the racial composition of first year classes at both campuses.



**Figure 4.3: Race profile of respondents**

At both campuses black students were the largest racial group, while white students

were the second largest at the Potchefstroom campus. The main difference is that the greater majority of the Vaal campus was black, while more diversity were evident on the Potchefstroom campus.



**Figure 8.4: Place of residence of respondents**

At the Potchefstroom campus the largest group, that is 53.76% of the class, live in private residences within walking distance from campus. A significant amount (24.73%) of the class however live in private residences that are further than walking distance, while 18.28% live on campus in dormitories or residences and 3.23% selected other.

Most students from the Vaal campus live either in campus residences and dormitories (33.77%) or private residences farther than walking distance from campus (31.17%). About 18.18% lived in private residences within walking distance of campus, while 16.88% selected other. On the question posed of how much time you take to travel to and from class per week, the average was about 3 hours each week, which implies that on a daily basis students do not have to spend much time traveling to and from campus.

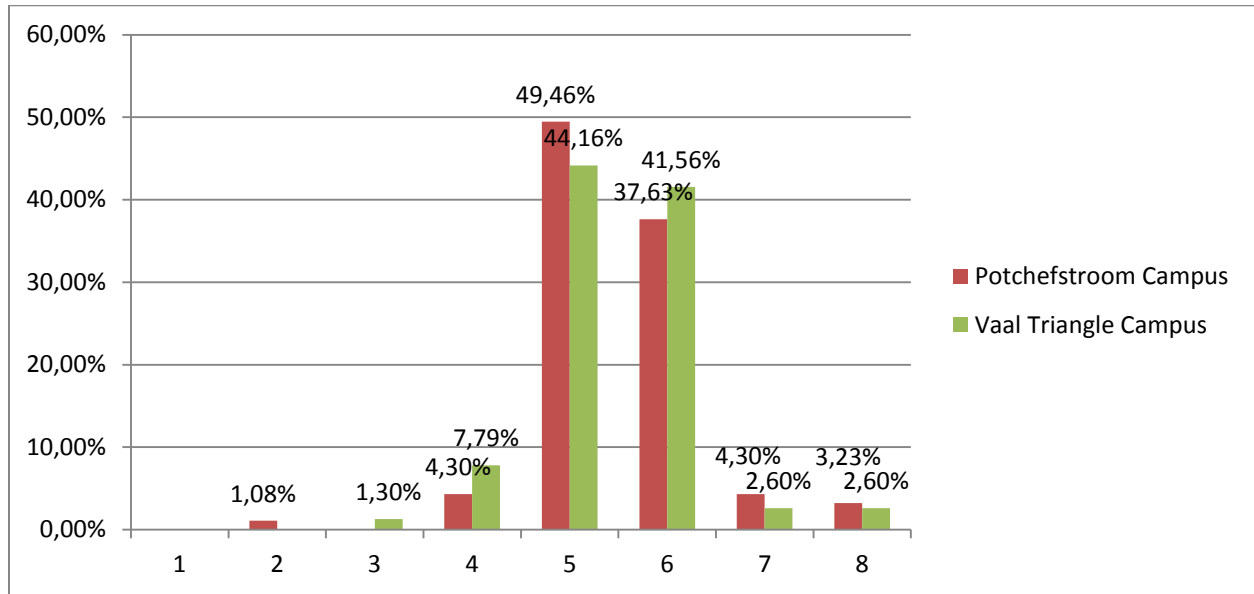


Figure 4.5: Total registered modules of respondents

The majority on both campuses were registered for 5 or 6 modules in the second semester. Since the degrees for which these students are registered comprise a predetermined amount of modules per semester, students have little say in the amount of modules they need to complete successfully per year.

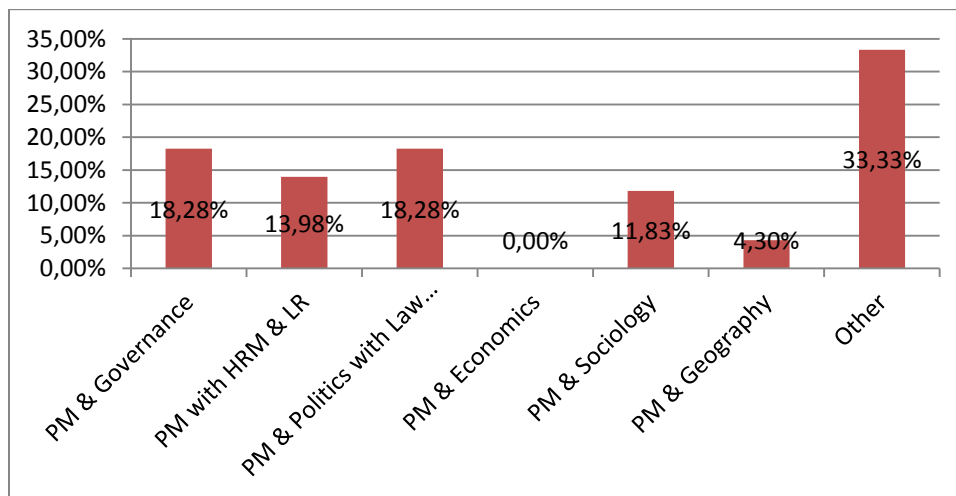
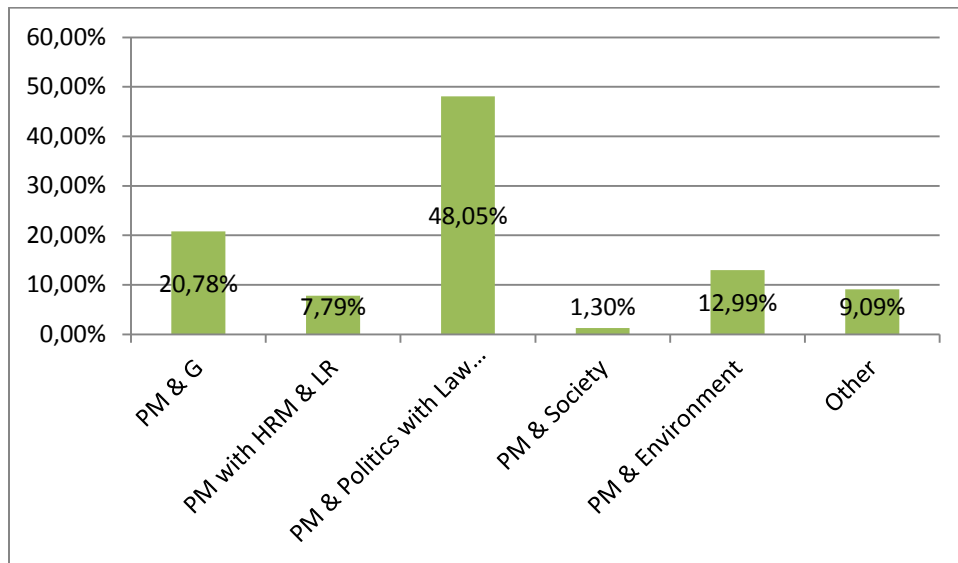


Figure 4.6: Curriculum of respondents (Potchefstroom campus)

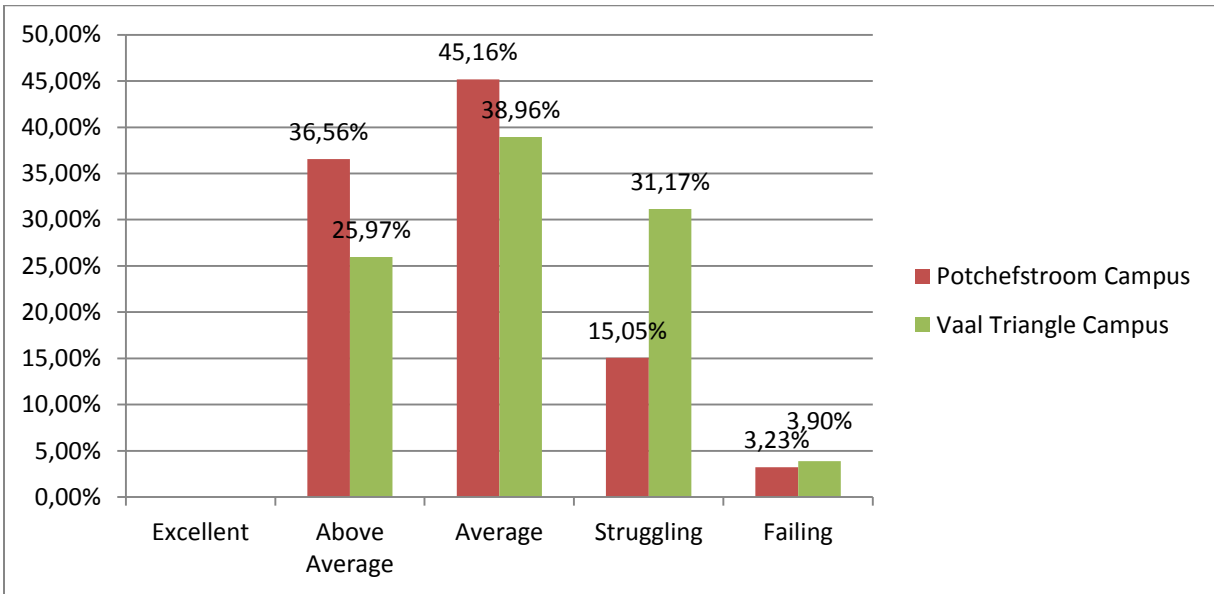
The largest group, 33.33% of the Potchefstroom class were not enrolled in the PA programme and were enrolled in programmes such as Psychology, Labour Studies, Sociology or Politics, with many opting to take the module as an elective. The two PA

curriculums with the most enrolments were Public Management and Governance and Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects, respectively 18.28% of respondents in each. Public Management with HRM and Labour Relations had 13.98% of the students in the class registered, while 11.83% of the class were registered for Public Management and Governance with Sociology. A small group, 4.30% of the class were registered for Public Management and Geography, while none were enrolled in Public Management and Governance with Economics.



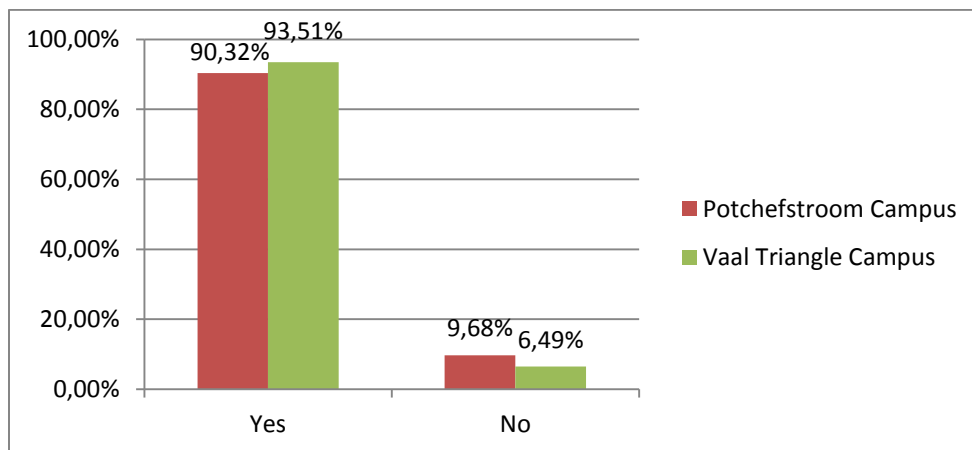
**Figure 4.7: Curriculum of respondents (Vaal campus)**

Almost half of the Vaal campus class (48.05%) was registered for the curriculum Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects. The second largest group (20.78%) was registered for Public Management and Governance, 12.99% of respondents were registered for Public Management and Environment, while 7.79% of respondents were registered for Public Management with HRM and Labour Relations. In a stark contrast to the Potchefstroom campus only a handful (7.79%) were registered to different programmes such as Politics and Society and History and Geography, having taken PUMA as an elective.



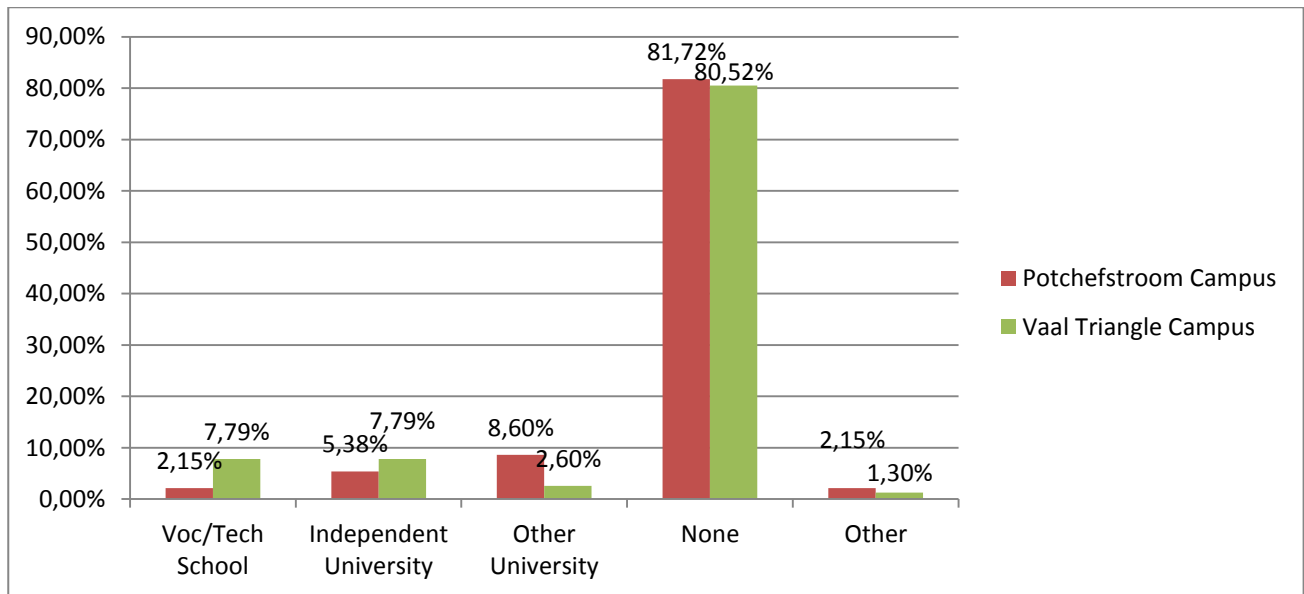
**Figure 4.8: Performance level of respondents**

The majority (45.16% & 38.96%) of respondents at both campuses felt that they were average students, while students leaned more towards struggling at Vaal campus (31.17%) and more towards above average at the Potchefstroom campus (36.56%). Both campuses also had a small group that were failing (3.23% & 3.90%).



**Figure 4.9: Percentage of respondents who started their studies at the NWU**

The overall majority of both campuses started their studies at the NWU as indicated above.



**Figure 4.10: Previous higher education institution attendance of respondents**

Most of the students at both campuses had never previously attended other institutions of higher education, while the Potchefstroom campus a small group that had attended other universities, the Vaal campus had some students that had attended vocational or technical schools previously.

The following section assesses respondents' perceptions according to the benchmarks presented in Chapters One and Two. The first benchmark to be analysed relates to the level of challenge presented to students at the institution.

### **4.3 LEVEL OF CHALLENGE**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the level of challenge, as first benchmark for student engagement focuses on the amount of time spent preparing for class, the regularity of hard work to meet the requirements of the programme, the amount of reading material, the amount of written papers or reports and the stress the institution places on engagement (Carini *et al.*, 2006:24). Level of challenge is the extent to which students participate in order to learn how to think and construct information for themselves. When students feel that they are challenged they engage with the work, whereas students who are not challenged become bored and disillusioned (SASSE, 2013:1).

Before commencing with the analyses of questions pertaining to the level of challenge the lecturers were asked to define student engagement. Diedericks (2016) defined student engagement as “involvement of learners in the learning process” and stated that the lecturer should provide relevant instructions to ensure student engagement. Poee (2016) defined student engagement as “students preparing and debating reading materials and being able to interact with lecturers based on them”. The first set of questions concerning the level of academic challenge asked students to indicate the extent to which the coursework emphasised certain content. The first question asked to what extent the coursework emphasised the memorising of module material. The second question asked to what extent the coursework emphasised the application of facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations while the third question asked to what extent the coursework emphasised the importance of analysing an idea, experience or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts. The fourth question asked to what extent the coursework emphasised evaluating a point of view, decision or information source and the fifth question asked to what extent the coursework emphasised forming new ideas or understanding from various pieces of information.

The second set of questions asked students how often they had chosen to engage with material in order to make specific arguments that are considered to be indicative of the level of challenge presented and how students engage with the module in order to construct new information. The first question under this section asked how often they had reached conclusions based on their own analysis of information. The second question asked how often students had made use of their module information to examine a real-world problem or issue such as unemployment. The third question, thus, asked students how often they had evaluated what others have concluded from information.

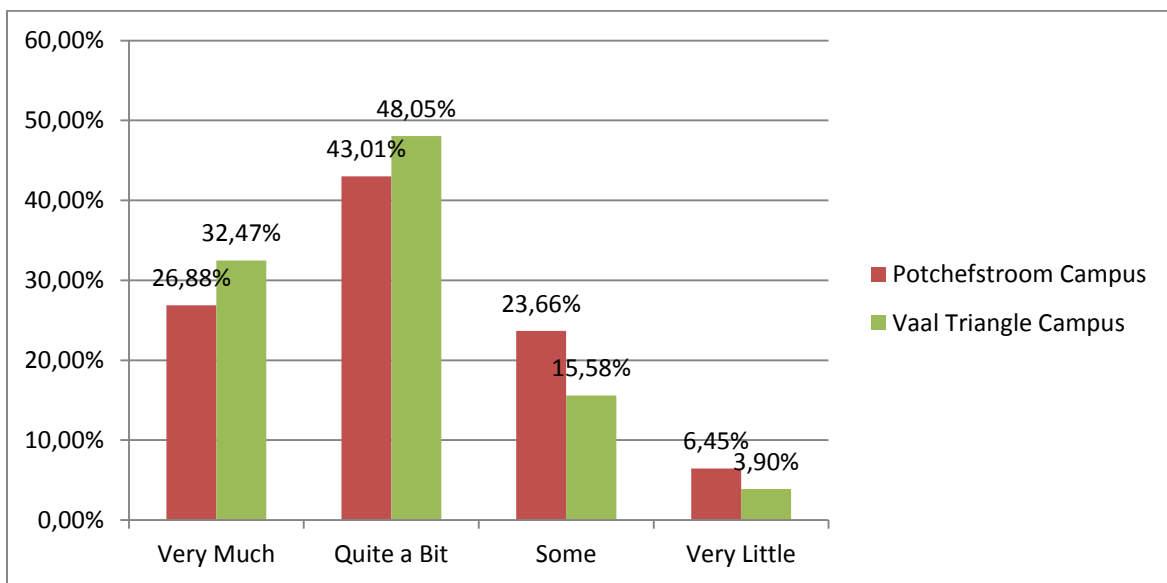
The third set of questions focused on reading and summarising information. The first question asked students how often they had identified key information from reading assignments. The second question asked how often students reviewed their notes after

class. The third question asked how often students summarised what they have learned in class or from module materials.

The fourth set of questions asked students of the time spent preparing for class by asking how many hours in a typical 7-day week are spent on assigned reading.

The fifth set of questions asked students to what extent they believe the module has challenged them to do their best work within the current academic year on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much while the last set of questions also comprised one questions asking students how many papers, reports or written assignments they had been assigned in the current academic year.

Students need to be able to memorise information so that they can store this data in order to integrate this information into previous bodies of knowledge to fully engage with the material to construct new ideas and thoughts (OECD, 2004:145). Figure 4.11 below illustrates the findings.

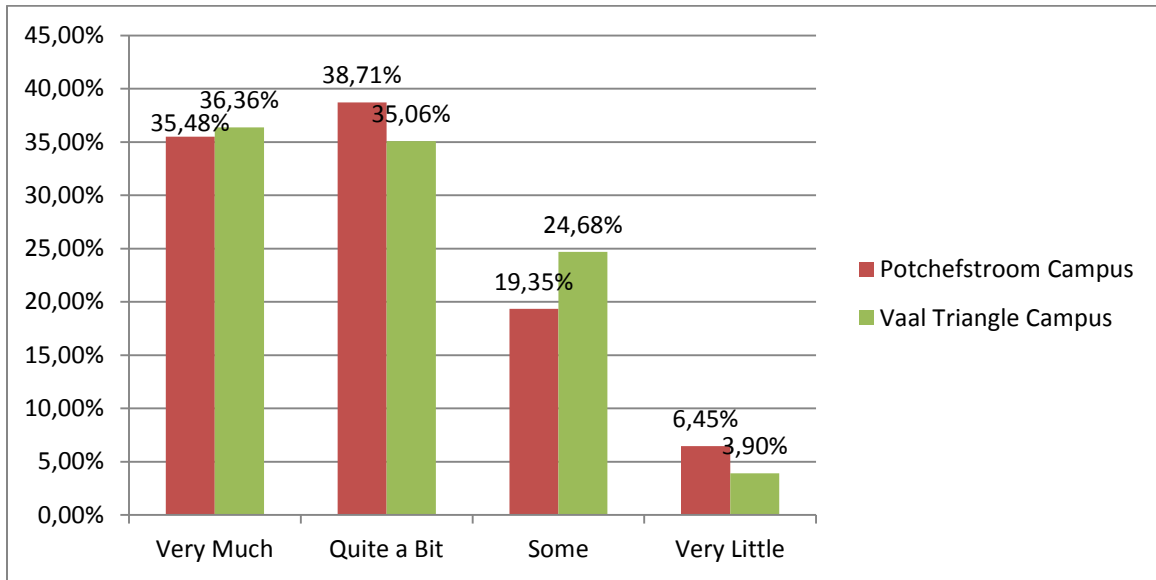


**Figure 4.11: Memorising module material**

The results from both campuses were similar. Most students felt that the coursework emphasised the memorising of the module material quite a bit (43.01% & 48.05%), while a smaller group felt that it was emphasised very much (26.88% & 32.47%). An even smaller group or respondents felt that the coursework only sometimes emphasised this

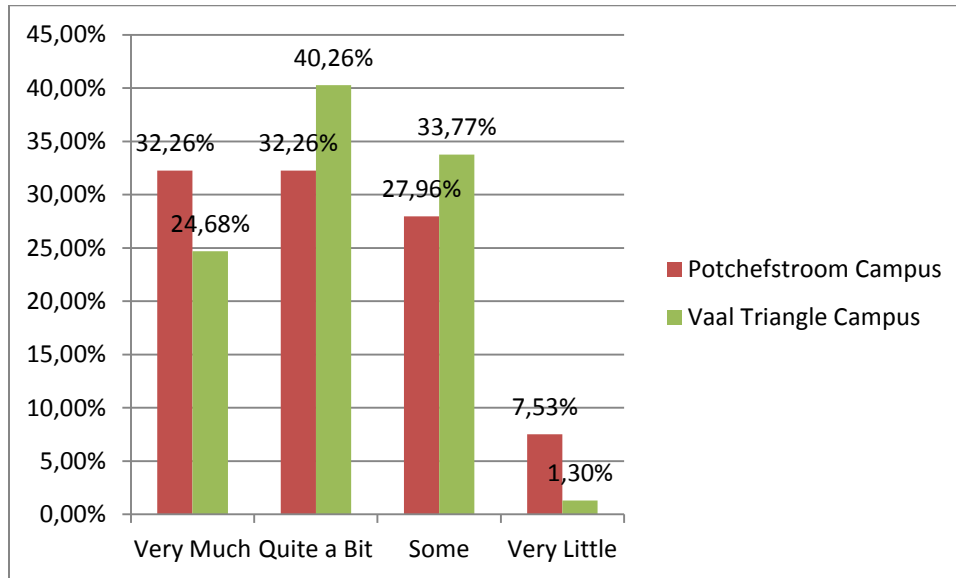
(23.66% & 15.58%), while a small minority indicated it placed very little emphasis (6.45% & 3.90%). This means students most often memorise the information presented to them in their prescribed material in order to construct new information. They perceive memorising material as integral to their ultimate success in the module.

Figure 4.12 below illustrates the extent to which the application of theory was emphasised.



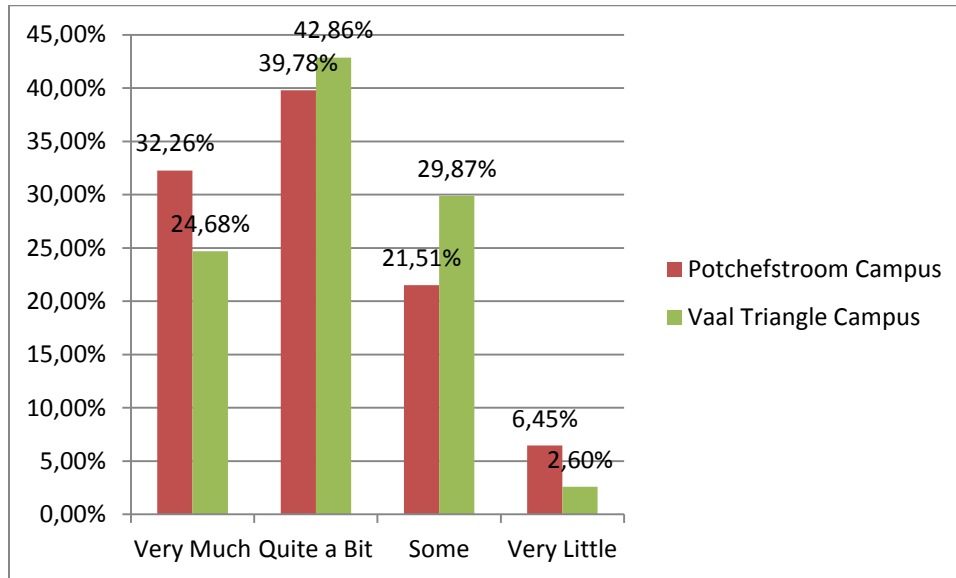
**Figure 4.12: Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations**

Most students at both campuses felt that the coursework emphasised application of theory to practical problems, with most selecting quite a bit (38.71% & 35.06%) or very much (35.48% & 36.36%). However, a smaller yet sizeable group thought it only placed some emphasis on this concept (19.35% & 24.68%), while a minority indicated it did very little of that (6.45% & 3.90%). Application of knowledge is when students make use of the theoretical knowledge that they have at their disposal and to then apply this information in real-life situations. This showcases that students are engaged with the work and not only remember it, but that they also understand it and that they can apply it in their lives, the actual goal of education (Hone, 2009:1). The argument can be made that most students seem to be able to apply theory to practice and thereby engage with not only the content of the module, but also is context through application.



**Figure 4.13: Analysing an idea, experience or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts**

The largest group of students at both campuses (32.26% & 40.26%) indicated quite a bit, with the Potchefstroom campus leaning more towards very much (32.26%) and the Vaal campus towards some (33.77%) analysis of ideas or experience in order to understand its parts. Once again only a minority (7.53% & 1.30%) at both campuses indicated very little. This means that students are capable of deconstructing information to analyse the various parts of an idea or a theory as well as the interlinked ideas and how each part fits into the whole. Students use this technique to understand the inner workings of ideas or to see how a specific idea was constructed. Students actively engage with a module by breaking it down into segments (Banks, 2002:14). The extent to which students are able to evaluate a point of view, a decision or an information source is analysed in the following figure.

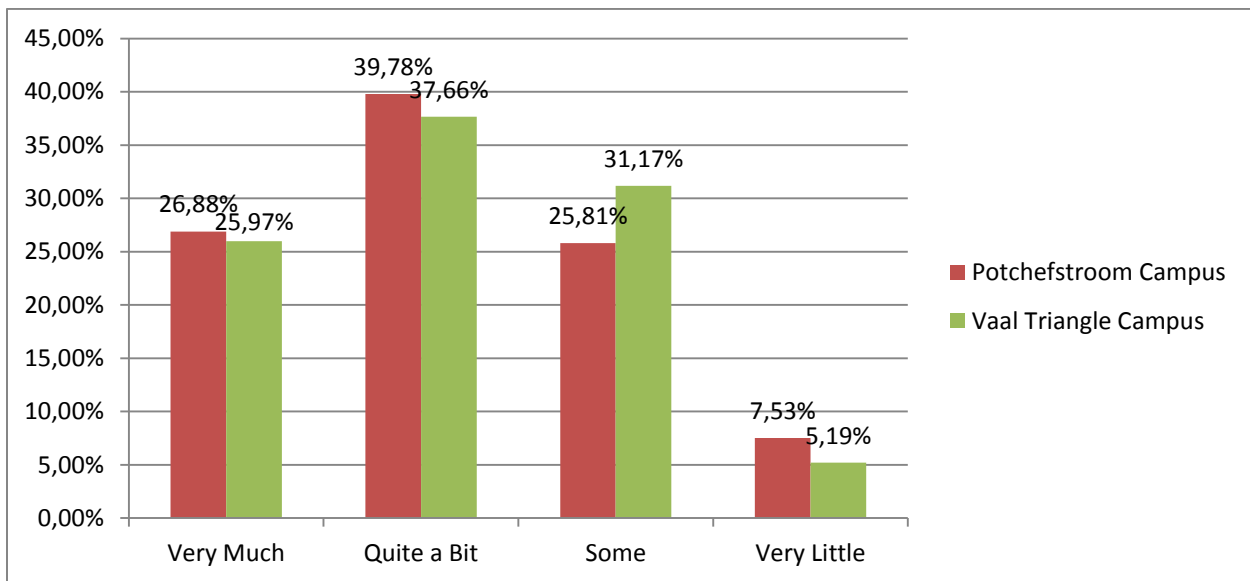


**Figure 4.14: Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source**

Most (39.78% & 42.86%) respondents once again indicated quite a bit, with the Potchefstroom campus leaning towards very much (32.26%) and the Vaal campus towards some (29.87%) evaluation of ideas, decisions or information sources. A small group (6.45% & 2.60%) at both campuses indicated very little. This would mean that students engage in the evaluation of information sources in order to gain understanding about the content and how it has evolved. The argument is made that student engagement is enhanced when students are able to demonstrate their understanding through the evaluation of content and how it is presented.

Diedericks (2016) states that while he encourages free thinking it is important that free thinking needs to be directed or linked back to the particular learning outcomes. He continues by stating that some students confuse the volatile political landscape in South Africa with what is discussed in class and it is, thus, important to always provide the link between learning content and practice. Pooe (2016) indicates that he provides students with space to debate one another on a variety of outcome based topics and that as a lecturer he simply guides the debates. Through the debates the intention is to create a space for students to link their own experiences with the content of the module, thereby transforming theory into practice. Both lecturers and respondents agree that the relationship between theory and practice is important in facilitating student engagement. The responses from interviewees also indicate that as lecturers different approaches

towards facilitating interaction and engagement may be followed. However, for both it is important that the connection between theory and practice enhances participation and understanding among students. The following figure depicts results pertaining to whether students are engaged through forming new ideas or understanding from a variety of information sources.

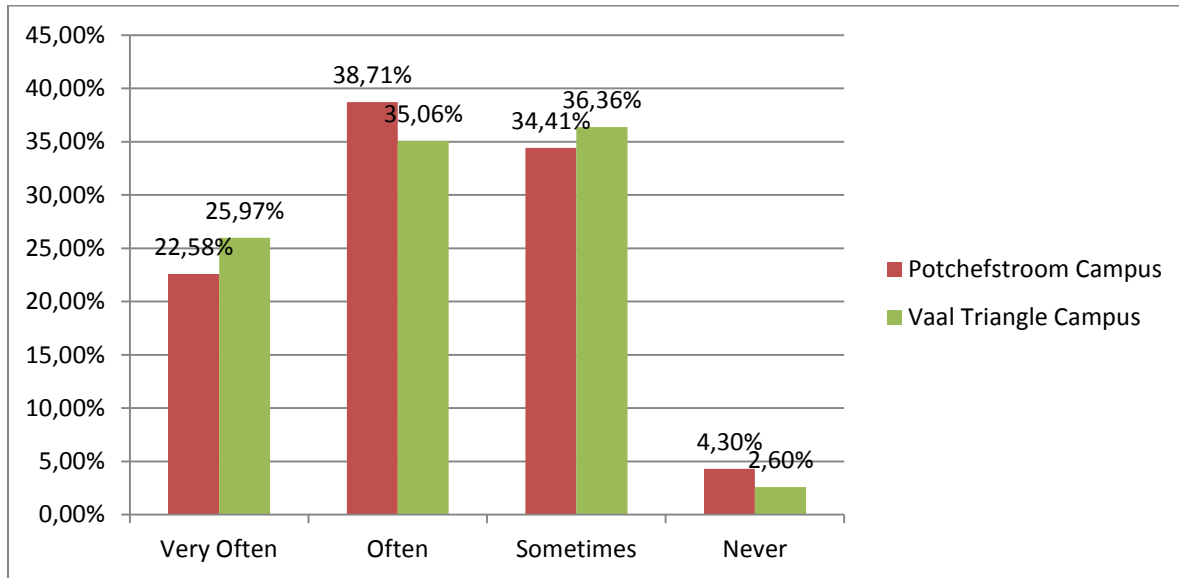


**Figure 4.15: Forming new ideas or understanding from various pieces of information**

Most students felt that the formation of new ideas from various sources of information was emphasised some (25.81% & 31.17%), quite a bit (39.78% & 37.66%) and very much (26.88% & 25.97%). The study suggests that as part of student engagement students are continuously encouraged to view information from a variety of perspectives thereby allowing them the opportunity to form their own opinions as well as link the information back to their own experiences. This encourages active learning and thereby stimulates student engagement, which implies that students are aware that they must construct new ideas and bodies of knowledge using the information that the coursework provides them to gain an enlightened understanding. This shows students as capable of the basic constructionist techniques of learning through engagement.

As stated in Chapter Two, it is imperative that students not only learn to recite information but that they construct ideas and develop thoughts using the information as building blocks (Schunk, 2000:237). This reflects the views of the cognitive learning

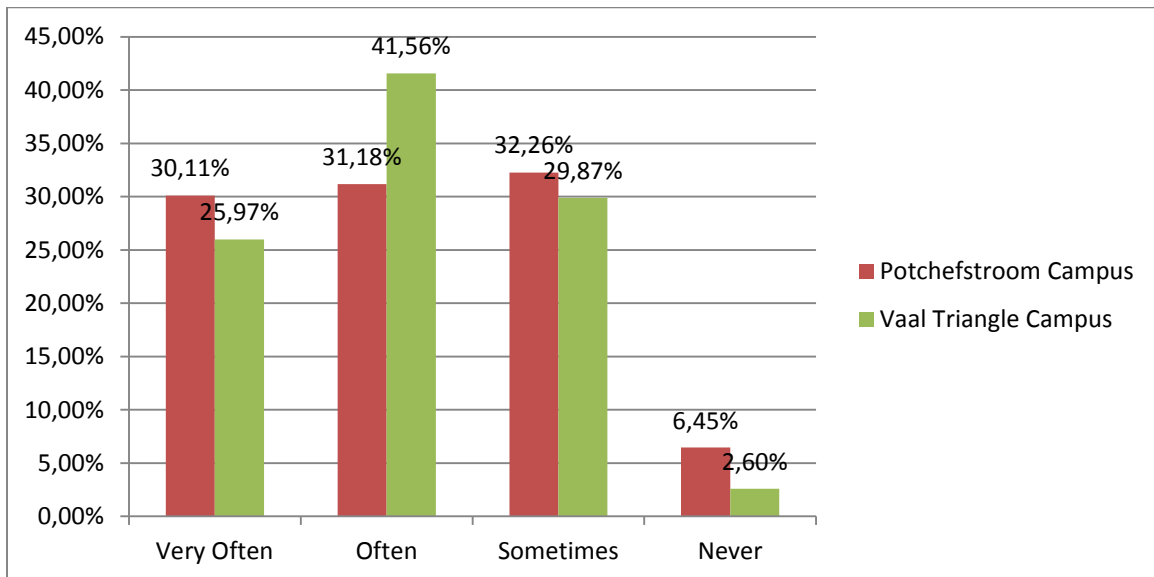
theories as well as Constructivism, where students are expected to learn through engaging and then combining and shaping the information to form new and creative ideas, applications and solutions (Atherton, 2013:1).



**Figure 4.16: Reached conclusions based on own analysis of information**

In terms of reaching conclusions based on their own analysis of information the majority of the respondents were split between often (28.71% & 35.06%) and sometimes (24.41% & 36.36%), while roughly a quarter at each campus indicates very often (22.58% & 25.97%) and a small group (4.30% & 2.60%) identify that they have never done this. This means that overall students are capable of constructing information and using the theoretical knowledge they have been provided with to reach conclusions. However, care should be taken that students who are not always able to draw conclusions, thereby linking theory and practice, should be encouraged to do so. While not the majority of study, a significant percentage only experience that lecturers require some personal interpretations, which may signal some disengagement with the material.

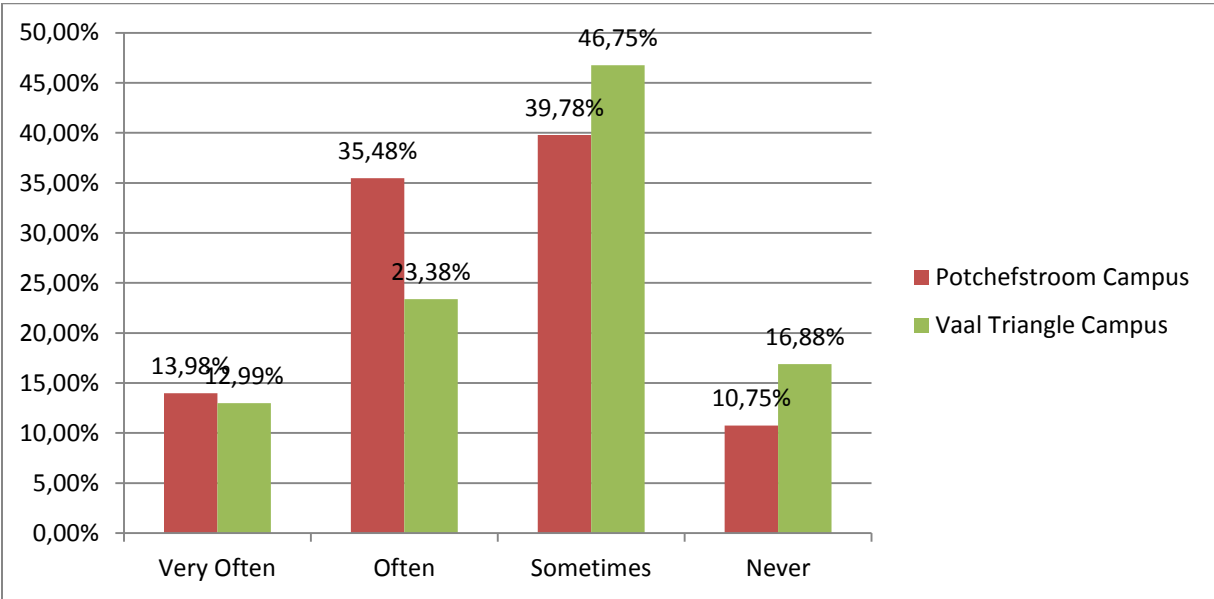
A core goal of the learning process should be that students should be able to apply the information in the coursework to real-life situations in order to not only understand the mechanics of the idea, but also where the specific information fits into the world in order to construct a more complete picture of the role of the module, PA in this case (Van Dijk, 2013:93).



**Figure 4.17: Examined a real-world problem/issue with module information**

Overall the campuses seem to be evenly distributed across the fields of very often (30.11% & 25.97%), often (31.18% & 41.56%) and sometimes (32.26% & 29.87%), with the Vaal campus having a significant lean of about 10% towards often in terms of how often they had to examine real-world problems or issues within the module. Overall it would appear from the data that students are capable of applying information to real-world situations and can see how the information is relevant to practical problems. The results also support the results shown in previous figures where students were asked whether they apply theory to practice.

The ability to have insight into how others reached their conclusions from the information provides students with the ability to deconstruct, link and evaluate information and see what path another person has followed to construct their idea. This also provides one with an opportunity to reflect on the validity, reliability and the accuracy of what they have concluded (San Diego State University, 2016:1).

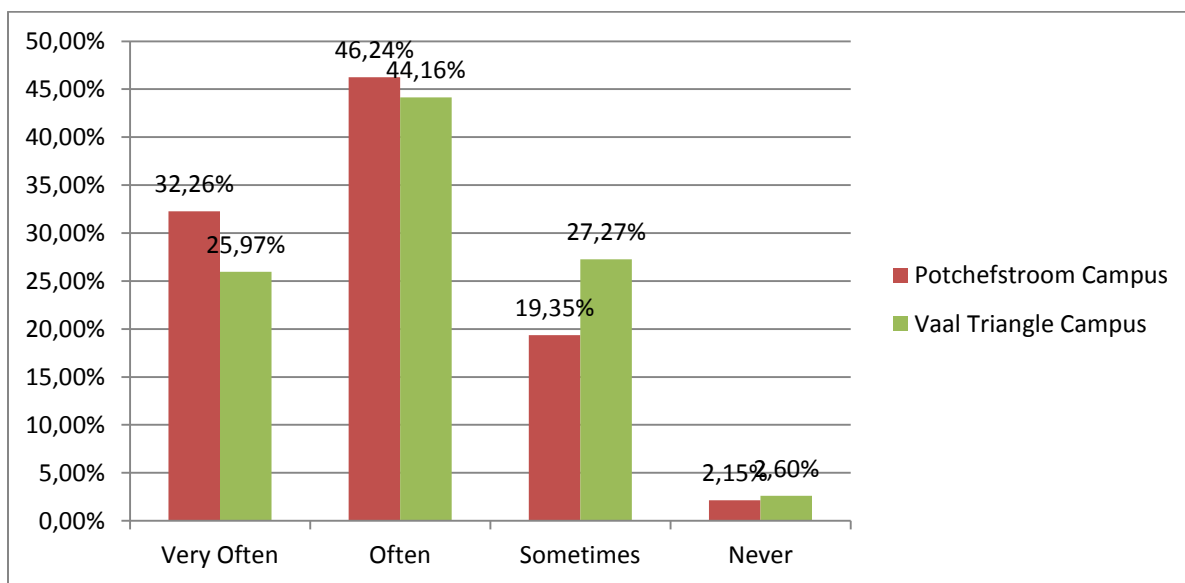


**Figure 4.18: Evaluated what others have concluded from information**

According to the respondent data at Potchefstroom’s campus only 13.98% responded that they have been asked very often to evaluate what others have concluded from information, 35.48% indicated often, 39.78% indicated sometimes and 10.75% indicated that they had never been asked to do this. This final question shows a shift towards a larger majority in the bottom half and the largest never response within the set. This could indicate that students have not yet engaged one another or that they don’t question how information that is relayed to them is constructed, merely accepting everything as a given, which may decrease student engagement since students do not internalise and try to contextualise the information for their own experience. With Vaal campus only 12.99% responded that they have been asked very often to evaluate what others have concluded, 23.38% indicated often, most (46.75%) indicated sometimes and 16.88% indicated never. This final question once again, as with the Potchefstroom campus, shows a shift towards a larger majority in the bottom half and the largest never response within the set. This could indicate that students have not yet engaged one another or that they don’t question how information that is relayed to them is constructed or make little effort to determine how a conclusion or idea was formulated. The argument is made that while lecturers seem to encourage application of theory in practice, students do not share among themselves the opinions they have formed because of their own application. This will indicate an attempt at engaging students individually, but

not collectively. Even though students are encouraged to work in groups (as will be described later on), the level of sharing among group members seem to be minimal.

Reading is among the highest priorities in all forms of education, especially in higher education, where it goes beyond merely understanding and receiving the message of the text, but also demands comprehension. A lack of comprehension makes the reading process seem tedious and students either struggle, lose interest or both (Bharuthram, 2012:205). Students need to understand the key information in the text and then be able to form an idea of how the information fits into other literature and what they have learned in class in order to successfully engage (Bharuthram, 2012:210). The following figure depicts the results from the question whether students are able to identify key information from their reading.

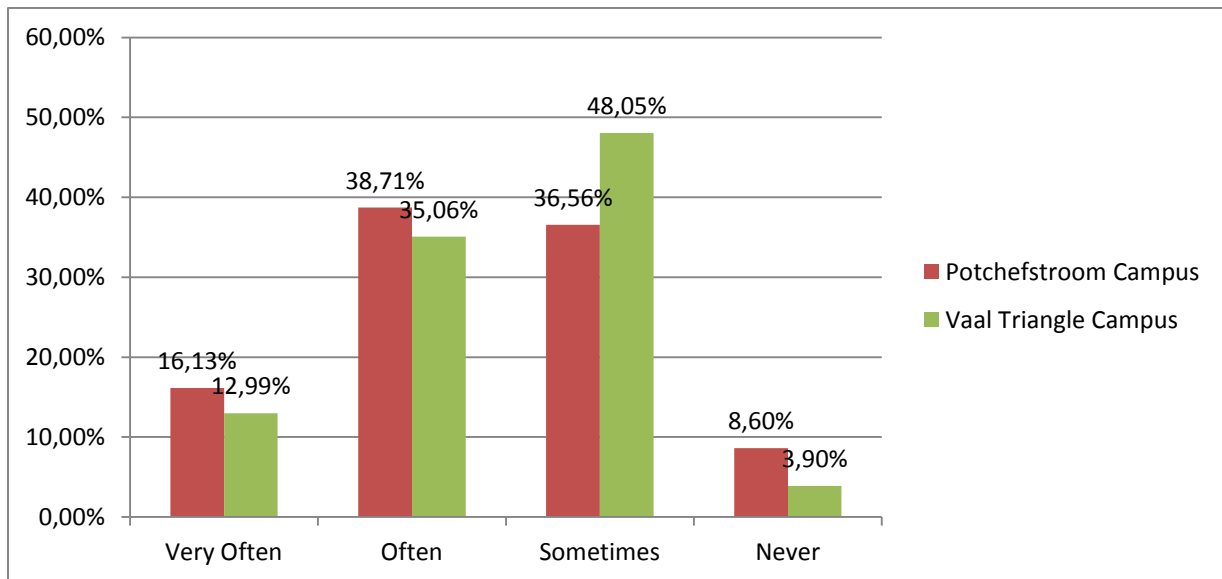


**Figure 4.19: Identified key information from reading**

The majority of the respondents from the Potchefstroom campus (46.24%) and Vaal campus (44.16%) stated that they often identified key information from reading and most of the other students were split between very often (25.97%) and sometimes (27.27%) at Vaal campus, while the Potchefstroom campus leaned towards very often (32.26%). This shows that most students feel that they are learning from reading and that they often engage with their reading assignments. The argument could be made that the more students are engaged with the material being mastered, the more they would want

to read about it. Thus, inclination towards reading as a form of enhancing student engagement should be prioritised.

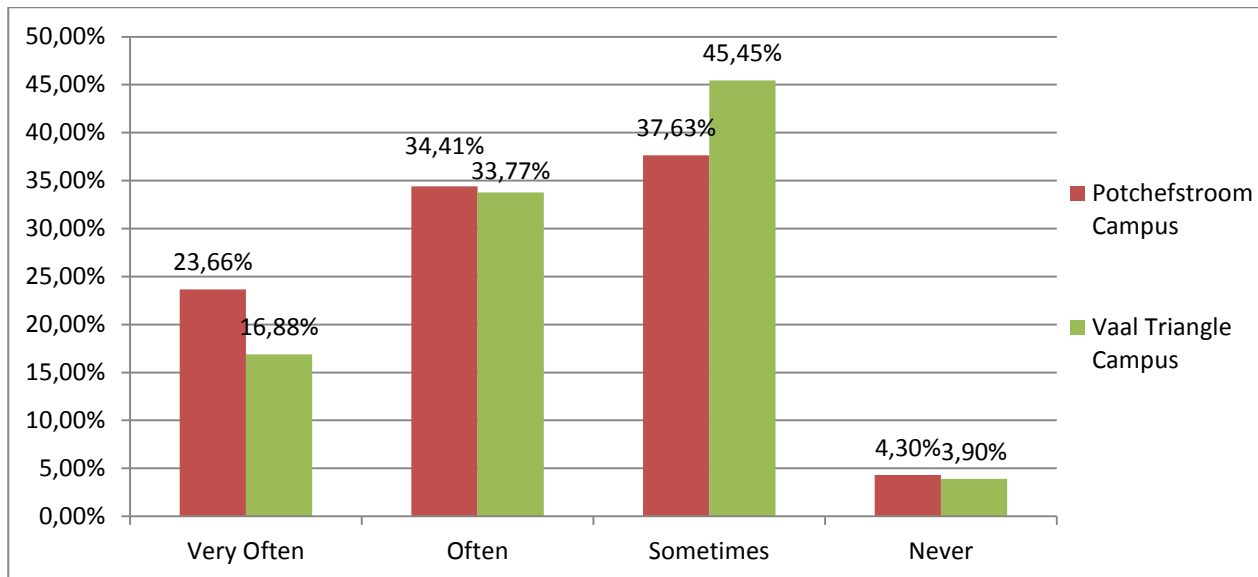
Going through notes after the conclusion of a class aids students with information retention and identifying the major ideas and comparing these notes with fellow students can help students identify gaps (University of South Carolina Student Success Center, 2016:1). As is shown in the following figure, respondents were asked their engagement in reviewing their notes after class.



**Figure 4.20: Reviewed notes after class**

While most at the Potchefstroom campus indicating either often (38.71%) or sometimes (36.56%), Vaal campus students leaned more towards sometimes (48.05%) than often (25.06%) in terms of reviewing notes after class. This could mean that some students either don't rely on notes taken during class, that they don't value the actual class or that they might not respond as well to engaging in academic activities after classes have concluded. Either way there appears to be lesser reliance on post-class reviews than on reading assignments.

Students tend to engage and achieve more when they actively take notes during a class session due to the fact that they are paying attention to and transcribing class sessions. Students also seem to retain information for longer periods of time when they make notes during contact sessions (Ayres, 2015:96).



**Figure 4.21: Summarised what was learned in class or from module materials**

Most of the Potchefstroom and Vaal students indicated either sometimes (37.63% & 45.45%) or often (34.41% & 33.77%), with Vaal campus leaning towards sometimes summarising their class and module material. Almost a quarter (23.66%) of Potchefstroom students stated very often, while only 15.88% at Vaal campus stated so. The results confirm that most students still make notes, but a significant proportion of the students don't always rely upon the value of these notes towards ensuring their academic success. This could be indicative of either boredom or disinterest which is the furthest possible stance from an active and engaged student or a lack of emphasis on the importance thereof.

Preparation is important as it is the required for students to learn and teach each other in more depth, students should prepare for class in order to more effectively engage with the work (BYU Idaho, 2016:1). It is important that the expectation that lecturers have of students should be communicated clearly so that students know what it expected of them (McKeachie, 2002:25). The average amount of preparation required according to Cornell College (2016:1) is between 6 and 8 hours per day in a five day week, while most students have an average preparation time of 4 to 6 hours per day. This will lead to roughly 35 hours of preparation per week. The average amount of time spent on preparing for class was 3 hours per week at the Potchefstroom campus. The average amount of time spent on preparing for class at the Vaal campus was also 3 hours per

week. This would indicate that students don't spend enough time preparing for class. This could be indicative of the module requiring too little preparation from students, or students being disinterested since whether they prepare or not has no effect of the actual class. Both these scenarios do not encourage active student engagement.

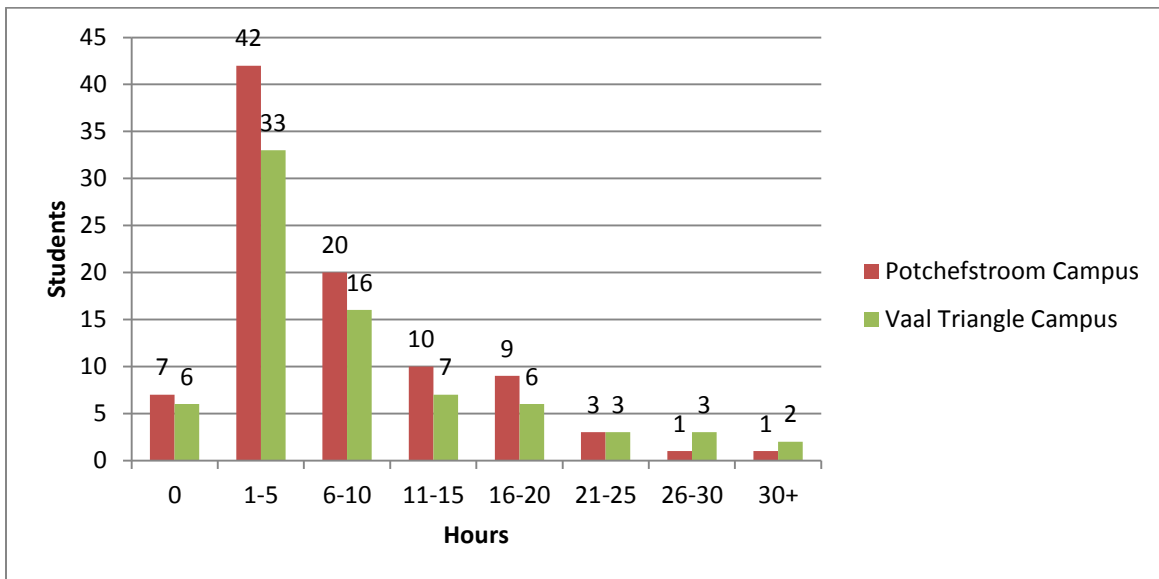


Figure 4.22: Assigned reading per week

The average answer provided at both campuses in terms of assigned reading was 6-10 hours a week, however as shown by Figure 4.22, the largest group indicated that 1-5 hours of assigned reading per week were required. An interesting conflict comes forth here as students believe they have quite a bit of assigned reading, yet they only spend an average of 3 hours preparing for class. This could indicate why the students have a tendency towards sometimes in the previous set of questions. Diedericks (2016) feels that students need to read to make up notional hours, but do not heed the call and believes they need to read 10 hours or marginally less per week on additionally assigned reading material. He also provides them with extra readings especially to answer case study assessments in groups. He also makes use of unprepared tests to ensure class preparation. Pooe (2016) believes students should spend about 3 hours and 45 minutes reading per week. He also provides his students with additional reading as the module requires students to read and interpret numerous ideas not covered by the prescribed reading. Thus, both lecturers agree that additional reading is necessary for not only enhanced student engagement, but also student success since the reading

is associated with assessment. However, the more important aspect here is that while the respondents indicate that they spend time reading, the lecturers did not comment on whether they observe the fruits of this reading in class. The challenge lies in ensuring that the reading is appropriately addressed and assessed during formal contact between the lecturer and student, otherwise it will not have a true effect on student engagement.

Challenging students can be split up into three different perspectives according to Bamber and Jones (2015:152). The first deals with how students are challenged by the module and the lecturer to be active and engage in their understanding of the work, the second focuses on how students are prepared to deal with the challenges presented by higher levels of diversity and the final looks at how students challenge themselves and how they view the world in order to be more insightful and creative thinkers. Students should be challenged in order to encourage engagement with the course material, but lecturers should keep in mind with diversity not all students respond to the same techniques and students have more diverse views (Bamber & Jones, 2015:152).

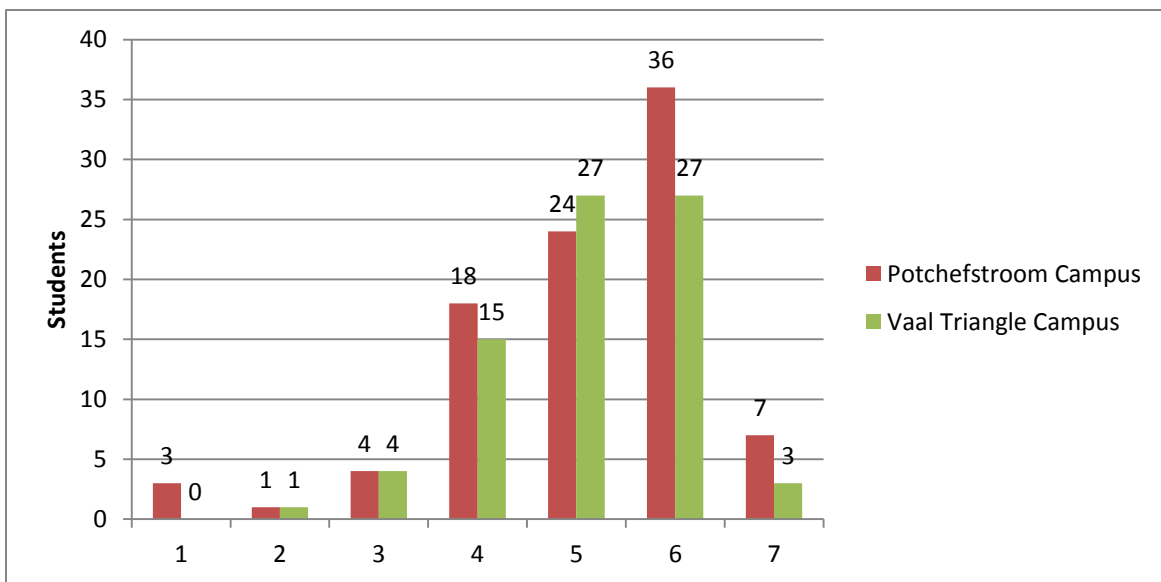


Figure 4.23: Level of challenge

Figure 4.23 above indicates that most Potchefstroom and Vaal students lean towards 5 or 6 regarding the level of challenge, with students finding the module to be relatively challenging. Only a small handful felt that little challenge was presented by the module.

Generally it appears that students feel that the module provides an achievable level of challenge, not being too easy or too difficult.

Diedericks (2016) believes that students don't want to be intellectually challenged and that if they were provided with reading assignments they would not do it. He believes that a more confrontational style of teaching is required to challenge and engage students. He felt that students were struggling, because firstly, they underestimate the module and think they can study the material the night before a test or exam and only then discover that it needs to be properly understood and that it is a lot of work, and secondly, he felt that the students' reading abilities are not on par with what is expected from the first year students but rather in most cases equivalent to the reading speed and ability of grade 9/10 learners and they therefore struggle to get through the content. Thirdly, he feels that poor planning and a lack of commitment to prioritise their studies lead to students struggling. Diedericks (2016) also suggested raising the entry requirements for the degree in order to attract better students, establishing an induction programme with PA students who are lost during the first few months as most of them are not living in hostels or campus dormitories where they receive additional support or are somehow involved in the formal institutional induction programmes and forcing students to start reading through reading groups. Pooe (2016) had similar sentiments and felt students were not challenged enough on an academic basis. He also indicated that students were struggling in his opinion as the module requires them to have an appetite for reading and contextualising concepts that require vast amounts of reading and understanding legislation, however students, in his opinion, were often ill-prepared and lacked the required appetite to engage with topics. The views between the lecturers and the students offer a stark contrast that would require reconciliation.

Numerous smaller assignments help facilitate engagement among students, who then learn more as they proceed through a module in manageable increments. Assignments also sequence the module and open the way for larger and more in-depth projects where students will have a more enlightened idea of what is expected of them and are more familiar with connecting information and knowledge from previous sections (Light *et al.*, 2009:91). Assignments also foster critical thinking skills and give students an

opportunity to research the module beyond the content covered in prescribed textbooks (Woodward, 2015:1).

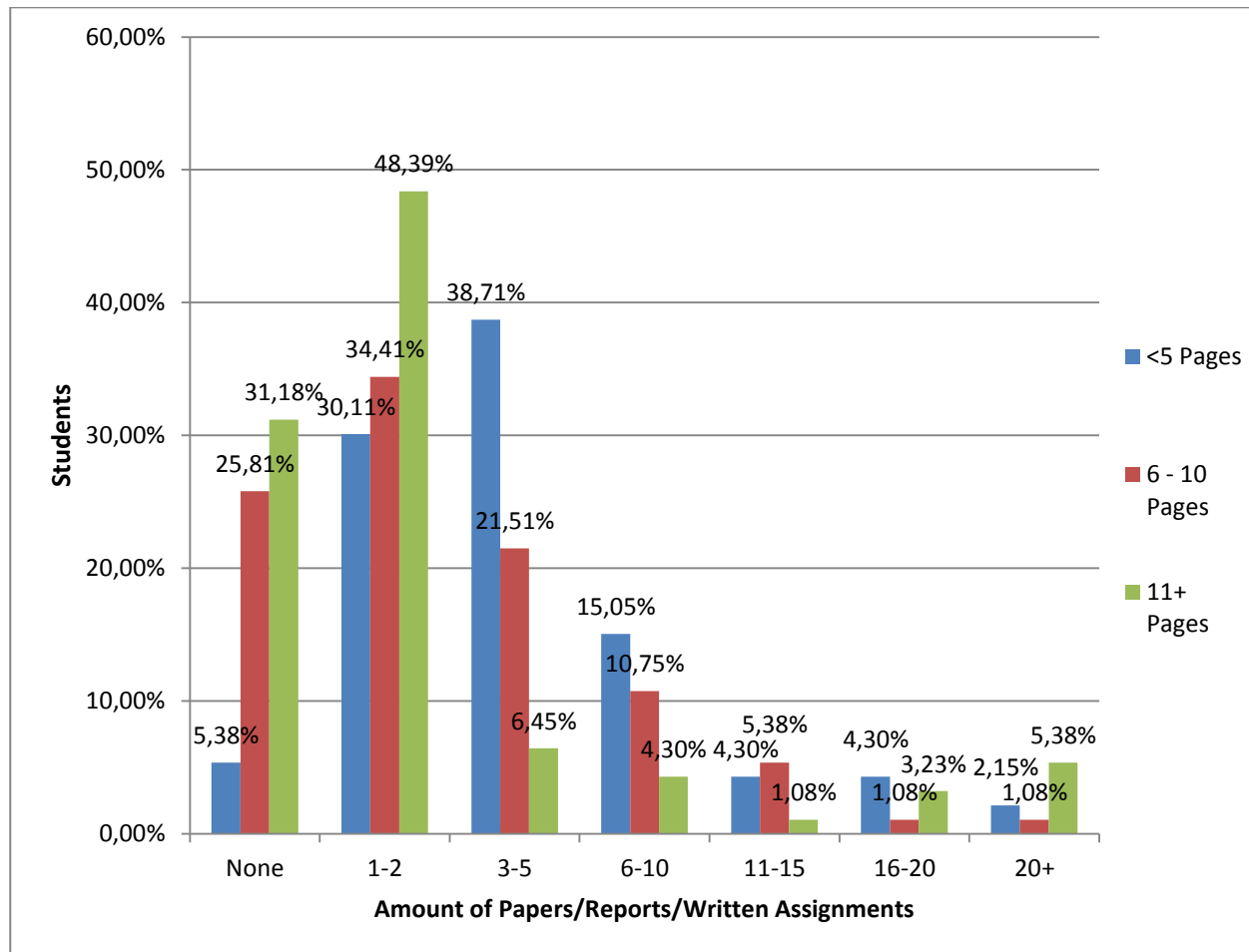


Figure 4.24: Assignments written (Potchefstroom campus)

The average amount indicated for assignments consisting of up to five pages at the Potchefstroom campus was 1-2. The average amount indicated for assignments consisting of 6 to 10 pages was 3-5, while the average for assignments consisting of more than 10 pages was also 1-2. This means that the first year PA students are accustomed to medium length assignments. They never truly delve in-depth into a broad range of topics, but maintain a generalised view. However, as seen in the literature (Banks, 2002:14), students find it easier to engage when their work is broken down in segments that are easier to manage.

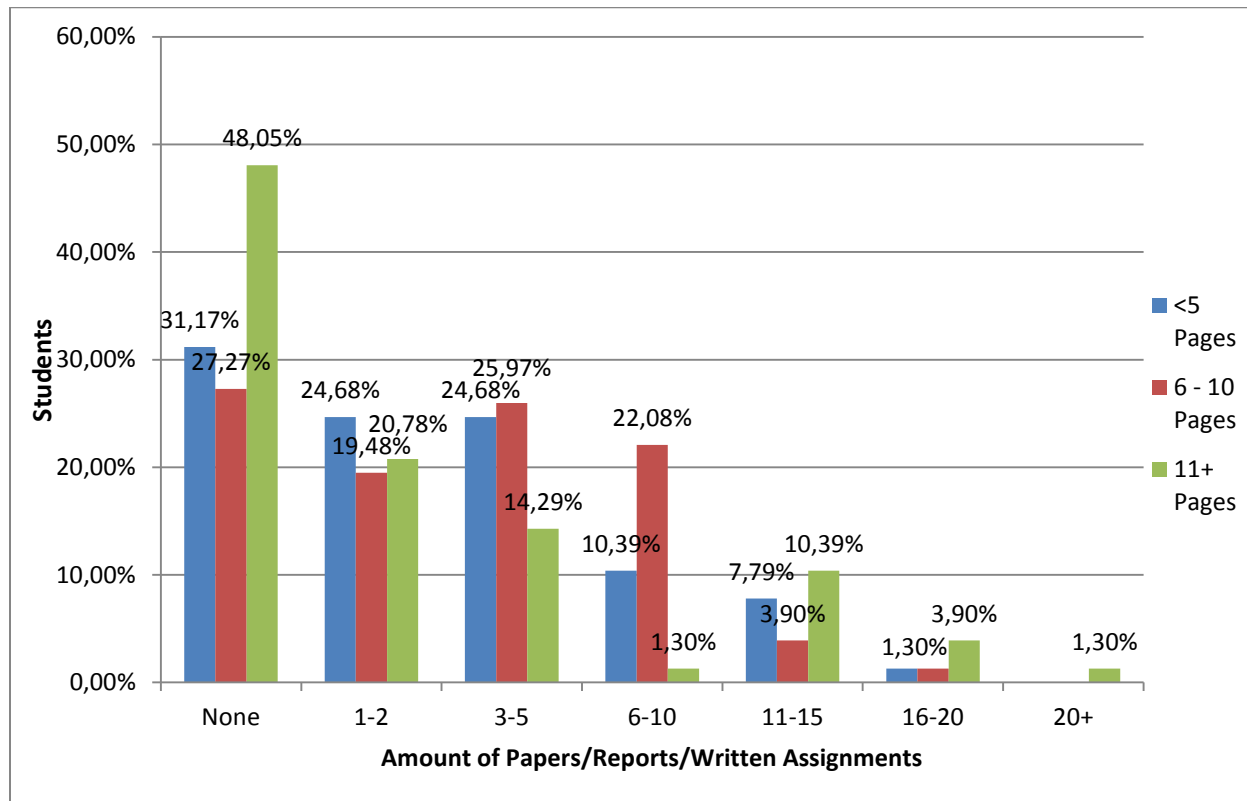


Figure 4.25: Assignments written by respondents (Vaal Triangle campus)

The average amount indicated for assignments consisting of up to five pages at the Vaal campus was 3-5. The average amount indicated for assignments consisting of 6 to 10 pages was 1-2, while the average for assignments consisting of more than 10 pages was also 1-2. At the Vaal campus students are more accustomed to short assignments. While easier and faster to complete they deprive students of detailed analysis of the material leading to students not fully engaging with the work, however as with the Potchefstroom campus this had made the work easier to manage for students.

Diedericks (2016) feels that students dislike reading and that they are ill-prepared for university, lack reading skills and that they don't know how to manage their own academic time. Pooe (2016) feels students don't prepare or engage as they lack proper understanding of what is required of a university student. Overall students felt satisfied in terms of level of challenge, but the lecturers had different views believing students were not challenged enough. As to the level of challenge as benchmark for student engagement, the results reveal that students are able to make connections between

reading and class work, that students are able to understand the importance of class preparation and reading and that they identify the module to be challenging. However, the lecturers have raised concerns about the level of reading and engagement from students and have identified a number of persistent obstacles, such as lack of interest, in ensuring engaged students reflected by active learning and ultimate student success.

The following section will review interaction between students and staff as the second benchmark towards ensuring student engagement.

#### **4.4 INTERACTION BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS**

As indicated in Chapter Two interaction between students and staff refers to discussions between the two concerning performance, assignments, career plans or ideas (Kuh, 2010:29). This also refers to how students are mentored and guided by lecturers inside and outside of the classrooms (SASSE, 2013:1).

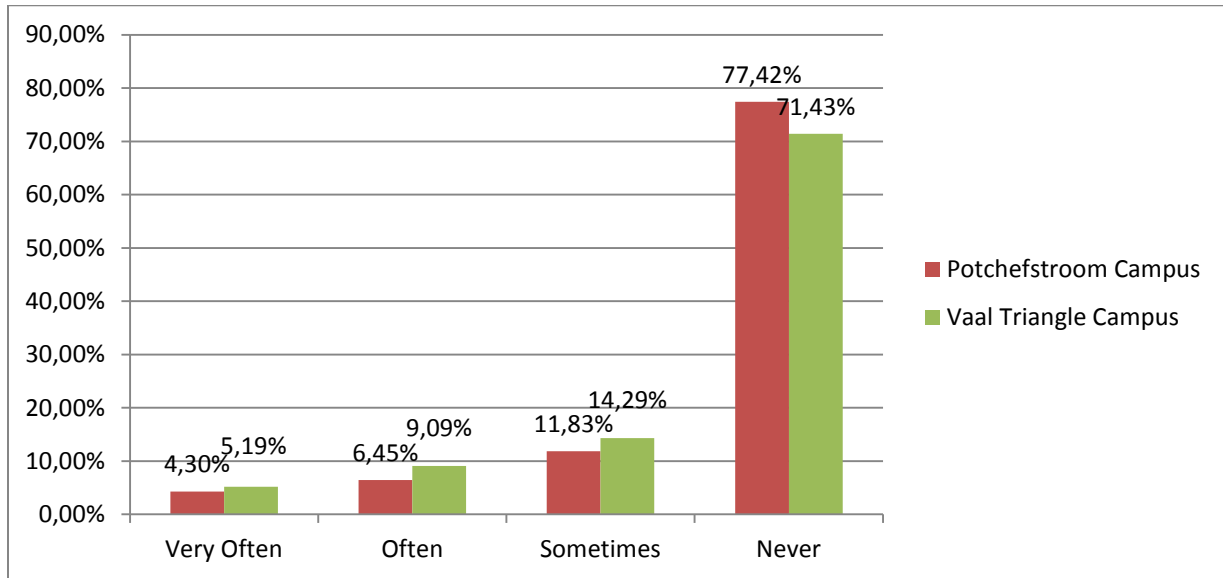
The first set of questions asked students about the frequency of various interactions between themselves and their lecturers. The first question asked how often students had spoken to a lecturer about their career plans. The second question asked students how often they had worked with a lecturer on activities other than coursework. The third question asked students how often they had discussed topics, ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of scheduled class times. The fourth question asked how often students had discussed their academic performance with a lecturer.

The second set of questions focused more on the lecturers' or instructors' conduct from the viewpoint of the students. The first question asked to what extent the lecturer clearly explained module goals and requirements. The second question asked to what extent the lecturer taught the module sessions in an organised manner. The third question asked to what extent the lecturer made use of examples or illustrations to explain difficult points, concepts or ideas. The fourth question asked to what extent the lecturers provided feedback on a draft or work in progress. The fifth question asked to what extent the lecturer provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.

The final question concerning student and staff interaction asks students to indicate the quality of their interactions with different faculty members on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being poor and 7 being excellent.

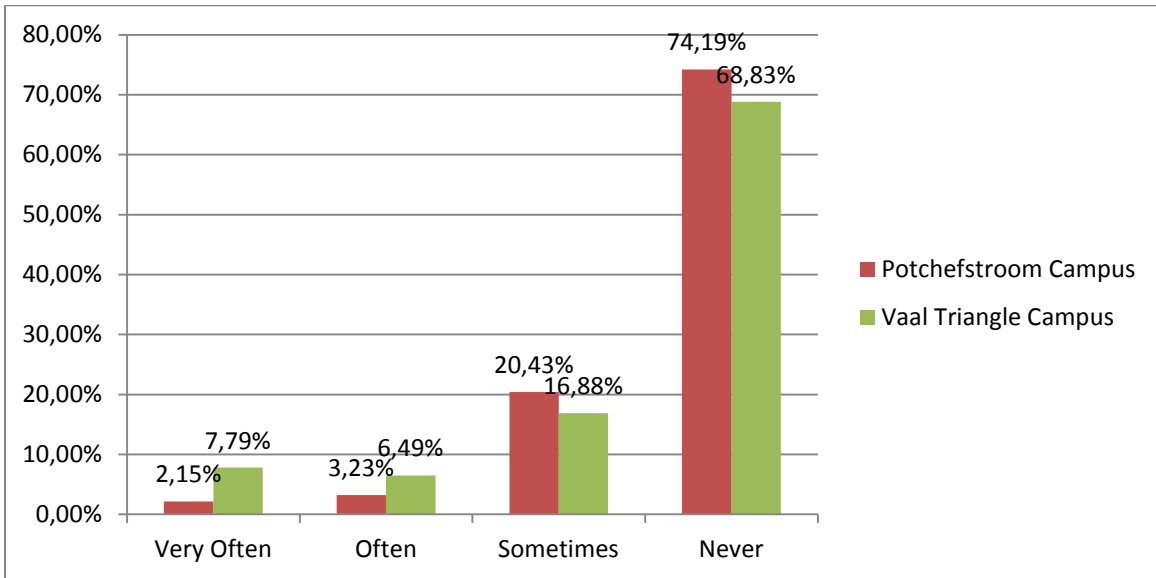
Student-faculty interaction has an effect on engagement when it encourages students to devote more effort to activities that are educational and the key, according to Kuh (2010:29), is thus substantive contact. Casual or non-academic contact has little effect on how students approach their learning, thus the frequency as well as the nature of the contact is important (Kuh, 2010:29). Not all types of contact, however, are that crucial that they require a constant occurrence. The interactions concerning discussing career plans, working with a faculty member outside of class or doing research with them are examples of this type. The former would be satisfactory if it occurred even just once, while the latter would count as extraordinary experience. Other interactions such as feedback, discussing performance or ideas and concepts again indicate that more interaction is in fact better (Kuh, 2010:29).

Interaction for Diedericks (2016) refers to dealing with module content in the class or at any other scheduled meeting. He believes there is nothing wrong with current communication, but feels that students only want to use it when in need and that they often don't consult early enough on important issues affecting them, leaving lecturers feeling powerless. He facilitates communication by allowing students to contact him anytime by email or messages via Efundu, but prefers if they abide by his consultation session hours on Wednesdays and Fridays. He states however that students don't make use of these sessions and prefer consulting facilitators and assistants, who then approach him for the correct information. Poee (2016) stated that communication is acceptable and that he had no considerations on changing it regarding the module. He added that he has assistants who assist him to relay communications to students. He stated that he has an open door policy and uses email communication. He stated that while he allows communication outside of class it is still a work in progress as students rarely consulted him outside of class sessions.



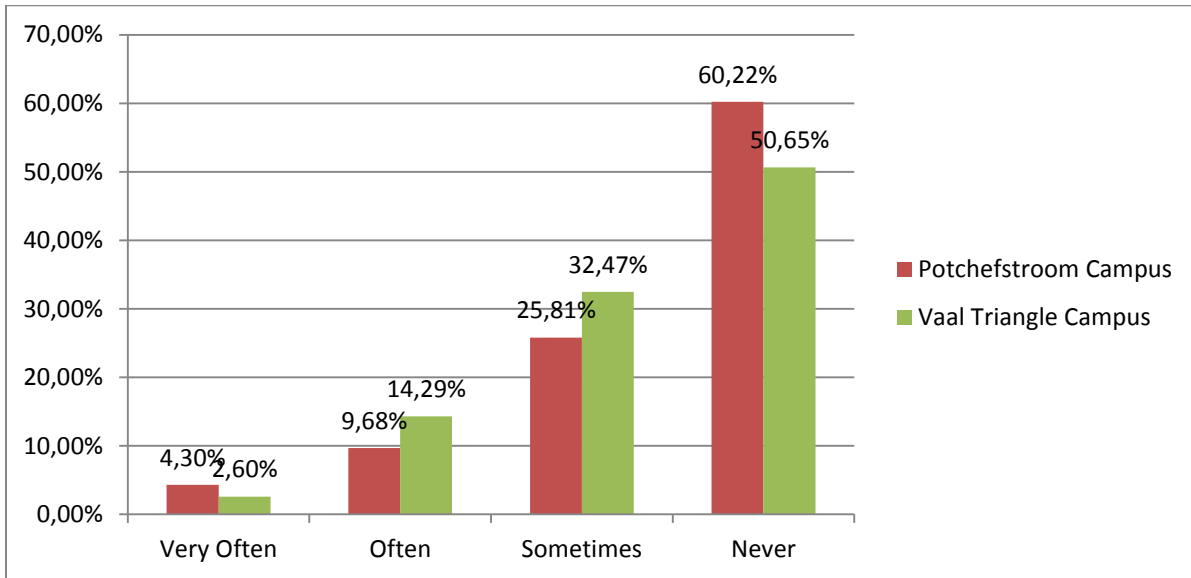
**Figure 4.26: Talked about career plans with a lecturer**

More than three quarters of the Potchefstroom and Vaal students have never (77.42% & 71.43%) discussed their career plans with a lecturer before, while only small groups had indicated they have only sometimes or often discussed this with a lecturer. No more than 6% at both campuses had indicated that it occurred very often. This appears to be a very rare event on both campuses, which is indicative of students either not needing the input from their lecturers regarding their future plans of lecturers not showing an appropriate interest in the future career plans of students. Either way, this does not encourage student engagement on issues maybe not directly pertaining to academic success, but definitely indicative of the campus as an enabling environment fostering learning and sharing.



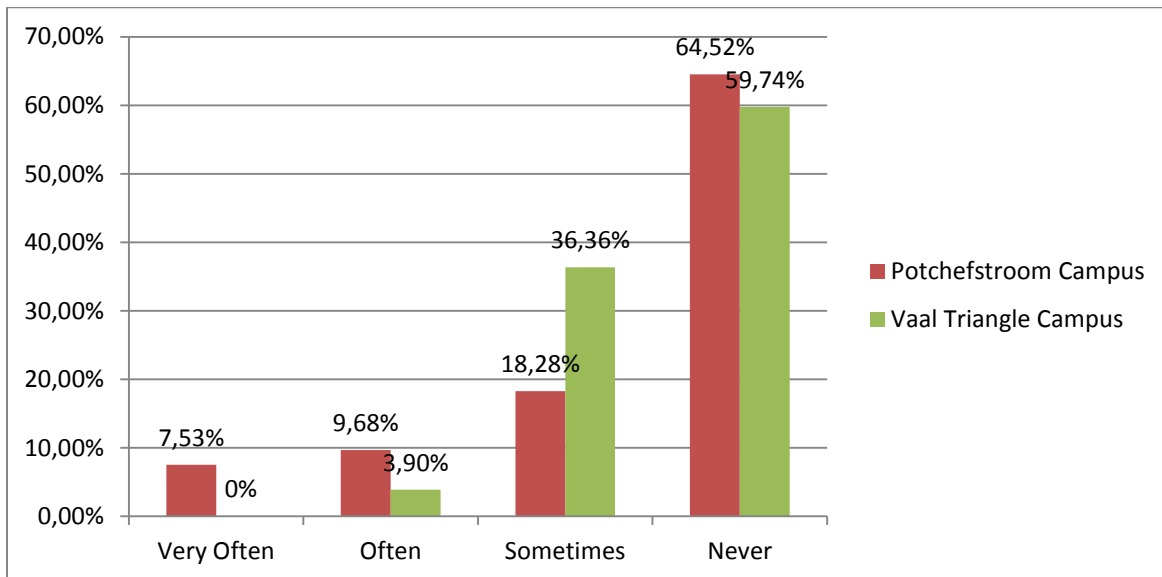
**Figure 4.27: Worked with a lecturer on activities other than coursework**

Almost three quarters of the Potchefstroom and Vaal classes once again indicated that they had never (74.19% & 68.83%) worked with a lecturer on activities other than coursework and a smaller group stating that they sometimes did, while a very small group (3.23%) stated this took place often or very often. Once again this is an activity that only occurs every once in a while, but as discussed earlier this is usually an extraordinary experience and usually doesn't take place in the first year. However, students in their first year are specifically in need of a supportive campus environment which would mean that they feel encouraged to discuss their activities with their lecturers, even if those activities do not have immediate academic relevance. Lecturers should also be in a position to provide such a space where students feel comfortable enough to engage their lecturers on issues of either academic or a more personal concern.



**Figure 4.28: Academic discussions with a lecturer outside scheduled class time**

Once again most Potchefstroom and Vaal students had never (60.22% & 50.65%) held academic discussion with a lecturer outside of class and slightly over a quarter of both classes stated that it sometimes (25.81% & 32.47%) took place. Only small groups checked often (9.68% & 14.29%) or very often (4.30% & 2.60%). This is where concern begins to arise as students are not making use of the opportunity to broaden their own knowledge and learning potential by tapping into a more experienced mind and could possibly indicate that students don't engage with their work outside of classes.

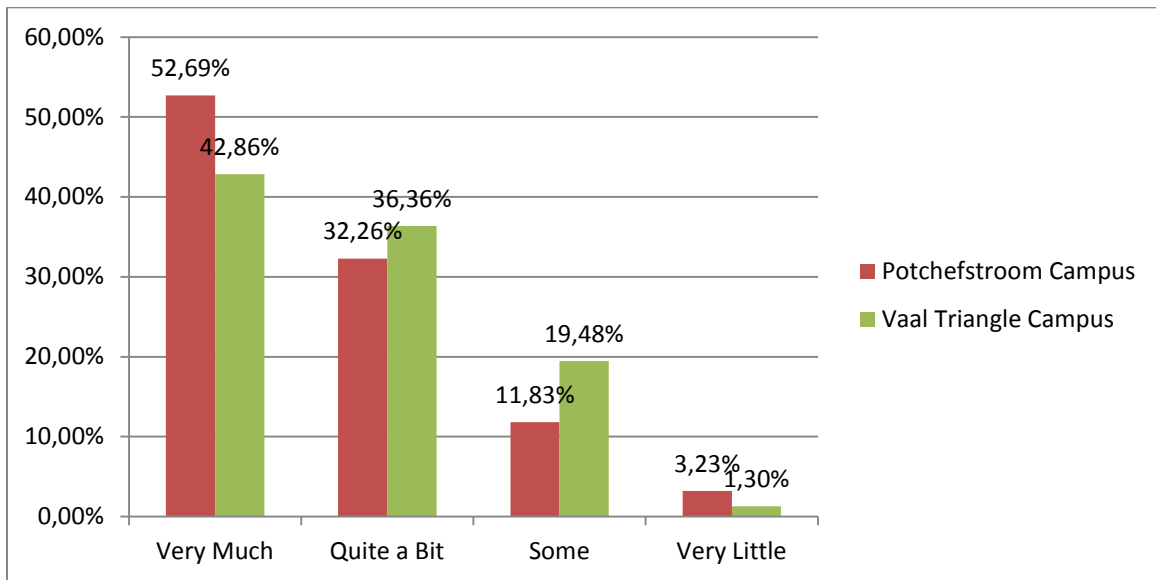


**Figure 4.29: Discussed academic performance with a lecturer**

The following question asked how often students had discussed their academic performance with a lecturer, with a very worrisome 64.52% of the Potchefstroom class and 59.74% of the Vaal class claiming to have never had done this before. Only a small group did this sometimes at the Potchefstroom campus (18.28%), while a larger group at Vaal campus (26.26%) did so sometimes. An even smaller group at both campuses indicated often, with Vaal especially not engaging in this opportunity. Only a few (7.53%) at the Potchefstroom campus indicated very often, whereas Vaal didn't have a single student engaging their lecturers very often. Clearly there is a significant lack of interaction between students and lecturers outside of the scheduled class times and outside of these there appears to be very limited contact or communication. Very few students spoke to a lecturer about their academic performance. If a student was struggling, chances are, according to the data at least, they will not approach a lecturer. This confirms the earlier assertion by Diedericks (2016) who argued that students would more likely consult the student assistants or facilitators than the lecturers.

In order to understand where they are going and what they have to do to get there, students need direction, according to Butcher (2015:88). Lecturers should give learners an idea of what is expected of them and provide them with standards. This should also include descriptions of when a student should be able to do specific tasks and what they

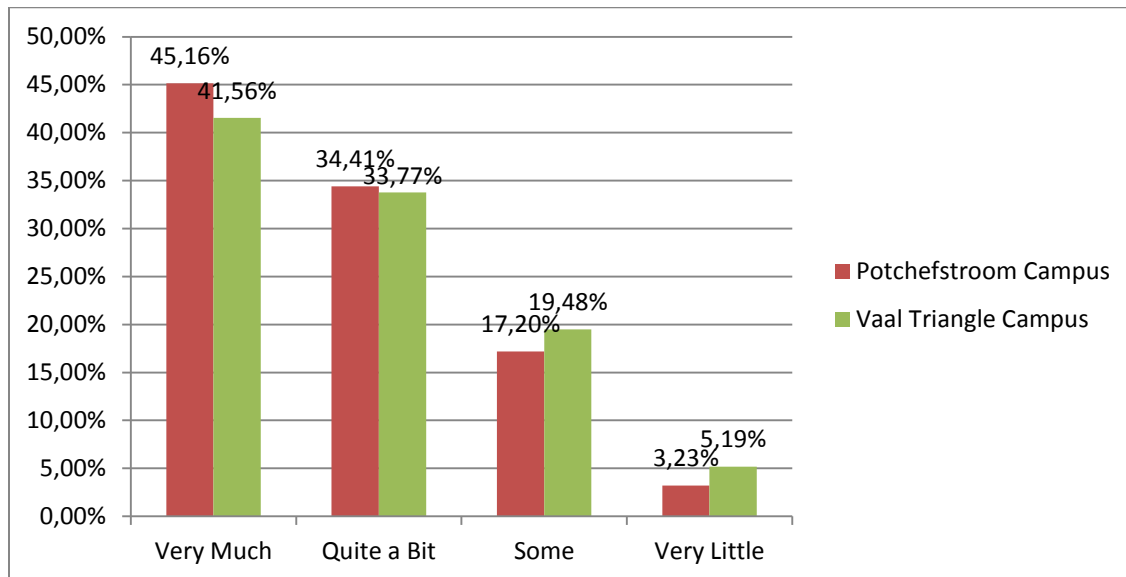
should be capable of at the conclusion of the module. These goals or learning outcomes should be specific, appropriate, meaningful, realistic and testable (Butcher, 2015:89).



**Figure 4.30: Lecturer clearly explained module goals and requirements**

Most students at the Potchefstroom (52.69%) and Vaal (42.86%) campuses indicated that lecturers explain module goals (or outcomes) and requirements very much. Diedericks (2016) also alluded to the importance of module outcomes in relation to student preparation, reading and class participation. The second largest group indicated quite a bit (32.26% & 36.36%), while a small group (11.83% & 19.48%) felt that explaining module goals and requirements were only partially done. Overall the lecturers seem to have conveyed the message and students feel they understand what is expected of them and what the module necessitates.

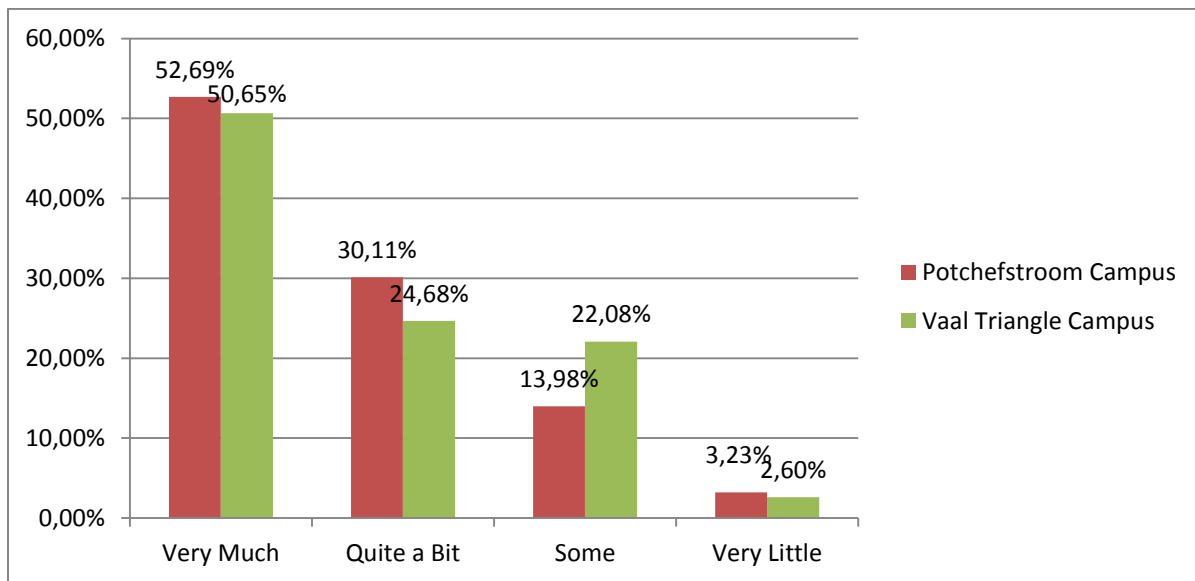
A clear structured class helps students to make progress with the course and unlock their own potential (Ayres, 2015:95). Good lectures should be well structured and organised with a clear beginning, middle and end with material making connections to previously covered ideas and a guide for students to refer to (Ayres, 2015:96).



**Figure 4.31: Lecturer taught the module in an organised manner**

Most students at the Potchefstroom (45.16%) and Vaal (41.56%) campuses indicated lecturers taught the modules in an organised manner very much, with quite a bit being the second most popular option for both campuses with 32.41% and 22.77% respectively. Once again most students seem to have observed the lectures to teach in an organised manner as laid down in a formal lesson plan, providing the class with structure and allowing students to plan and prepare accordingly to engage with the subject matter. Diedericks (2016) stated that he follows a structured approach by stating the learning outcomes, attempting to link any prior knowledge on the module, dealing with content in-depth and providing assessment activities in order to test whether learners understood what was taught. He believes a logical order is important to convey content in a sound manner and improves the learning experience. Pooe (2016) contended that he structured his slides and class according to the stated outcomes of the module, but where necessary cuts out non-relevant outcomes or updates them. He stated that he has an activities based class, where he also explains theories or concepts, to assist students with understanding PA ideas and while he believes that it is important to have a general structure, he adds that it should be flexible if students are not able to grasp what is being presented. The results clearly indicate that from both the students and the lecturers' perspectives structure and logic constitute an important facet in ensuring success in PA modules.

According to Aybers (2015:96) any class should contain clear real-world examples and applications that are not only multicultural but also free from gender stereotypes. The lecturer should include critical perspectives and recent developments and examples the textbooks might not have so that students grasp the theoretical information by making it more relevant and practical (Light *et al.*, 2009:107).

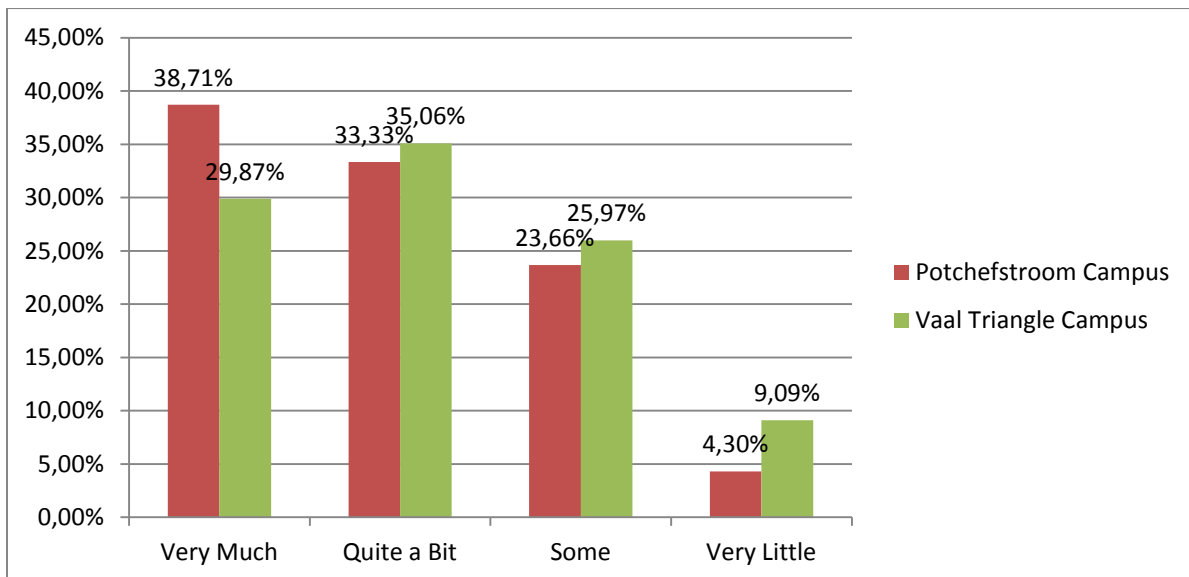


**Figure 4.32: Lecturer used examples/illustrations to explain**

At least half of the Potchefstroom class (52.69%) and the Vaal class (50.65%) felt that this was successfully done by the lecturer, while 30,11% at the Potchefstroom class and 24.68% at the Vaal class felt it was done quite a bit, however 13.98% of Potchefstroom campus and 22,08% felt that there was more to be done here, with only less than 4% indicating that very little was done in using examples to illustrate the material. Once again the majority of students felt that the lecturers made sufficient use of examples and could explain difficult concepts through utilising them. As indicated earlier in Figure 4.12, the coursework emphasises the importance of applying theory to practical situations and lecturers aid in this endeavour by providing examples and applying the knowledge themselves in class sessions, so students can learn through example.

Receiving feedback on tests and assignments is crucial to improving the rate at which students learn. Feedback also serves to promote an environment in which engagement and partnership prospers and the lecturers can also learn how to improve their teaching

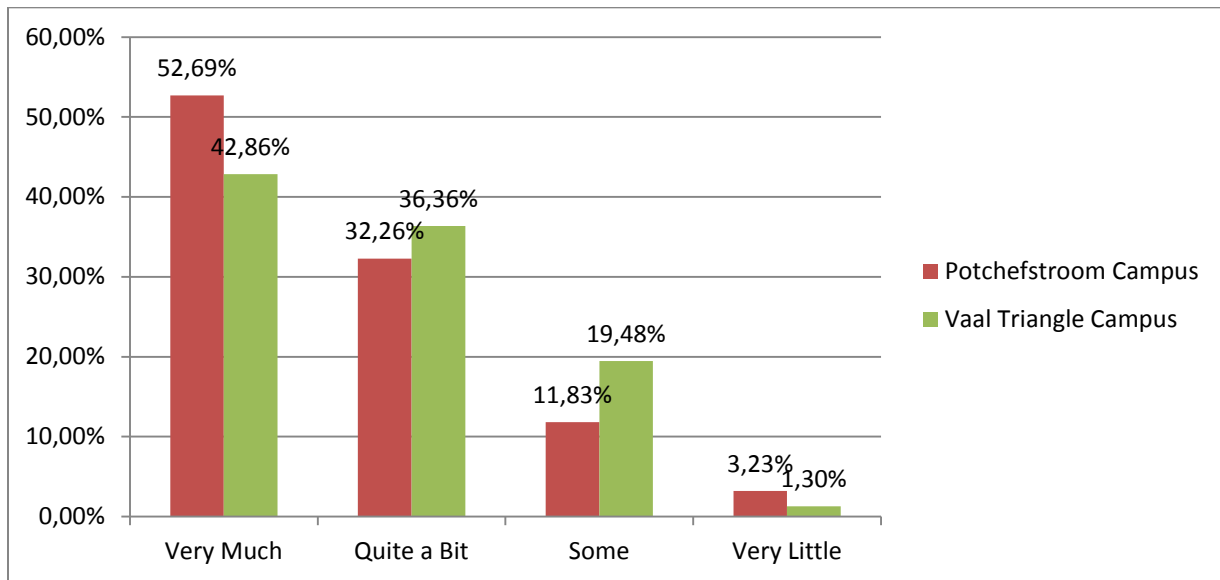
and the module overall (Kandiko, 2015:123). Overall assessment also helps students to understand what is important, what they should improve and has an effect on how and what they learn. Furthermore it provides students with an assurance of the quality of their work, especially helpful in the case of a draft before the actual submission (Bloxham, 2015:107-108). The following figure illustrates students' responses in terms of feedback on drafts for assignments. Diedericks (2016) finds feedback to be "very, very important", especially timeous feedback. He continues by stating that it provides them with a progress update regarding their performance or development throughout the semester. He adds that formative assessment helps to shape students during the course of the semester. Poee (2016) also feels that it is important as it allows students to see exactly what is expected of them intellectually.



**Figure 4.33: Feedback on drafts**

Most students indicated either that they either received very much or quite a bit of feedback on drafts with Vaal students indicating a preference for quite a bit and Potchefstroom students indicating very much. However 23.66% and 25.97% respectively felt that feedback on drafts was only sometimes done. Small groups at both felt that very little was done in this regard, with Vaal campus' group just shy of 10% of the class. This could be due to the previously discussed lack of interaction outside scheduled class times as draft submissions are not always required. The lack of

submitting drafts to the lecturer would logically lead to final drafts being submitted that are erroneous and contain flawed arguments and constructs.



**Figure 4.34: Feedback on completed tests/assignments**

Most students felt that feedback on tests or assignments was either done quite a bit (32.26% & 36.36%) or very much (52.69% & 42.86%). As evidenced by the results, feedback on tests and assignments is overall satisfactory, providing students with an opportunity to see how they are performing and can help them to identify shortcomings. This could be due to delayed feedback, undetailed feedback or in the worst case scenario students deflecting negative feedback.

When students frequently interact with lecturers in a constructive and facilitating manner it helps the institution to grow, because then students not only feel connected to a community on their campuses, the higher education institution finds that retaining students is then easier and their academic performance is enhanced (Duberstein, 2009:1). When students don't integrate with an institution they often feel estranged and depart the institution before completion of their studies (Nagda *et al.*, 1998:57). The following question concerning student and staff interaction asks students to indicate the quality of their interactions with different faculty members on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being poor and 7 being excellent. Figure 4.35 indicates the Potchefstroom campus results, while Figure 4.36 indicates the Vaal campus results.

The first group were students who received an average rating of 5, indicating that students are pleased with their interactions with other students. The second group, academic advisors, scored an average rating of 4, indicating either equally mixed feelings or a general feeling of content. Many (27.96%) students gave a ranking of 3 which however indicates a mild feeling of dissatisfaction in the quality of that relationship. The third group are lecturers, who received an average ranking of 4. Once again students might seem content, but if viewed more specifically it become clear that more students indicated beneath 4 than above it, meaning students don't feel satisfied with the quality of the interaction between the two. As previously mentioned this could once again come down to the limited contact between the two groups outside of class sessions. The fourth group are student services staff, which includes career services, student activities, housing and general student support services. This group scored an average of only 3 which was the lowest average score out of all the groups. Students seem to be unsatisfied with the quality of the relationship they have with student services staff. This group also scored the least 7's and the most 1's. Possible reasons provided in an open ended question regarding the institution include a feeling of some services being unapproachable and some faculty members being somewhat apathetic to the concerns of students. The final group includes administrative staff such as those charged with registration or financial aid. This group scored an average of 4, with a very slight tendency towards a lower score. This means some students might not be completely satisfied with this relationship and might feel estranged. Overall there is definitely room for improvement in interactions between staff and students as most relationships are only seen as average. Interaction outside of classrooms with staff seems to be limited and minimalistic and probably even avoided by some individuals.

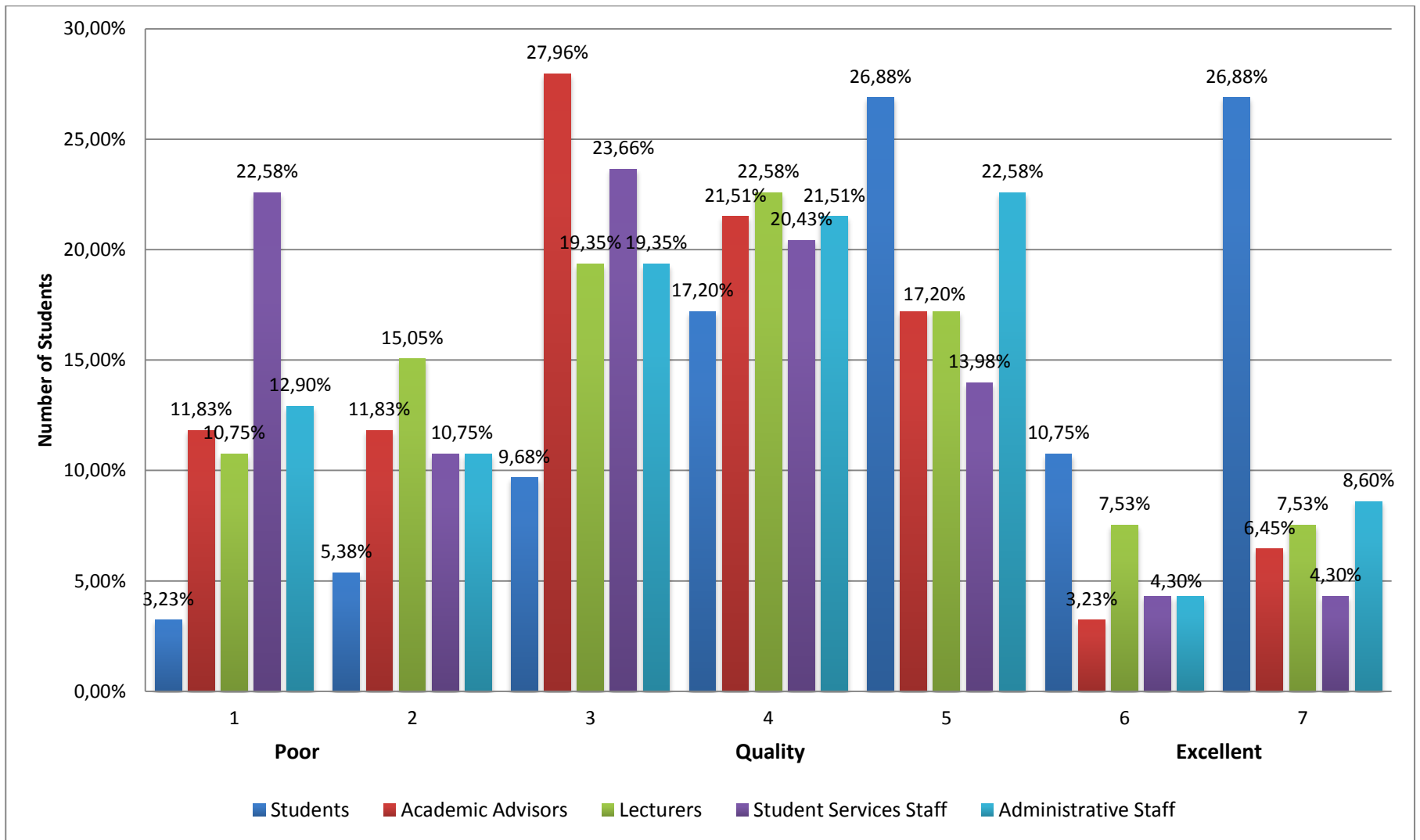


Figure 4.35: Quality of student faculty interactions at Potchefstroom campus

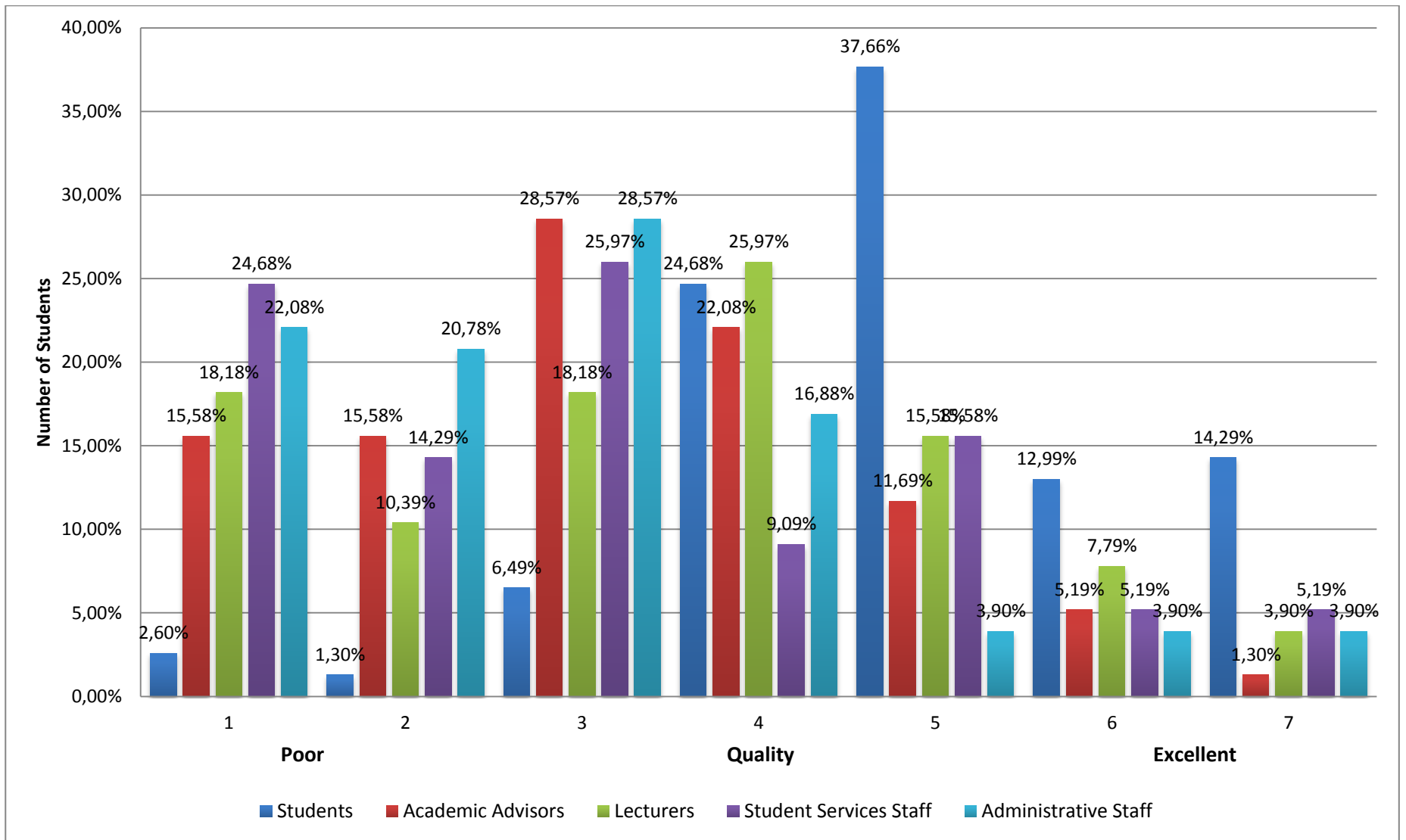


Figure 4.36: Quality of student faculty interactions at Vaal Triangle campus

The first group were Vaal campus students who received an average rating of 5, indicating that students are pleased with their interactions with other students. The second group, academic advisors, scored an average rating of only 3, indicating a feeling of dissatisfaction. This group also scored the least amount of 7's. The third group are lecturers, who received an average ranking of 3. Once again students seem dissatisfied with the interaction they have with lecturers. The fourth group are student services staff as explained previously. This group also received an average of 3. Students seem to be dissatisfied with the quality of the relationship they have with student services staff. This group also scored the most 1's. Possible reasons provided in an open ended question regarding the institution include students saying that while some staff members care, others just simply don't. The final group includes administrative staff such as explained previously. This group scored an average of 3, with a slight tendency towards a lower score. This means some students are not satisfied with the quality of their interaction with this group. Overall there is definitely room for improvement in interactions between staff and students as most relationships are only seen as average at best. The averages for the quality of interaction were all lower on the Vaal campus.

Overall there are some shortcomings here as the interaction between students and staff is limited. While students believe the class sessions are adequate and that the lecturers present these sessions in an organised and structured manner, interaction outside of class and with non-academic staff appears to be less satisfying, the latter especially in the case of Vaal campus. Students and staff should interact outside of class and both parties so actively engage in this interaction to foster engaged students. The following section will review educational experiences that enrich classroom experiences.

#### **4.5 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES THAT ENRICH CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE**

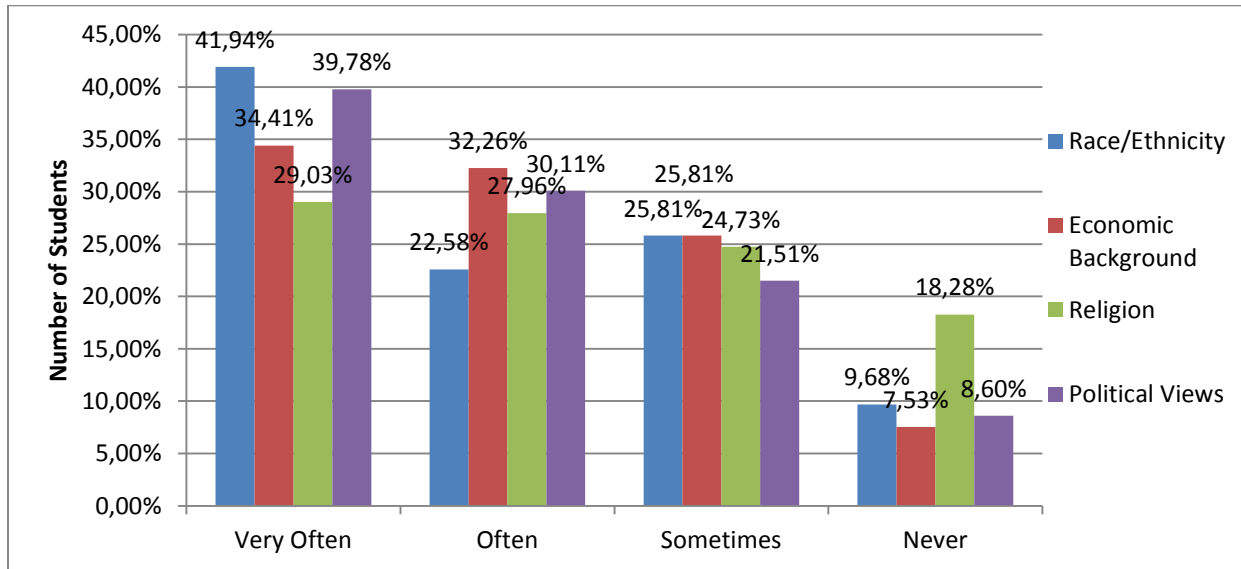
As stated in Chapter Two, educational experiences that enrich students' classroom experience focuses on experiences such as making use of electronic media and new technology to enhance class experiences, engaging in co-curricular activities, community service, independent study, internships or field experience. (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25-26). Diedericks (2016) stated that for PA it would definitely be linking content to

practice by presenting it in a memorable experience in order to learn from. Poee (2016) interprets this as a means to facilitate greater debates, less parroting of textbooks by lecturers and students being more engaging with the lectures and feels it is a work in progress on his campus. Students who experienced more diversity also seem to be more involved in other academic practices and were more likely to be involved in active and collaborative learning and had felt that they had a more satisfying experience with higher education. The demographics of an institution play a role in engagement as students on more diverse campuses indicate more interaction with people from different racial, economic, religious and political backgrounds and helps students evaluate their own views (Kuh, 2010:31).

The first set of questions asked students how often they had academic discussions with people from a list of groups. The first question focused on race and ethnicity, the second on economic background, the third on religious beliefs and the fourth on political views.

The second set of questions focused on educational experiences that students might have or would like to undertake. The first asked if students had or planned to participate in an internship, field research or student teaching before they graduate. The second question asked if students planned to hold a formal leadership role in a student organisation or group. The third question asked whether students had any plans to participate in a learning community or some other formal programme where groups of students take two or more classes together. The fourth question asked if students planned to work with a faculty member on a research project. The third set of questions comprised a question asking whether students had a community-based project as part of their PA module.

The rankings for all four questions pertaining to academic discussions at the Potchefstroom campus can be seen in Figure 4.37 below. The first question focused on discussions between people from a race or ethnicity other than that of the student. The largest group (41.94%) in the class said that they had very often had discussion with people from other races, while 22.58% stated that it often occurred for them. A quarter of the class (25.81%) stated that it only happened sometimes, while 9.68% stated that it never happened.

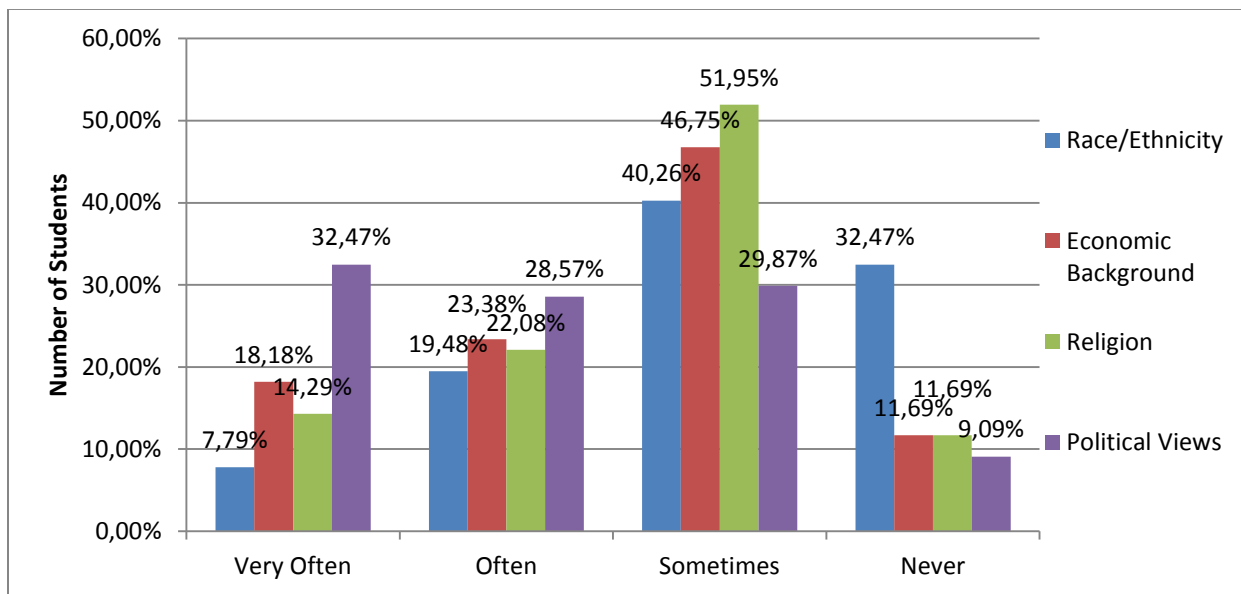


**Figure 4.37: Academic discussions at Potchefstroom campus**

Overall most students seem to have had this enriching experience to some degree. Some students commended the diversity of the campus and gave this as a reason for enjoying their educational experience as it allowed them to experience other cultures, races and, thus, other viewpoints different from their own, allowing them a new capacity for thought. The PA class of the Potchefstroom campus also seems to be most diverse, as seen in Figure 4.3, in terms of race and ethnicity. The second question asked about discussions with people from different economic backgrounds than the student themselves, with most students having indicated very often (24.41%) and often (32.26%). A quarter of the class (25.81%) stated sometimes, while a minority of 7.53% stated never. Again the results show that people from different economic backgrounds can be found at the institution and that the students do engage them, although more engagement could be facilitated. The third question asks about discussion with people with religious beliefs other than that of the student. The responses seem to spread roughly across the first three answers with 29.03% for very often being the highest, followed by 27.96% for often and 24.73% for other. Meanwhile 18.28% responded with never. This indicates that most of the class have at least once had an academic discussion with a person from another religion, however the statistics are lower than the previous questions. The fourth question asked students about academic discussions with people with political views different from their own, most responses were either very

often (39.78%) or often (30.11%). About 21.51% stated they sometimes did, while 8.60% stated that they never had. Once again the Potchefstroom campus has shown itself to be rather diverse with many different political views.

The rankings for all four questions for the Vaal campus can be seen in Figure 4.38 below. The first question focused on discussions between people from a race or ethnicity other than that of the student. The largest group (40.26%) in the class said that they had only sometimes had discussions with people from other races or ethnicities, while 32.47% stated that they have never done this. 19.48% of the class stated that they often did so, while only 7.79% stated that it never happened. This offers a sharp contrast to the Potchefstroom campus, where most students very often have these interactions. The PA class of the Vaal campus seems to be much less diverse, as seen in Figure 4.3, in terms of race and ethnicity, with 95% of the class identifying as black.

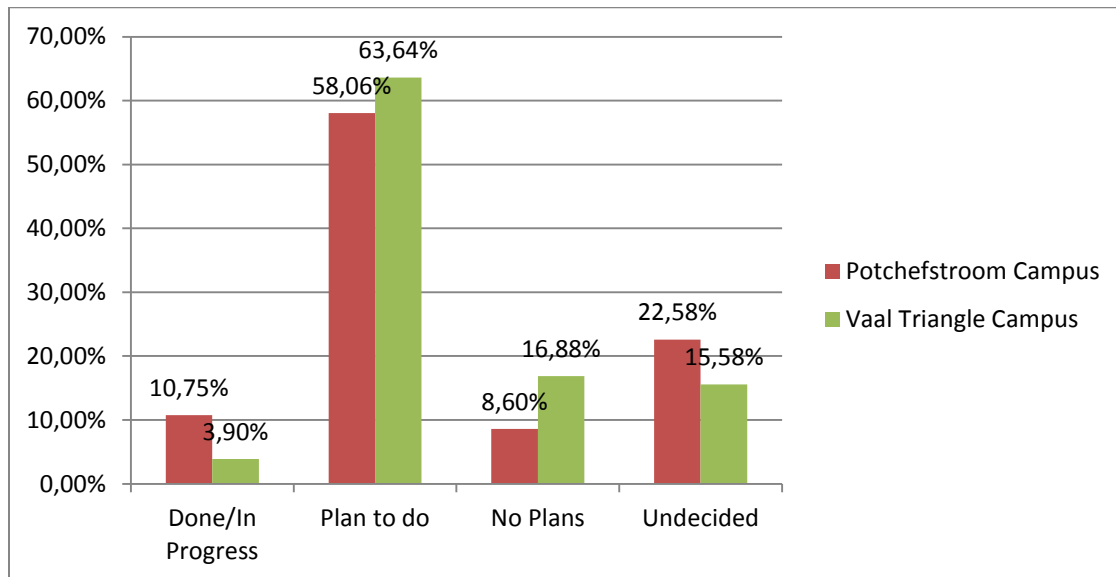


**Figure 4.38: Academic discussions at Vaal Triangle campus**

The second question asked about discussions with people from different economic backgrounds than the student themselves, with most students having indicated sometimes (46.75%), while 23.38% stated often and 18.18% stating to have done so very often, while a 11.69% stated they had never. The results show that people from different economic backgrounds can be found at the institution and that the students do sometimes engage them, although it appears to be limited and more engagement could

be facilitated by the institution. The third question asks about discussion with people with religious beliefs other than that of the student. More than half the class (51.95%) stated they sometimes did so, while 22.08% replied often, 14.29% very often and 11.69% never. This indicates that most of the class have at least once had an academic discussion with a person from another religion, however the statistics are still relatively low. The fourth question asked students about academic discussions with people with political views different from their own, most responses were either very often (39.78%) or often (30.11%). Most of the students were roughly divided between very often (32.47%), often (28.57%) and sometimes (29.87%) with a minority of 9.09% stating never. The Vaal campus appears to hold a relative degree of diversity in terms of political affiliation and views. Academic discussions between these groups seem to be the dominant trend out of the four categories. Overall the Vaal Triangle seems to be less diverse than the Potchefstroom campus. The argument made through both the figures is that students who engage in discussions favouring diverse perspectives are able to articulate their engagement with a specific point of view. This internalises learning, but also encourages students to think differently about module content and to understand academic module content from a diversity of perspectives.

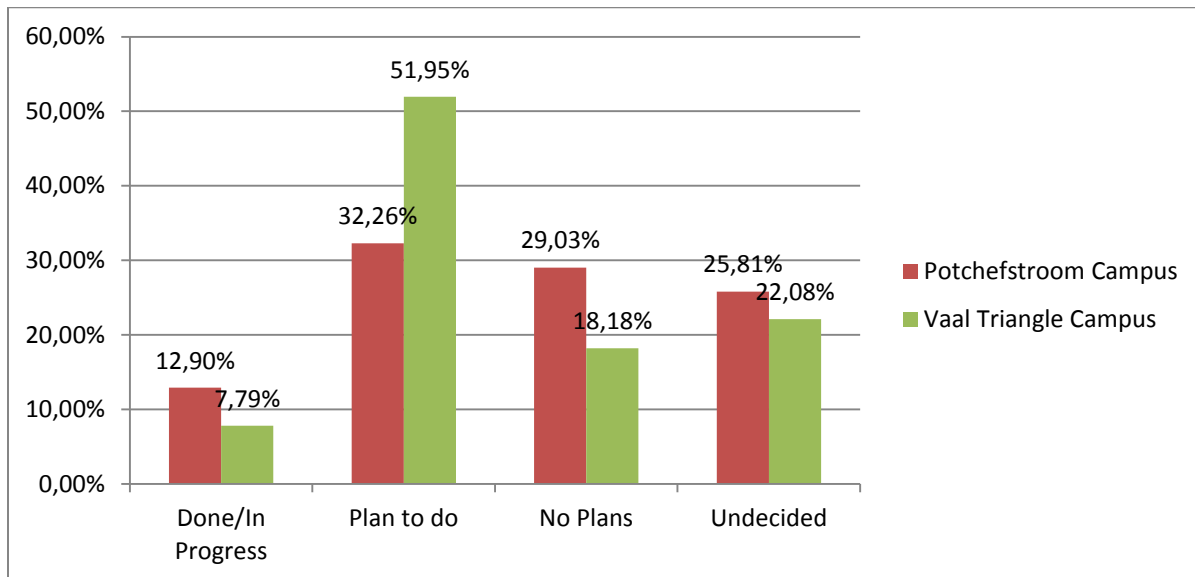
Internships and field research are aimed at placing students in situations where their theoretical knowledge must be applied to solve problems in real-world situations within their field of study in order to gain experience. Internships and field research also help students to network for future career ambitions and to see whether they actually enjoy the field in a more practical setting (Kuh, 2008:11).



**Figure 4.39: Participated in an internship/field research/student teaching**

More than half of both classes (58.06%) stated that they planned to participate in internships and field research, with a small group at Potchefstroom campus (10.75%) and a smaller group at Vaal (3.90%) stating that they had already done so. Almost a quarter (22.58%) at the Potchefstroom campus were undecided against Vaal campus' 15.58%. A small group at the Potchefstroom campus (8.60%) had no plans to participate in internships or field research, while a larger group (16.88%) at Vaal campus had no plans to do so. Overall most students at both campuses would like to engage in internships, field research or student teaching. This can help them understand the field and provide them circumstances in which they can apply their knowledge.

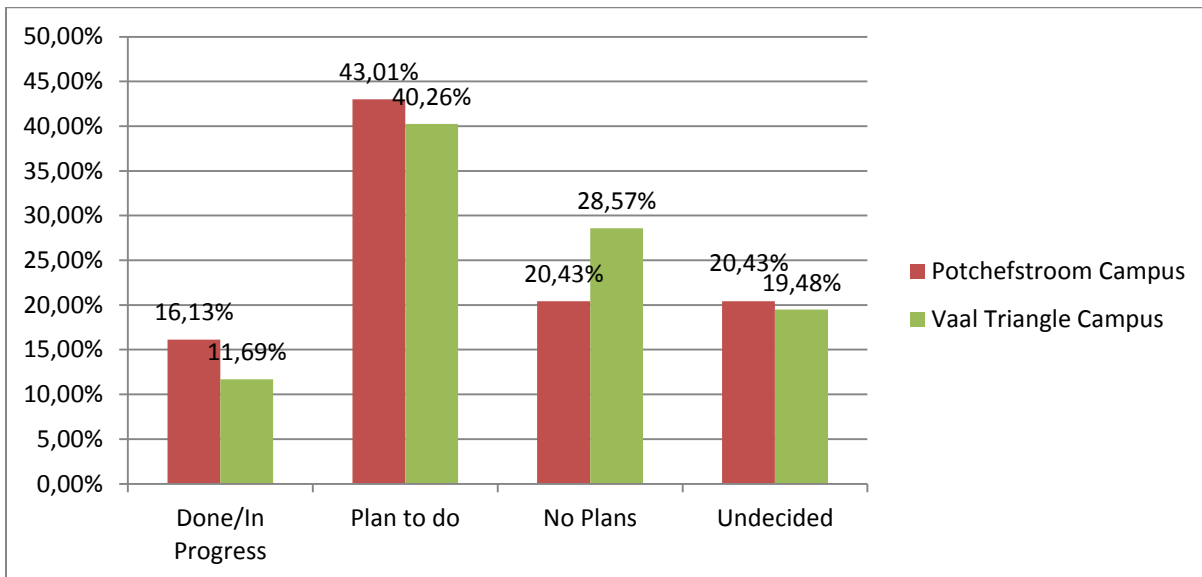
Student organisations and groups promote inclusivity and provide support to various students on an institution's campuses and can act as representation for minority groups which would actively make more students become involved with the institution and assist integration (Ozaki & Renn, 2014:100).



**Figure 4.40: Hold a formal leadership role in a student organisation**

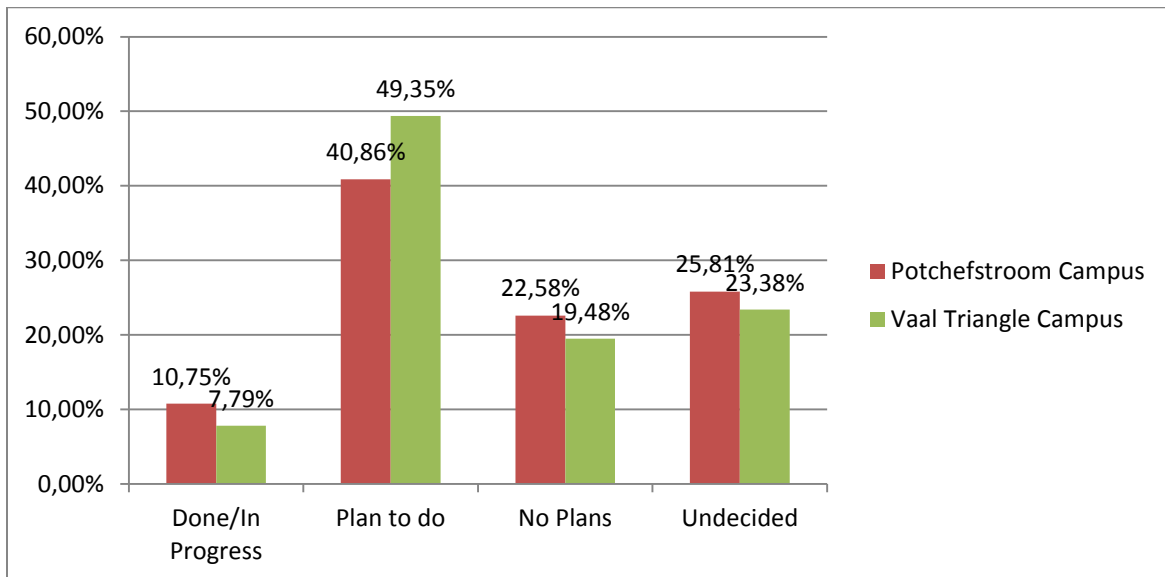
About 32% of the Potchefstroom students stated that they planned to hold a formal leadership role in a student organisation and 12.90% stated they had already done so. Quite a few students (29.03%) however had no plans to do so and 25.81% were still undecided. With Vaal campus half (51.95%) stated that they planned to do so and 7.79% stated they had already. Quite a few (22.08%) were still undecided and 18.18% had no plans to do so. Students at Vaal campus seem to be much more engaged in this aspect. This shows that students at Vaal campus appear to generally be more active and engaged on their campus. This could mean students at the Potchefstroom campus might feel more isolated from their environment. This means that individual isolated students don't feel as engaged in their work or their environment.

Learning communities exist to promote learning in an integrated manner and to let students focus on bigger questions beyond what they might cover in a conventional class session. A common approach is for these communities to work together with fellow students and even faculty members to approach a common and regularly discussed topic from a completely different angle, viewpoint or discipline in order to gain insight into a different perspective (Kuh, 2008:10).



**Figure 4.41: Participate in a learning community**

More than 40% at both campuses stated they planned to participate in a learning community, while less than 17% had already done so. A considerable group around 20% felt undecided, while the same amount at the Potchefstroom campus and 28.57% at the Vaal campus had no plans to do so in the foreseeable future. Both campuses had most students eager to undertake this activity, but respondents from the Potchefstroom campus showed a little bit more enthusiasm for this than those from the Vaal campus, showing that they were more inclined to work in groups. This helps students to review information outside of class and gain different insights on topics. The reality is also that by indicating that they have not participated in learning communities implies that such communities do not exist on campus, or are not initiated through their structured learning. When lecturers also encourage students to participate in such communities and create such communities, student engagement could be facilitated.

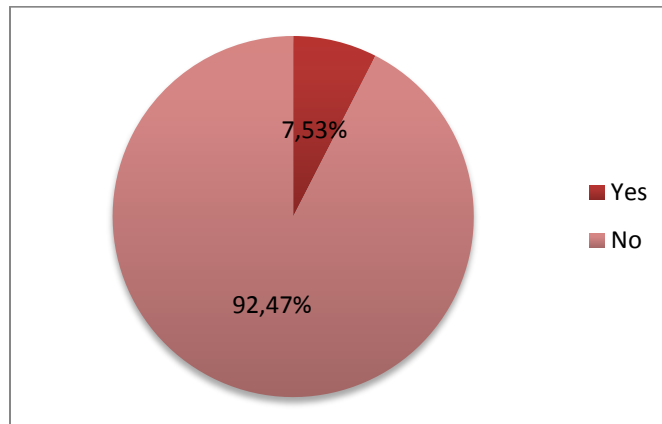


**Figure 4.42: Work with faculty member on a research project**

Most of the class at the Potchefstroom (40.86%) and Vaal (49.35%) campuses stated they planned to work with a faculty member on a research project while a small group at both campuses having already undertaken this activity. Less than a quarter of the classes (22.58% & 19.48%) felt no desire to do so, while the other roughly drawn quarter had not yet decided (25.81% & 23.38%). Overall students mostly seem to have plans to engage in these activities, yet again, the evidence is provided that such opportunities or activities do not yet exist. This could provide students with an extraordinary opportunity to establish not only a rapport with a faculty member, but also to engage in the field and learn not only findings but techniques and practical skills.

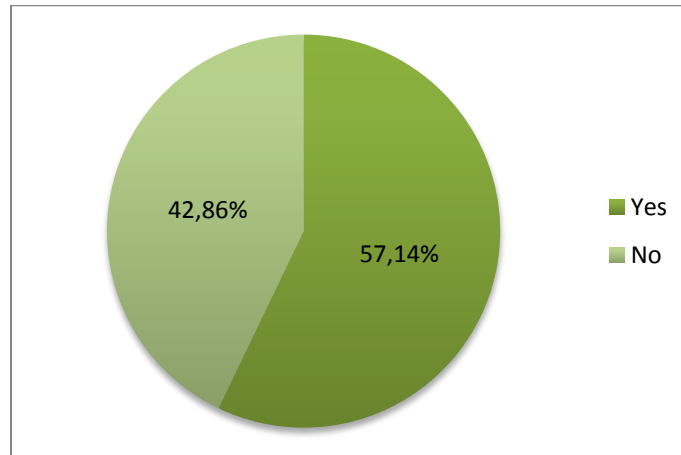
A question was asked about whether students had a community-based project as part of their PA module. Community-based projects are utilised in higher education to help students obtain some experience in field research, application of theory and problem-solving in a designated community. This also shapes the idea that an integral part of the higher education system is the notion of giving back to the community to improve their lives (Kuh, 2008:11). Diedericks (2016) stated that no official project was in place as stringent processes and procedures have been put in place by the University before any research can be embarked on, especially where the community is involved and due to the size of the group this isn't viable. Pooe (2016) stated that his class had such a

project as it is the job of any future manager and administrator to know his/her citizens/market.



**Figure 4.43: Community based project (Potchefstroom campus)**

The results confirm the response received from Diedericks (2016). The overwhelming majority of respondents (92.47%) from the Potchefstroom campus stated that they had not, while 7.53% responded that they had. The four projects mentioned included a community upliftment project based on the environment, a child support grant project, one student claiming the topic was still to be discussed with a research group and another student not being able to recall the nature of the project – none of these project were however part of the formal curriculum. With the large majority responding negatively, an opportunity for application and engagement could be missed. The average amount of hours spent doing community service or voluntary work by students amounted to 1.5 hours per week. It would appear most students at Potchefstroom are not engaged in this experience. Students do not make the connection between their education and their responsibility to give something back to their community. This has a negative influence on student engagement since student engagement ultimately wants to foster the values that contribute to making a responsible citizen. If students and lecturers underestimate the value derived from community projects, then the extent of their engagement with their community may also be questioned.



**Figure 4.44: Community based project (Vaal Triangle campus)**

The majority of respondents (57.14%) from the Vaal campus stated that they had, while 42.86% stated that they did not. Of the students who said yes, projects mentioned included projects on socio-economic issues and policies in the Emfuleni region and service delivery in a municipality of their choice, while focusing on the inputs and role of council members. The average amount of hours spent doing community service or voluntary work by students amounted to 2 hours per week. It would appear most students are not engaged in this experience.

Educational experiences such as internships and research projects were for the most part not yet undertaken by most students, however these students are only first years and many indicated that they plan to do so. If they actually do so, they will be provided with an insight on the practical aspects of the discipline and learn to apply their knowledge. Potchefstroom's campus has a significant level of interaction between people from different backgrounds leading to more exposure to diversity and varying opinions, whereas results from the Vaal campus identified a less diverse environment. The Potchefstroom campus however lacks an official community based project, which may also contribute to students' responses regarding the application of theory in practice. A key characteristic of the engagement process is, thus, the amount of time and effort students put into academically orientated activities to better themselves and broaden their ways of thinking and constructing information and the effort the institution makes to foster these practices amongst the students of an institution (Bamber & Jones, 2015:155). The following section will discuss constructive campus environment.

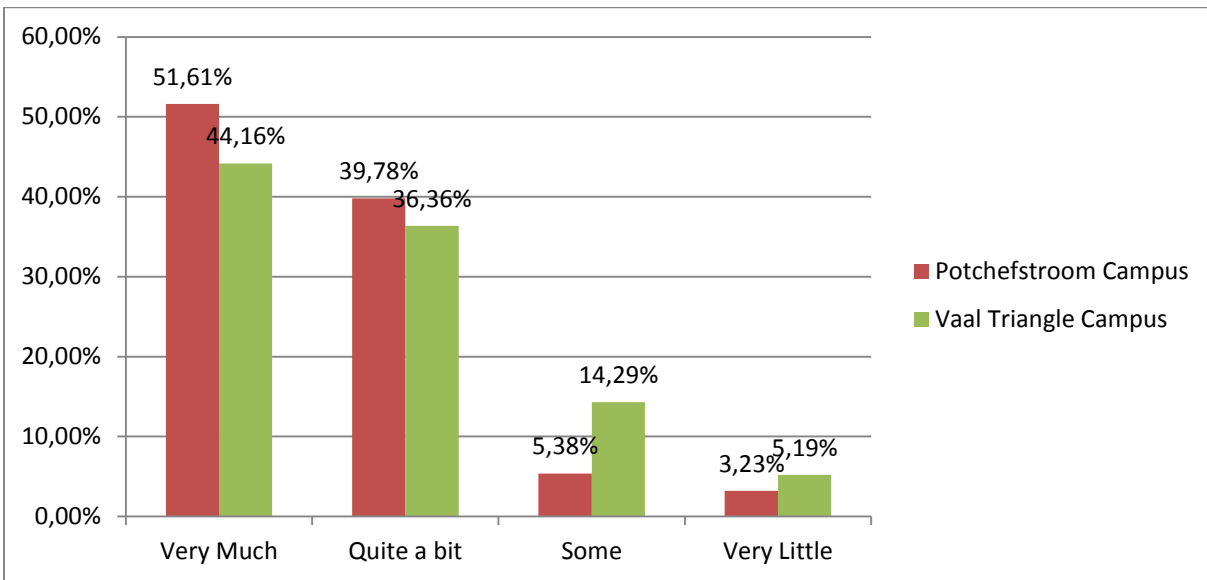
## 4.6 CONSTRUCTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

As stated in Chapter Two a constructive campus environment is focused on academic support, how the institution supports the student's growth, both academically and socially and the extent to which it helps students cope with their responsibilities (Carini *et al.*, 2006:26). Diedericks (2016) believes that a constructive campus environment had been created with facilities that include libraries, technologically enabled classrooms, WiFi connectivity and supplemental instruction. Pooe (2016) defines a supportive campus as one with enough reading resources and student interaction to fill in the missing gaps lectures cannot do. He feels however that the Vaal campus has that and that more could be done to foster a stronger student population, where students are more involved academically and socially.

The main set of questions asked students' responses to questions about how much emphasis was placed on a list of requirements by the institution. The first question asked how much emphasis was placed on spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work. The second question asked how much emphasis was placed on providing students with support to succeed academically. The third question asked whether the institution emphasises the use of learning support services. The fourth question asks how much emphasis is placed on encouraging contact among students from different racial, social, religious and economic backgrounds. The fifth question asked to what extent the university provided opportunities for students to become socially involved. The sixth question asked about the institution's provision of support for the overall well-being of students through recreational-, healthcare- and counselling facilities. The seventh question asked about the emphasis placed on helping students manage non-academic responsibilities such as work and family. The eighth question asked to what extent the institution emphasises the attendance of campus activities and events such as sports or performances. The ninth question asks about the emphasis placed on attending events that address important social, economic or political issues.

Most courses and programmes are designed by universities with presumptions of what students should know and what they will learn as they progress through the years by putting in enough study time with the assignments, projects, textbooks and notes they

are prescribed. The university accordingly should thus place a significant degree of emphasis on the importance of this construct so that students follow through with it and realise the seriousness of the institution so that they can become engaged at the appropriate times during the course of their academic studies (Butcher, 2015:80). The following figure presents the findings pertaining to time spend studying.

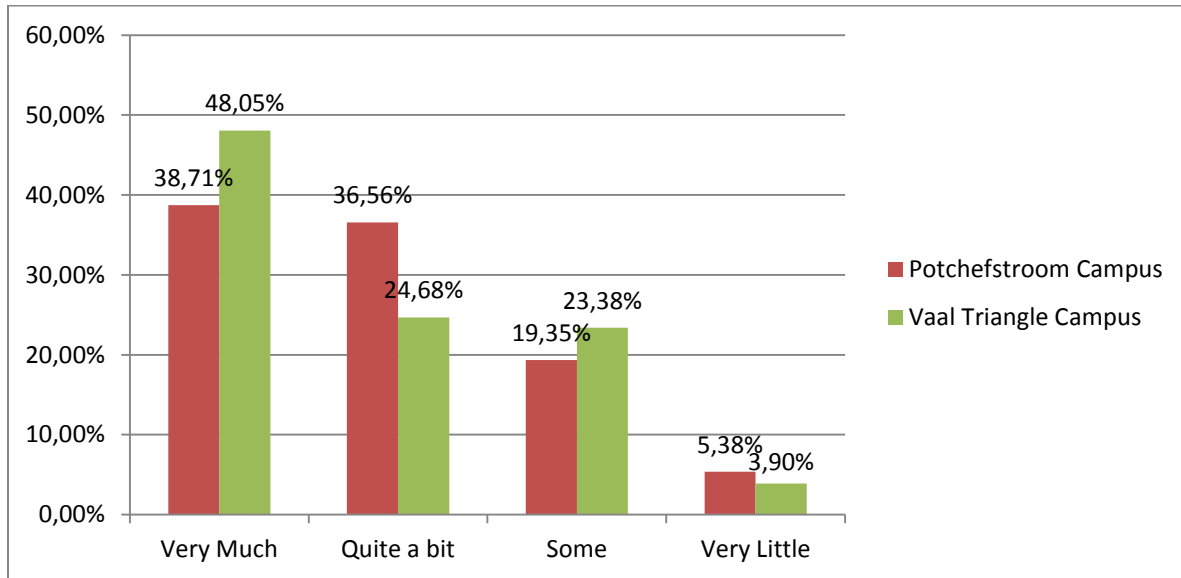


**Figure 4.45: Spending significant amounts of time studying**

Most of the students at both campuses indicated that a lot of emphasis was placed on this, while the majority of those left felt quite a bit of emphasis was placed. Only a small group indicated some (5.38%) or very little (3.23%) at the Potchefstroom campus, while a small group of 5.19% indicated very little and a slightly larger group (14.29%) indicated some at the Vaal campus. This shows that the institution, especially at Potchefstroom’s campus, according to the students places enough emphasis on this topic and provides students with assistance through study methods and guides. This helps students to be knowledgeable about how to study and engage with their material.

Student support services include financial and personal services aimed at providing students with support in response to the growing levels of diversity at higher education institutions and high dropout rates (Dhillon *et al.*, 2006:1). These support services enhance a student’s learning experience by providing them with practical skills such as writing classes they can apply in class and for assignments and serves to close gaps

within students' ideas of higher education and the specific institution they are attending. Many students feel that this is one of the most important factors for engagement (Dhillon *et al.*, 2006:1-2).

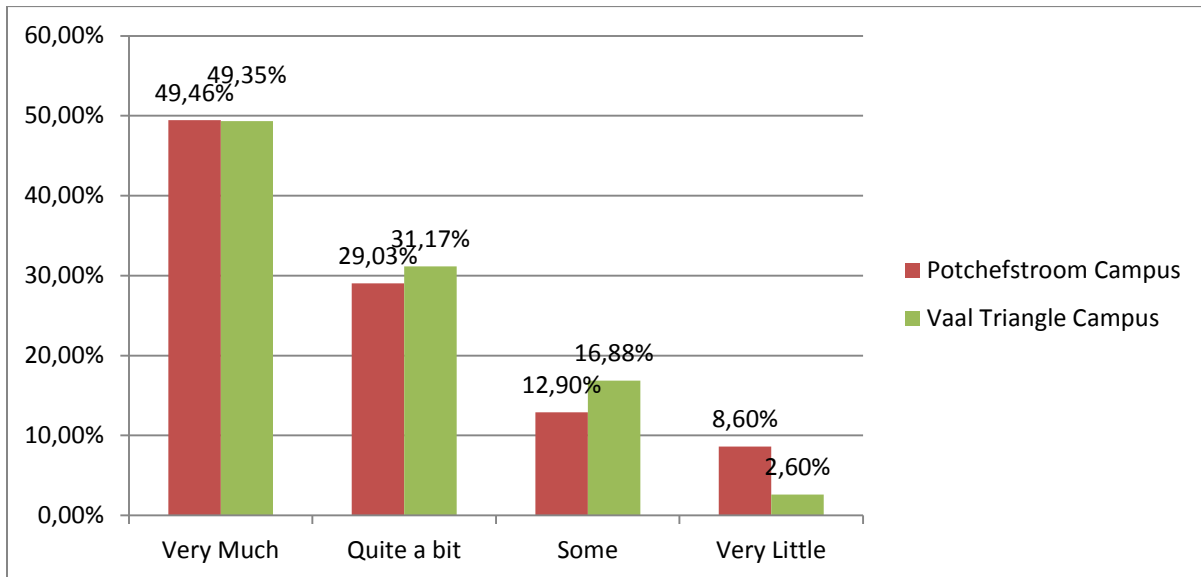


**Figure 4.46: Provide support for academic success**

Most students indicated either very much or quite a bit (36.56%) of emphasis was placed on providing support to help students academically by the institution. A small group (19.35% & 23.38%) indicated that more could be done, while a smaller group (5.38% & 3.90%) indicated that very little emphasis was placed on these services. Overall most students seem to get the idea that a support system is in place for students struggling academically, but the distributed nature of the results seem to indicate that students are either not aware, the institution could perhaps do more or students might even not have faith in the support system. This means that students who might be falling behind can still be caught within a safety net ensuring students would return to the correct path and can foster engagement in students who have strayed. The results also correlate with student previously indicating a level of dissatisfaction in their engagement with support services and staff.

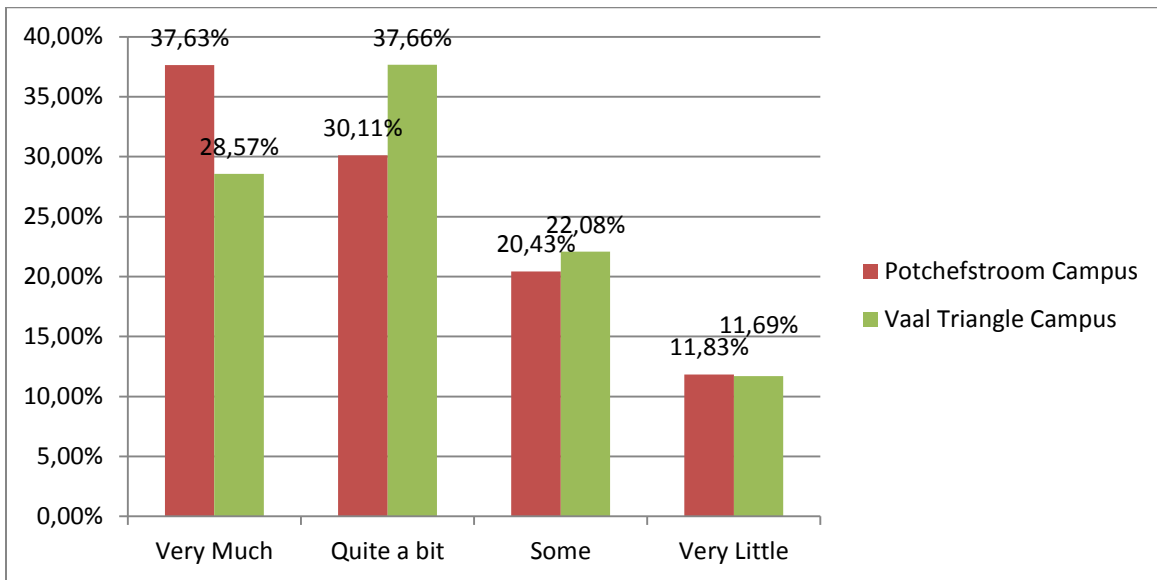
Learning support strategies such as facilitation or tutoring helps students analyse how they come to certain conclusions and ideas and how others were formed so as to have a better grasp on the theory (White & Ewan, 1991:107). These strategies can also assist

lecturers in understanding why an individual or a group are struggling with coursework, creating an opportunity for coherent outreach to improve the situation to more actively engage the students in the course work (Light *et al.*, 2009:139). Technological advances have also opened up a new manner of support via online resources, providing students with more self-tests, reading sources, materials to enhance studying and so forth (Ayres, 2015:104).



**Figure 4.47: Use of learning support services**

About half of both classes (49.46% & 49.46%) indicated that a lot of emphasis was placed on using learning support services, while the second largest group (29.03% & 31.17%) responded with quite a bit. A smaller group (12.90% & 16.88%) responded with some, while a minor group (8.60% & 2.60%) indicated very little. These results show that students are aware of learning support and that the campus does quite a bit at the very least to make students aware of this. This means that the institution overall makes an attempt to encourage struggling students to make use of learning support services that are in place.

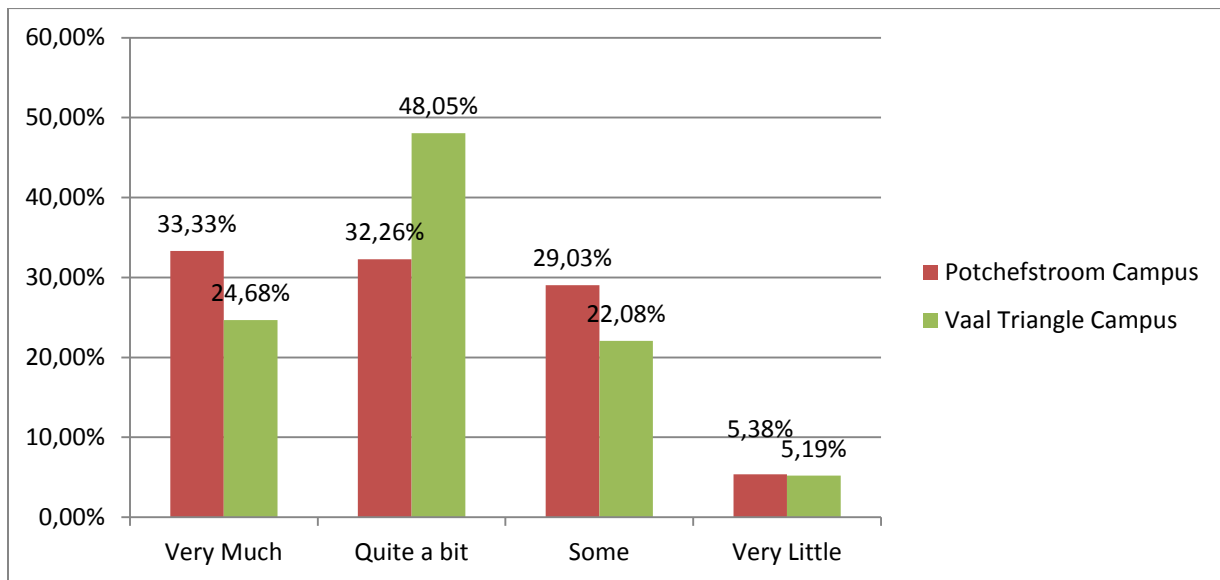


**Figure 4.48: Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds**

First year students are in general more inclined to report higher levels of emphasis placed on contact between students from different backgrounds due to the promotion of diversity during student orientation and various residence-based activities and seminars for first years (Kuh, 2010:31).

The larger part of both campuses indicated either very much, towards which Potchefstroom students leaned or quite a bit, towards which Vaal campus students leaned. Roughly 20% on each campus indicated some. A small, yet noteworthy group of around 11% indicated that very little emphasis was placed on this notion. This shows that the institution has made efforts to encourage contact among different types of students, but some are still left to feel like outsiders. Two Potchefstroom and two Vaal students in the open ended questions also indicated racism as a problem at the institution. Many other students however commended the diversity of the campus and gave this as one of the reasons for enjoying their educational experience as it allowed them to experience other cultures and viewpoints. This was discussed in further detail in the previous section where it was shown that while both campuses successfully conveyed the message, the actual experience was different. Diversity means that students are exposed to more ideas and perspectives which influence their learning and could enhance their engagement with the institution as well as the material.

One of the core functions of ensuring social inclusivity among students is student retention. Students who feel isolated and separate from an institution and the other students often suffer in silence and eventually leave, sometimes unable to conjure how the institution will play a role in the shaping of the future. Promoting social inclusivity and participation creates a feeling of belonging, upon which students will feel more comfortable and persistent with their studies (Gazeley & Aynsley, 2012:4-5). Diedericks (2016) argued that while those students who lived in campus dormitories were forced to partake in campus life, town students, such as most of the PA class, were more reluctant and isolated from campus life outside of their academic responsibilities. Poe (2016) indicated that while he encouraged students to partake in campus life, he was not yet sure if the institution itself did so at the Vaal campus.

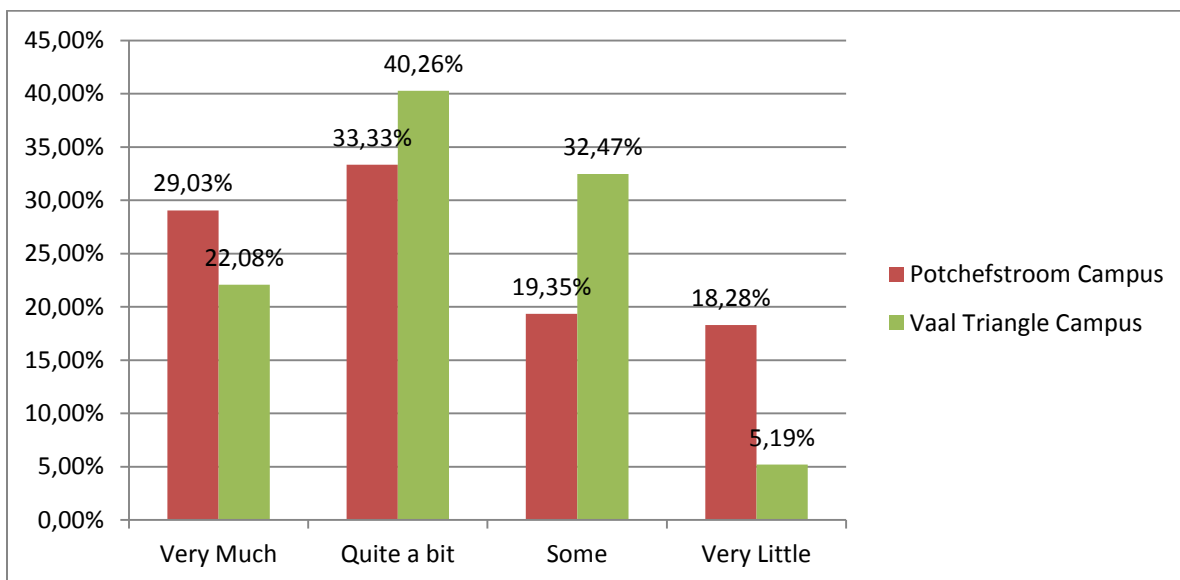


**Figure 4.49: Providing opportunities for social involvement**

Respondent students from both campuses indicated that they agreed that the University provides opportunities for social involvement either very much (33.33% & 24.68%) or quite a bit (32.26% & 48.05%), with 29.03% and 22.08% indicating some opportunity for social involvement. These results show that the institution does a significant amount to emphasise this point, but that it is still lacking in certain areas. Many of the students live further than walking distance from the campus and might be excluded due to this. Some students expressed that they have difficulty making friends and that they feel lonely. One student voiced a valid opinion that most activities on the campus were held after hours

or at night, making it difficult for students who live far away to participate actively. This means that while the institution makes an effort to encourage and facilitate participation, practical aspects such as where students live are not always taken into consideration leading to some students still being excluded and feeling isolated from campus. Diedericks (2016) also stated that students enrolled for the PA programmes are usually not part of campus dormitories and the institution should, thus, not concentrate on residences alone to provide students with the opportunities to become socially involved in campus activities.

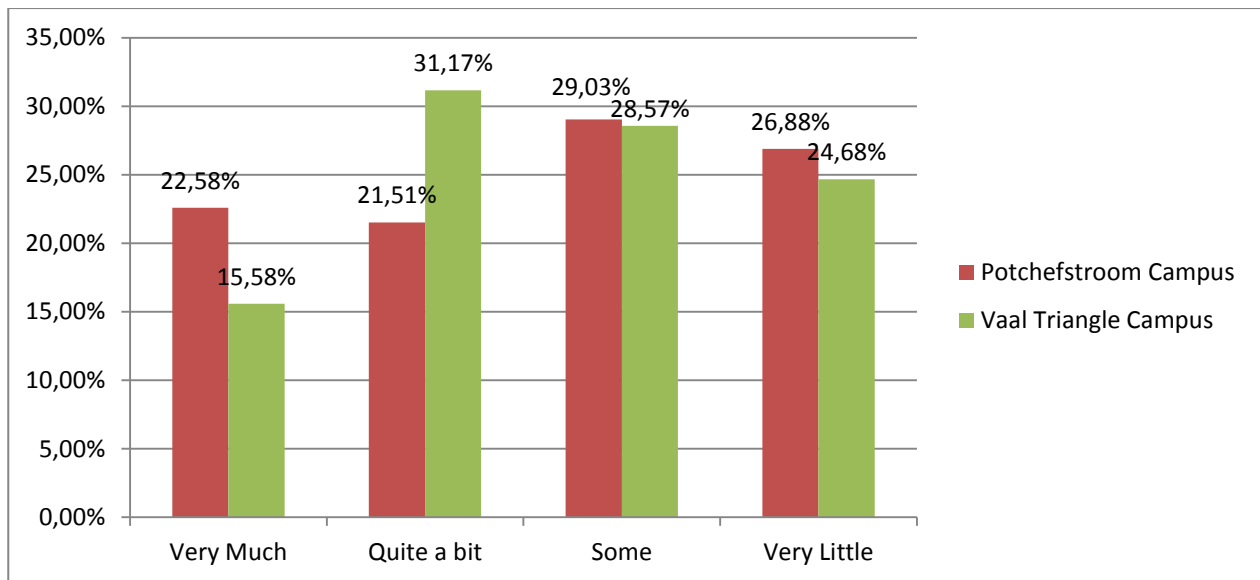
When students exist in social structures with intense regulations or that are too assimilated, the safety net for the welfare of students ceases to exist and suffers when a crisis such as a family emergency hits as students have no fall-back due to bureaucratic practices. However too little integration or regulation leaves students without the required support or information to handle a situation when difficult times descend and students suffer in silence (Kuh *et al.*, 2006:13). Support systems also aid persistence levels as well as satisfaction with the environment in which they find themselves, while fostering a success-oriented atmosphere (Kuh *et al.*, 2006:56).



**Figure 4.50: Providing support for overall well-being**

The largest parts of both campuses (33.33% & 40.26%) indicated quite a bit, while the larger part of the remaining students at the Potchefstroom campus (29.03%) revealed

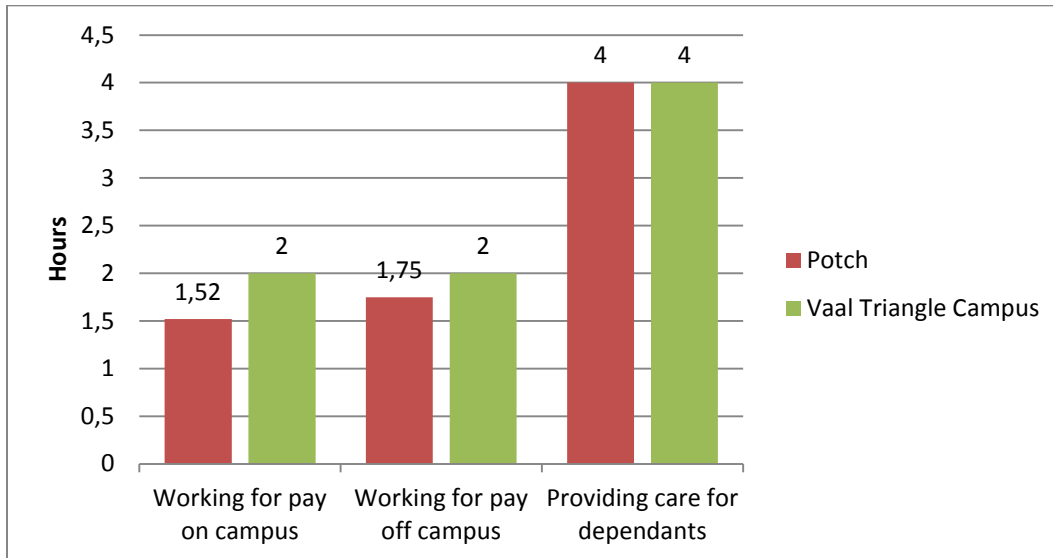
very much and the Vaal campus students suggested some (32.47%) support for their overall well-being. The rest of the Potchefstroom students were split between some and very little, while Vaal campus' remaining students indicated very much (22.08%). These numbers indicate that students to some degree feel that the institution makes provision in this. The University could however do more to reach all students concerning support for their overall well-being. Some students at Potchefstroom campus feel left out however, which means some students are not receiving the support they require. The mere fact that the institution is shown as offering adequate support to students is indicative of the intention towards promoting an integrated service to students. Furthermore, a caring institution promotes engagement with and between students and the institution.



**Figure 4.51: Helping manage non-academic responsibilities**

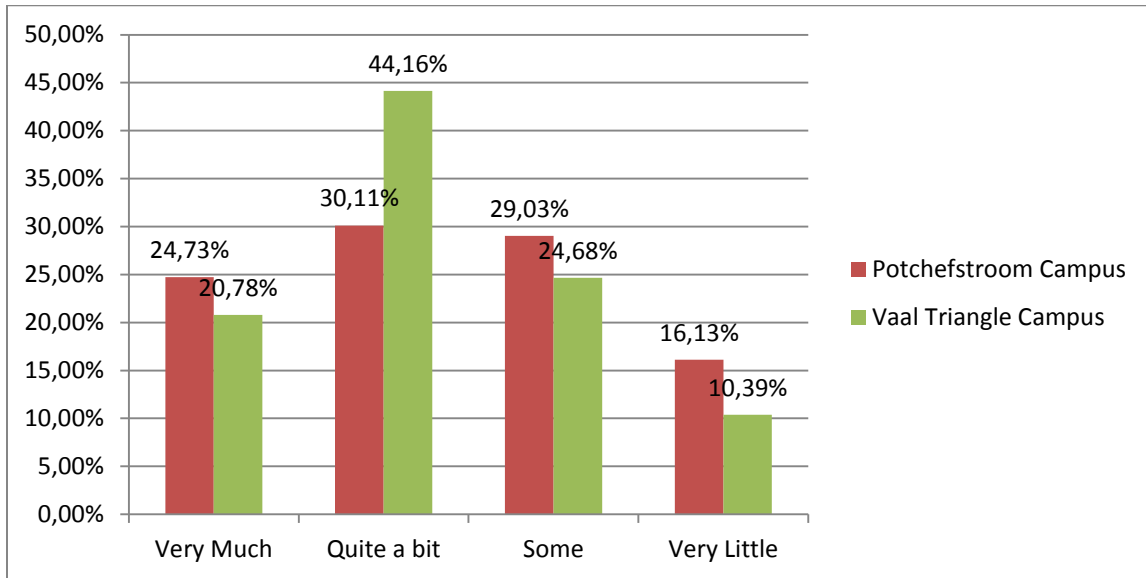
While the respondents indicate that the institution, to some extent, provides assistance in managing non-academic responsibilities, the reality is that 26.88% of the respondents from the Potchefstroom campus and 24.68% of the respondents from the Vaal campus felt that the University offers no help in them having to balance their home and academic lives. As seen on Figure 4.52 below, some students have other responsibilities, such as working on or off campus and even caring for dependants, and might feel that the institution does not understand their responsibilities and, thus, cannot accommodate for

their schedules and that they then struggle to balance their responsibilities. The figure indicates the amount of hours per week students spend working.



**Figure 4.52: Average Hours per week of Non-Academic Responsibilities**

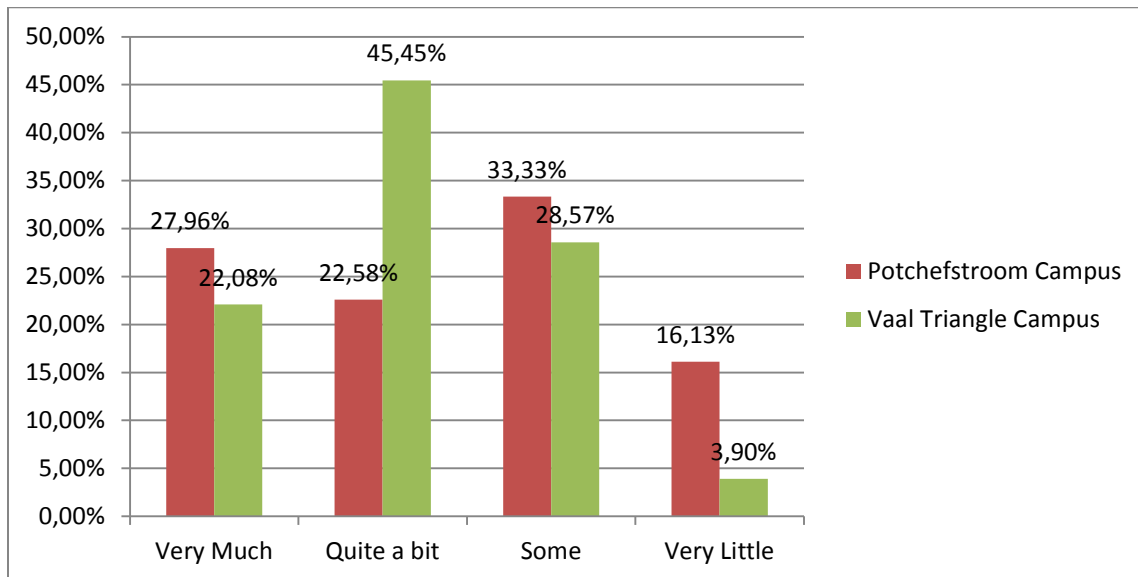
The above figure depicts that respondents from the Potchefstroom campus spend an average of almost two hours working either on or off campus, while respondents from the Vaal campus work an average of 2 hours on or off campus. Over and above their working commitments they also have to care for dependants such as siblings or even parents or grandparents for an average of four hours. Their responsibilities, such as working, enable them to afford their education and even contribute to their parents' households. The reality of their lives needs to be understood and considered by the institution if engagement is to be realised. Only when students feel that the institution cares about more than their academic lives, will they feel in a position to engage with the institution about the realities that influence their lives. This question links with what was said earlier about student retention through creating a feeling of belonging.



**Figure 4.53: Attending campus activities and events**

The results depicted above are indicative of an institution which attempts to foster engagement through participation and attendance of campus activities. Respondents from both campuses are in an agreement that the institution promotes the attendance of campus activities and events. While most students feel that enough is done a considerable amount (16.13% & 10.39%) indicated that the institution promotes attendance to a very limited extent. This could be indicative of some students feeling excluded. Students reported that an average of only 2 hours per week was spent on participating in co-curricular activities. This means that PA students are not as integrated and involved in the social aspects of campus. Most students that are involved are often only involved due to their obligations as residence students. Students could feel removed from campus and consequently would avoid aid systems, other students and lecturers outside of class sessions delivering quite a blow to their overall engagement.

Attending events that focus on political, social or economic issues provide students with opportunities for cognitive development, especially if the focus of the session falls within their field. These students make better progress in terms of application and the evaluation of other viewpoints and ideas (Kuh *et al.*, 2006:79).



**Figure 4.54: Attending events that address important issues**

The results depict a clear emphasis on the institution promoting the attendance of important social, economic or political events. Only 16.13% of the Potchefstroom respondents and 3.90% of the Vaal respondents felt that the NWU rarely promotes attendance in important social, economic or political events. Diedericks (2016) and Pooe (2016) also argued that students need to be aware of what is happening in the world around them, specifically for a module such as PA, where the application of the theory taught in classes is evident in everyday political, social and economic activities of government and society. Promoting students' attendance is a first step towards ensuring that students remain aware and involved in the activities which shape their society and to which they will contribute as responsible citizens.

Overall the institution provides a well-structured campus environment with support functions and inclusive atmosphere, however physical aspects such as promoting student involvement in campus activities located far from their homes or during times which limit their access to transport to and from home, may need additional consideration. This is needed for students to thrive in an academic environment and to feel part of an institution concerned with both their academic growth as well as their becoming responsible citizens. The following section will review the creation of

collaborative and interactive learning processes in order to promote student engagement and as a final benchmark to be analysed.

#### **4.7 COLLABORATIVE AND INTERACTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES**

As stated in Chapter Two, collaborative and interactive learning processes are focused on how often students ask questions, give presentations, worked with other students on projects inside and outside of class and the frequency at which ideas and work was discussed with persons outside the programme (Carini *et al.*, 2006:25). Diedericks (2016) stated that for PA modules it refers to collaboration with various government entities or any other role-players in order to provide the best learning experience. He added that he is not aware of any such opportunities at the campus, but that he had in the past invited some practitioners to his class to link a certain part of the module outcomes with practical exposure.

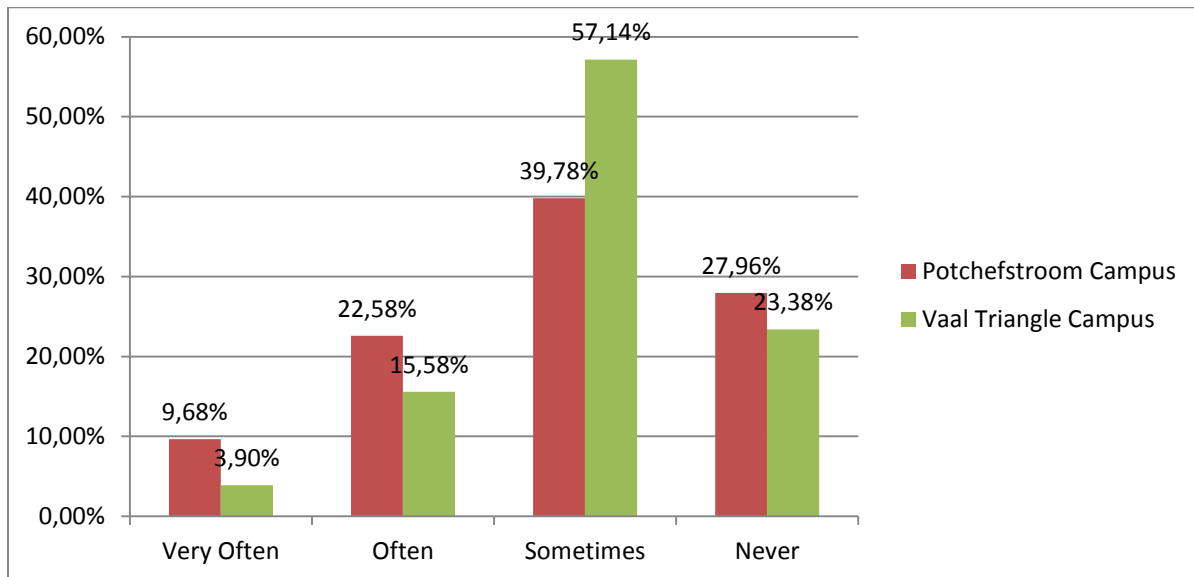
The first set of question focused on class participation, working in groups and in class activities. The first question asked how often students asked questions or participated in class. The second question asked how often students prepared two or more drafts of an assignment before submission. The third question asked how often students asked their fellow students for help. The fourth question asked how often students explained material to other students. The fifth question in this set asked how often students prepared for examinations by discussing or working through module material with other students. The sixth question asked how often students worked with other students on module projects or assignments. The seventh question asked how often students gave presentation. The eighth question asked how often students attended seminars of information sessions in addition to scheduled class times.

The second set of questions focused on how students incorporated what they had learned in the PA programme with real-life situations, other modules and their basic understanding and constructing of knowledge and concepts. The first question asked how often students combine ideas from different modules for PA assignments, placing emphasis on the multidisciplinary nature of the field. The second question asked how often students connected what they have learned to societal problems or issues. The

third question asked how often students included diverse perspectives in module discussion or assignments. The fourth question asked how often students examined the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic or issue. The fifth question asked how often students tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from somebody else's perspective. The sixth question asked how often students had learned something that had changed the way in which they understood a concept or an issue. The seventh question asked how often students had connected ideas from PA modules to prior experiences and knowledge.

The third set of questions assessed how much the students felt their experience at this institution has contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development.

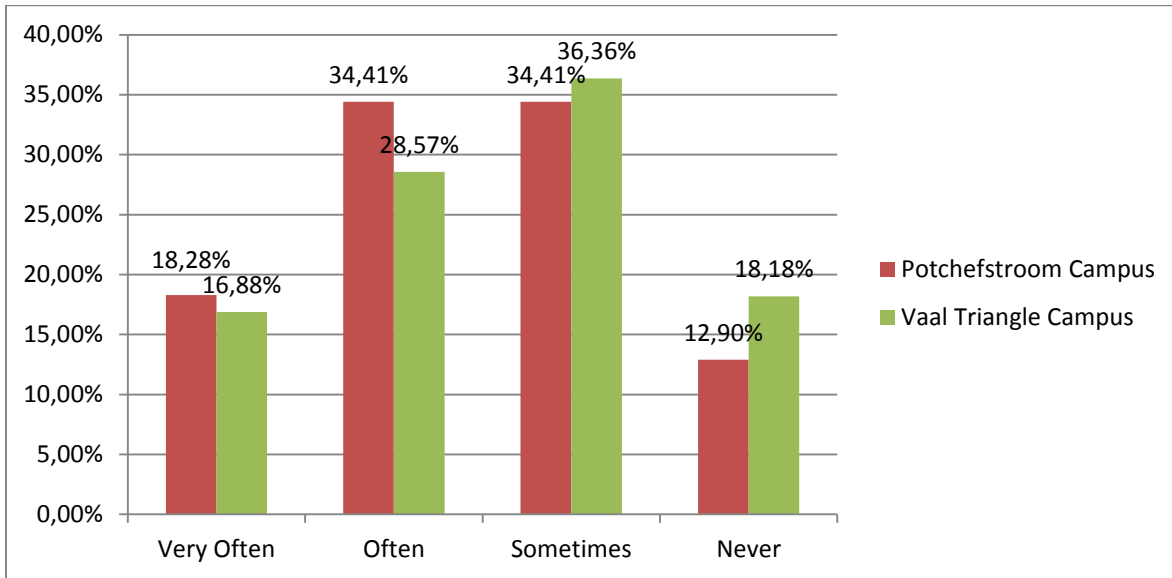
By not participating in a class discussion or asking questions students risk feeling alienated and removed from the class leading to confusion, disorientation and even isolation (Light *et al.*, 2009:110). Students should be encouraged to interact with the rest of the class as it facilitates engagement and promotes practical discussion among the class that is relevant to the module material. Furthermore it also expands upon the relationship between the lecturer and the students and enriches the classroom experience by providing a diversity of ideas and thoughts (Light *et al.*, 2009:116-117). Students also gain an understanding of different viewpoints other than that of the textbook and the lecturer creating a more creative and dynamic experience (Entwistle, 2009:134). Diedericks (2016) stated that he encouraged participation in class and coerced students into linking ideas for themselves. Pooe (2016) also encouraged it as it inspires students, in his opinion, to develop their own ideas and learn how to interrogate reading materials therefore to become academics and independent thinkers. He continues by revealing how he would encourage students to read and then prod them into answering questions not necessarily in textbooks. The question in the questionnaire pertaining to the above asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they contribute to class discussions. The following figure presents the results pertaining to interaction during class time.



**Figure 4.55: Asked questions and contributed to class discussions**

The results reveal that on both campuses respondents only sometimes (39.78% & 57.14%) ask questions or contribute to class discussions. Students who might not understand remain in the dark and a discussion could lose out on a valid point or thought, which leads to a lack of engagement and struggling students. The results depicted here may explain why respondents also perceived themselves as average students - they pass the module, but they are not truly engaged in the content, teaching or with the lecturers teaching the module. The extent to which they do not feel their contribution in class to be valuable may also be an indication that they do not feel comfortable enough to participate or they are simply not interested enough to participate.

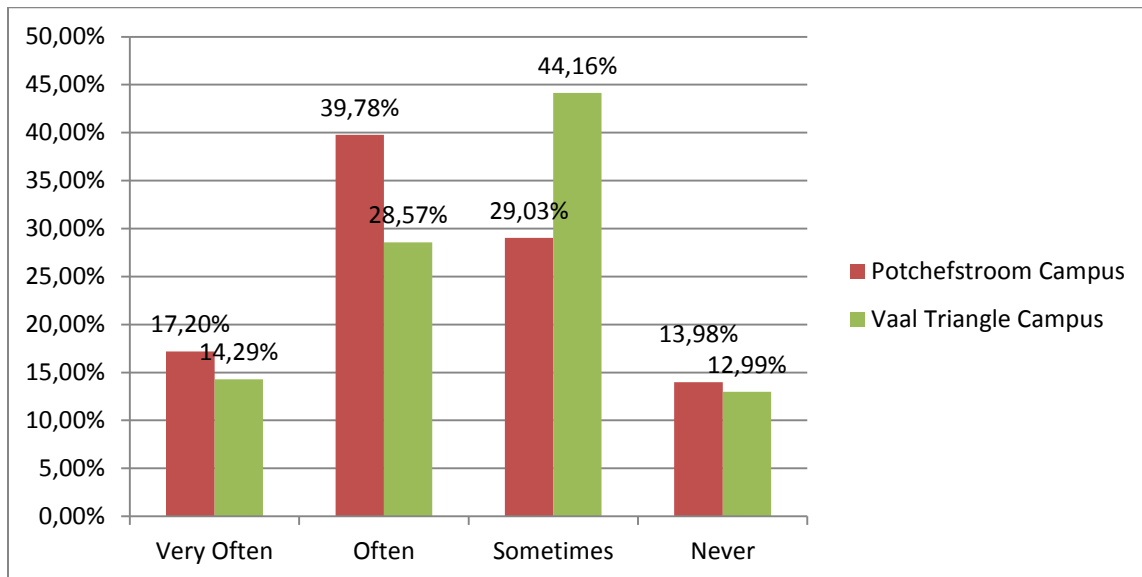
Rough drafts of assignments are often underrated and rarely utilised by students, as was also seen in previous discussions. A written piece should be revisited to assess how well it reads and to identify errors that went unnoticed in the initial writing of the assignment and to then make the necessary changes (Kosmicki, 2006:1). Rough drafts also present the writer with an opportunity to ensure that they maintain a logical process in the development of the argument and to prevent any language, punctuation, referencing or sentence construction errors (Write, 2016:1).



**Figure 4.56: Prepared two or more drafts before submission**

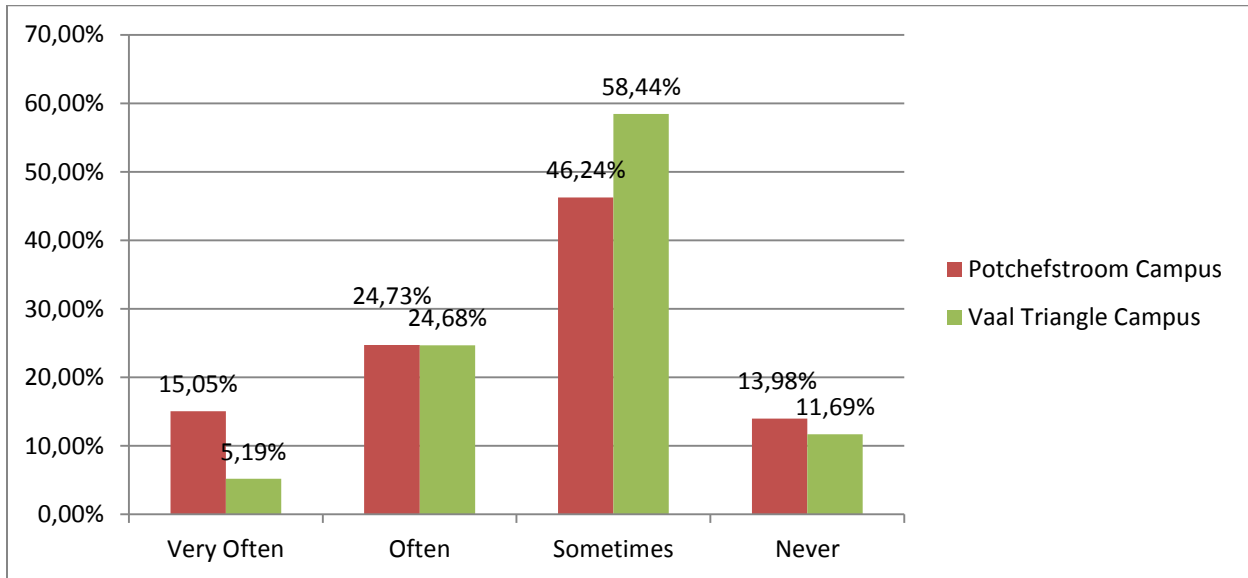
Most of the Potchefstroom and Vaal classes (68.82%) were more or less divided between often and sometimes, while less than 19% stated they very often did so or that they never did this. This could lead to lower marks due to preventable errors and rushing through an assignment. As drafts are not required for submission students neglect to make use of them. As previously seen students also rarely approach lecturers outside of class so these drafts carry little value as they have most probably not been seen by a lecturer. Drafts should be encouraged as they help students identify shortcomings and perform better with their final upgraded product.

While relying on the assistance of one's fellow students is not always the most effective and accurate source of information, for many students it is not only a faster approach but also a more convenient and approachable option. It involves making use of other students who are better versed to explain the information or an idea. Conversing and preparing with fellow students tends to make work much less of a burden and students find the overall learning experience more pleasurable leading to more active participation and engagement within the module and its contents (Boud, 2001:1). Working with other students also develops communication and management skills and students motivate one another to engage the coursework more enthusiastically (King, 2012:1). Thus, the following figure presents the results pertaining to how often students ask one another for assistance.



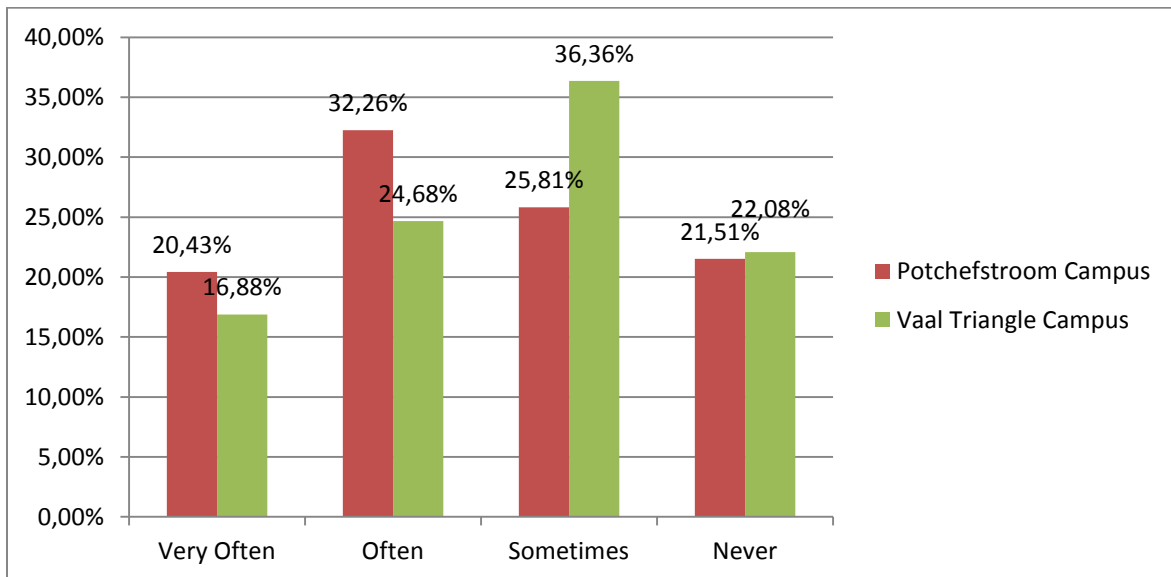
**Figure 4.57: Asked another student for help**

The results depicted above indicate that the highest responses were received from 39.78% of the respondents from the Potchefstroom campus who often ask fellow peers for assistance, while 44.16% of the Vaal campus respondents indicated that they only sometimes ask their peers for assistance. Students willing to ask their peers for assistance also indicate that they are open and willing to listen to other perspectives as well as learn from others. When the results are placed in relation to earlier results pertaining to willingness of students to consider alternative perspectives, the argument can be made that it seems as though students are more willing to accept alternative arguments as presented through theory than through peers. Student engagement will greatly be enhanced if students consider not only learning from the lecturer, but that sharing with peers may be an equally powerful learning tool. The results further confirm the subsequent results in that students are equally resistant in sharing their knowledge with peers, as depicted in the following figure.



**Figure 4.58: Explained material to other students**

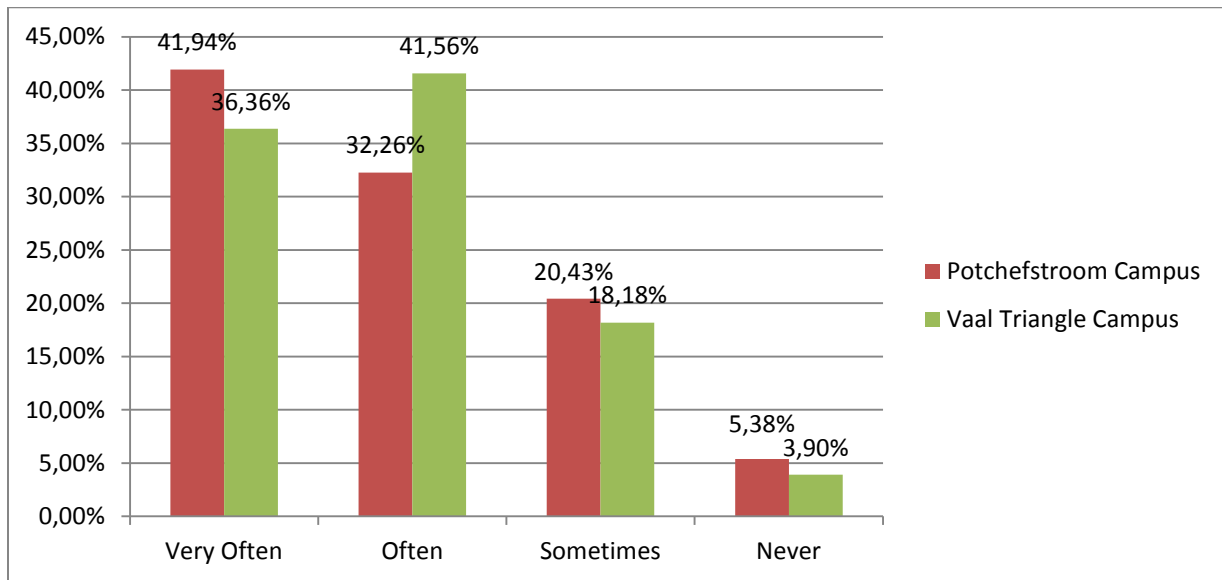
The question asked students how often they explained module material to one or more students with most (46.24%) at the Potchefstroom campus, as well as the Vaal campus (58.44%) saying they sometimes did this. This at least indicated that students to a degree discussed the coursework amongst themselves and asked and provided each other for and with assistance.



**Figure 4.59: Discussed or worked through module material with other students**

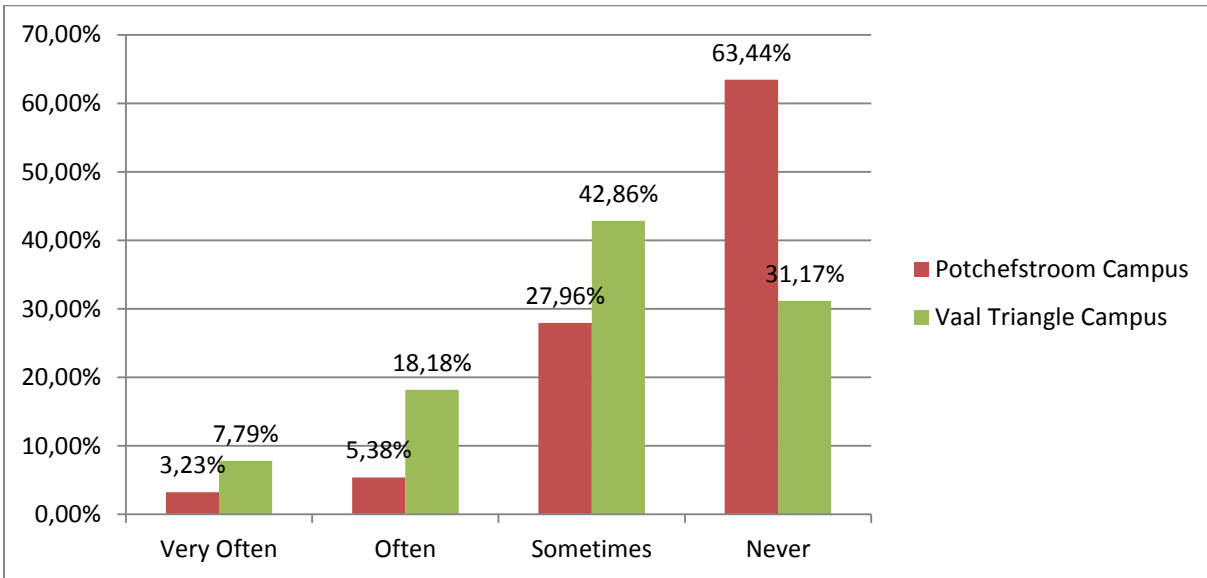
As can be seen from the above, the majority of respondents (20.43% & 32.26%) from the Potchefstroom campus choose to collaborate in preparation for examinations with other students very often and often. The same cannot be said for the respondents from the Vaal campus who indicate an inclination towards only collaborating sometimes (36.36%) and even never (22.08%). This would suggest that students don't frequently enlist the help of their peers and also don't really offer it to others. The data shows that Potchefstroom students more often discuss ideas and work together fostering camaraderie as well as mutual learning than students at Vaal who appear to stick to their own understand and preparation. Again, earlier discussions regarding sharing module content among each other confirms the results provided above.

Group work motivates students to work together and develops skills that increase the employability of students. Group work is designed to get students to construct their own knowledge, such as with constructivism, discussed in Chapter Two. Group work also develops the communication and analytical skills of students and makes them familiar with studying something by breaking it down into smaller parts (Ayres, 2015:98). The main goal of group work according to Ayres (2015:98) is the facilitation of higher order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation. Rao (2004:16) added to this by stating that the most important aspect of group work for higher education was the acquisition of non-academic skills that students could one day use in the real-world through combining these skills with the application of the theoretical knowledge they had been provided with. Diedericks (2016) stated that he often made use of groups due to the large size of the class and provided them with the freedom to choose their own groups, sizing between 7 and 10 members, on the condition that they don't complain afterwards with regards to the effective functioning of the group. He adds that there are still two or three groups that require intervention. Pooe (2016) also made use of group work as it focuses on students going out into the field and researching pertinent community problems and concepts. He lets them choose their own group members and also tells them it is their responsibility to ensure the group works. He adds that group work reflects the post-schooling experience in his opinion and therefore students need to know how to manage personalities and disagreements. The following figure depicts the results of how often students participate in group assignments or projects.



**Figure 4.60: Worked with other students on assignments/projects**

The results clearly indicate that students are expected to work with others in completing their assignments or projects. As such, respondents indicated that they work with others during class assignments, but they prefer to prepare for their examinations alone. While study acknowledges that group work for first years is often used because of the size of the class, the concomitant benefit to student engagement should not be underestimated. Students learn important group facilitation skills when working as teams, while the sharing of different ideas is also intended to further deepen student engagement with the content of the module. Students will also be more accustomed to working in groups in their future careers and can engage with the module alongside their peers. In preparation of students developing their ability to speak in front of others and give presentations also enhances and deepens their engagement with the module content. The following figure depicts the results of the question pertaining to class presentations.

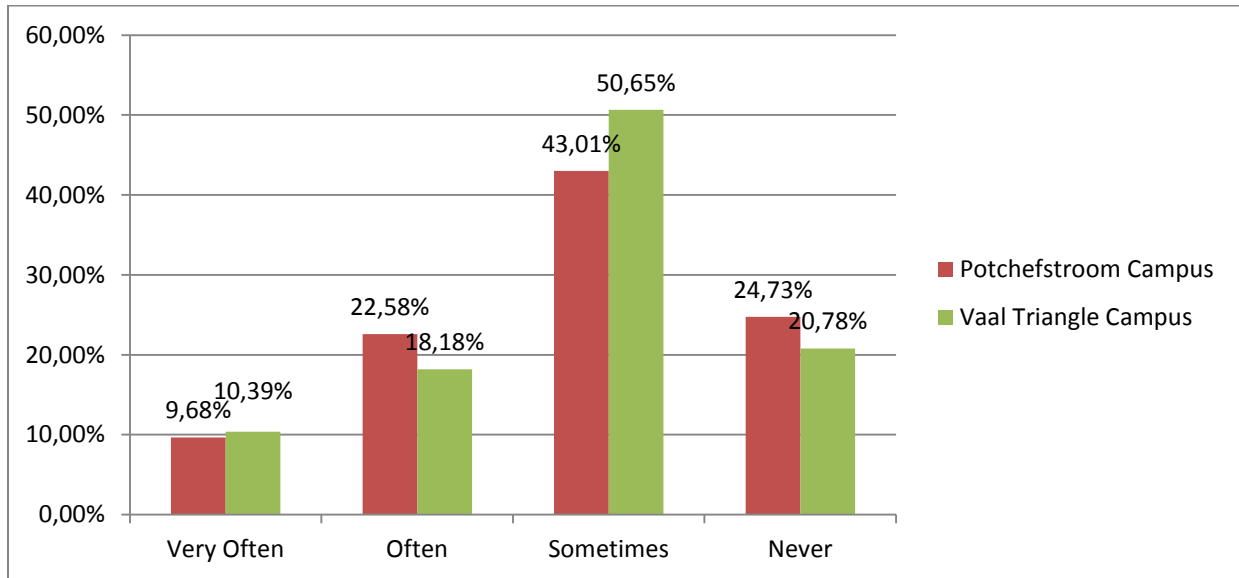


**Figure 4.61: Gave a presentation**

The following question asked how often students had given presentations in class, with the majority (63.44%) of the Potchefstroom class stating they had never done so and 27.96% stating they had only sometimes done this. Only 3.23% stated they did so very often and 5.38% stated often. Clearly this is an under-utilised technique and most students seem to be unfamiliar with this practice and most classes seem to consist of the lecturer relaying information. Diedericks (2016) stated that he did not make use of presentations for this fulltime student class, but made use of it in the part-time class, which is not included in this study. The majority (42.86%) of the Vaal class stated they sometimes did so and 31.17% stated they had never done this. Only 7.79% stated they did so very often and 18.18% stated often. Although this seems to be more common than at the Potchefstroom campus it still only occurs on an infrequent basis. Not using this technique makes students lack any development of presentation or oral skills and consequently they struggle to explain themselves later in the programme when presentations become a core part of the class sessions.

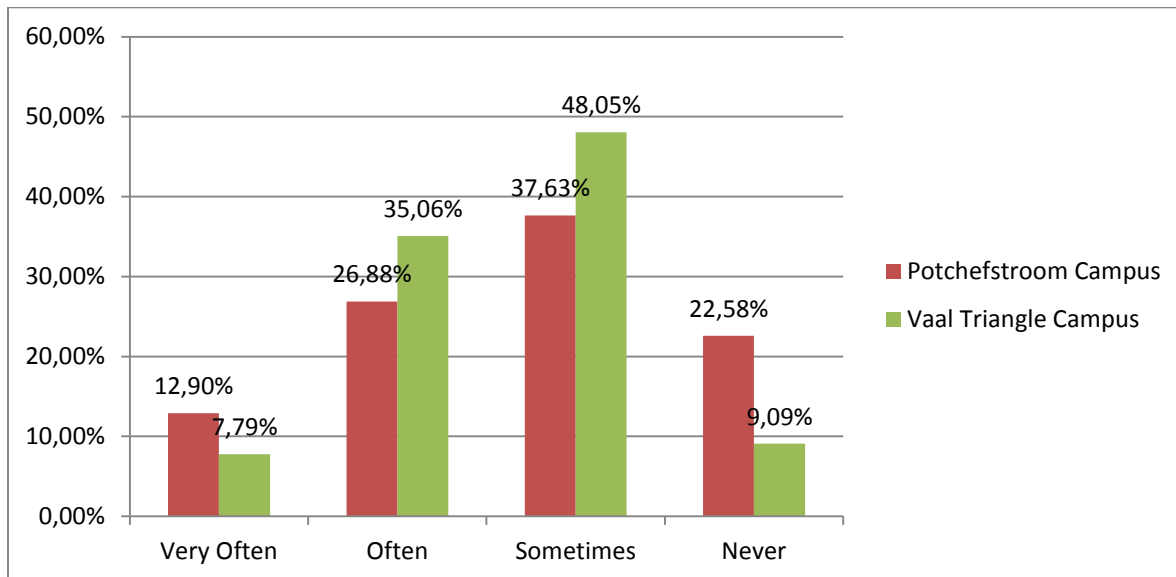
Seminars and information sessions are highly valuable to students as they often provide student with the most contemporary ideas, examples and applications in the student's field of study and grants students with new and innovative perspectives and ideas (University of Denver, 2016:1). These additional activities also provide students with opportunity for in-depth conversations as they are often led by a mediator rather than a

lecturer and, an often missed opportunity, these sessions could provide students with networking opportunities with organisations, individuals and companies for their future careers (University of Denver, 2016:1).



**Figure 4.62: Attended a seminar/information session**

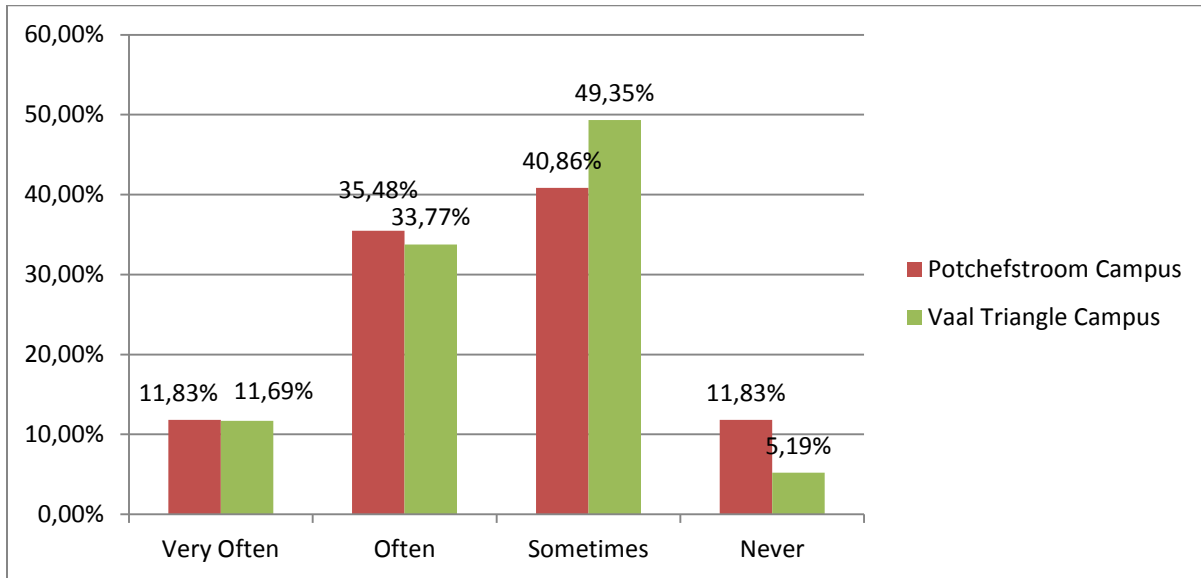
The above indicates that the majority of respondents at both campuses chose to attend seminars or information sessions only sometimes (43.01% & 50.65%). This could be due to not being aware thereof due to a lack of emphasis or lack of general interest and, thus, a lack of engagement with the programme’s key concepts and ideas outside the classroom. Hosting seminars or information sessions appears to still not be a regular thing amongst PA students.



**Figure 4.63: Combined ideas from different modules for PA assignments**

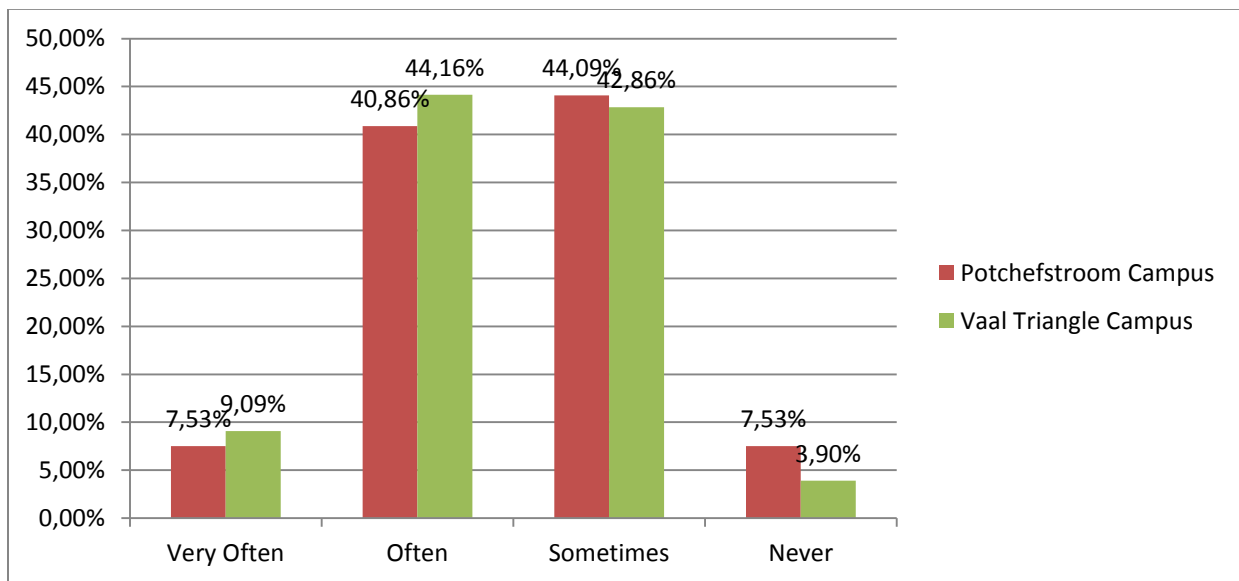
First year students often experience their modules, such as PA, in isolation with little to no connection with other modules or fields unless they are explicitly told to do so, which leads to students not engaging with their modules equally (Tinto, 2005:5). Learning should be connected across fields in the opinion of Tinto (2005:6) in order to promote more meaningful, deeper learning experiences for students in higher education. Most Potchefstroom (37.63%) and Vaal (48,05%) campus respondents however indicated that they only sometimes did this. The second largest group indicated that they did so often, while an astounding 22.58% of the Potchefstroom students believed they had never done so, compared to only 9.09% at Vaal. This is a clear sign that most students either view the field in isolation or they do not see how it is connected to other fields such as Politics or Sociology.

As previously stated examples of application are used in order to get students to understand a concept or idea, but students need to learn to do this on their own in order to show that they grasp the concept as their future employers will expect them to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-life scenarios and situations (Mathieson, 2015:64).



**Figure 4.64: Connected theory to societal problems/issues**

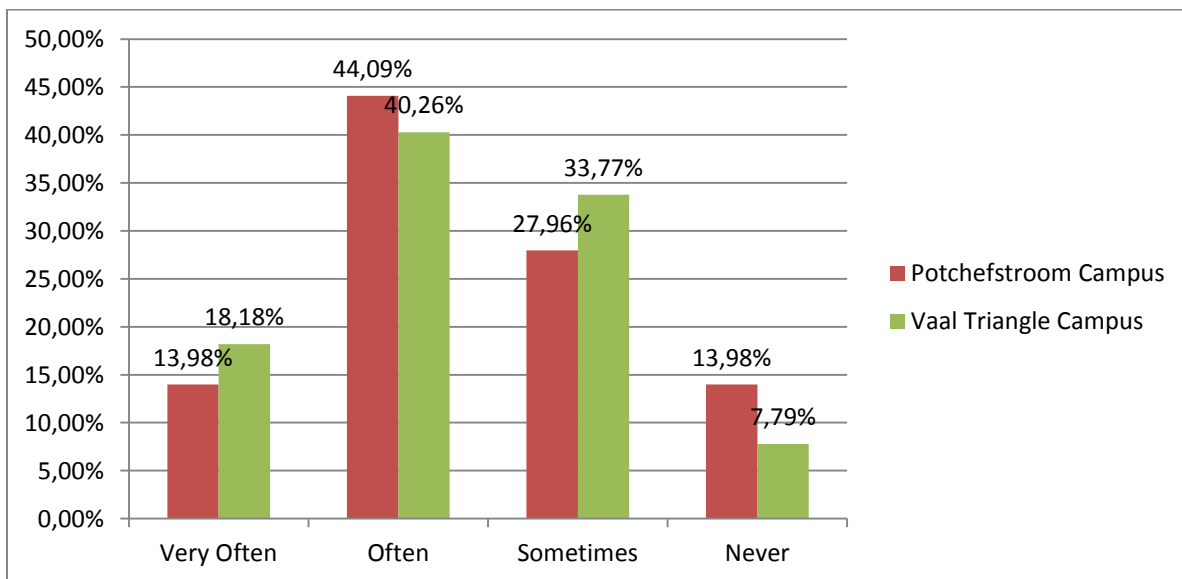
The above results again confirmed that the majority of respondents indicated they are only able to sometimes connect the theory to societal problems or issues. This means that students do not fully engage the module in this aspect as they can perhaps retain information, but do not necessarily understand it or the role it plays from a more holistic perspective. As a result students will have difficulty applying what they have learned to solve practical problems in real-life situations.



**Figure 4.65: Included diverse perspectives in module discussions/assignments**

Incorporating diverse perspectives into assignments, projects or research is advantageous in the sense that it leads to new findings, a more inclusive sampling frame, new innovative methods, often through the combination of different views, and perhaps most importantly, they offer alternative insights on established concepts and ideas lending them a new and unexplored dimension as people are inherently diverse (Medin & Lee, 2012:1). The main argument for the use of diverse perspectives is that it not only provides a higher level of equity and representation, but also has the potential to lead to new research methods (Medin & Lee, 2012:2).

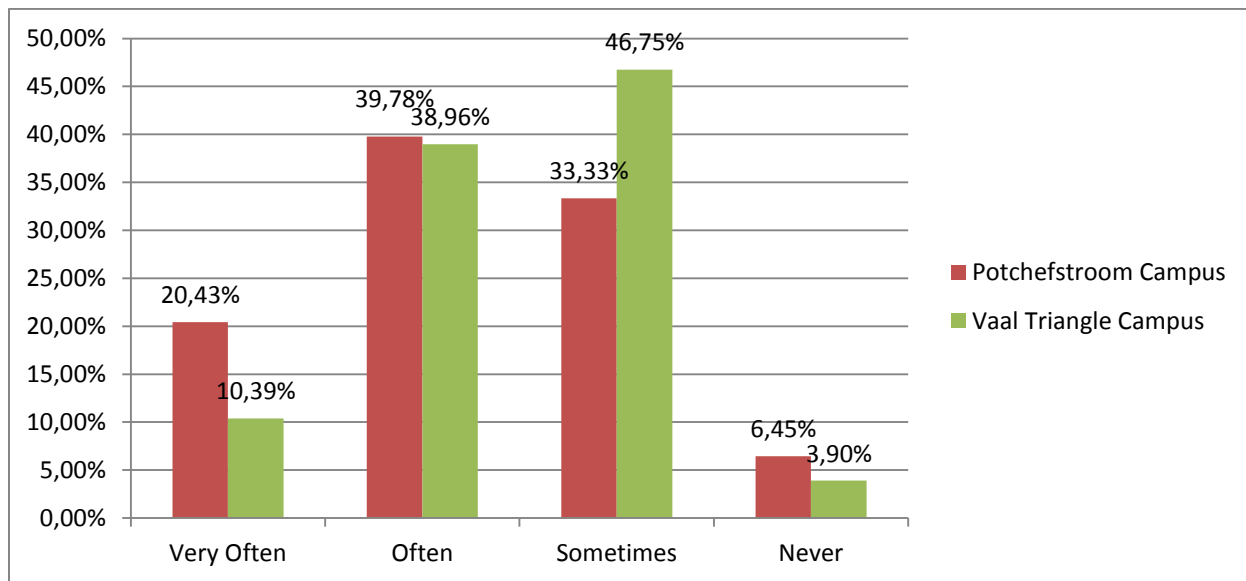
The results reveal that respondents from both campuses only sometimes (44.09% & 42.86%) include diverse perspectives in module discussions or assignments. Students appear to stick to what they're familiar with or use single perspectives rather than digging deeper and approaching the module from an alternative perspective. While students are required to consider alternative perspectives during their engagement with the modules, this also implies that they are able to determine the strength or weaknesses of their own views, as depicted in the following figure.



**Figure 4.66: Examined the strengths & weaknesses of own views**

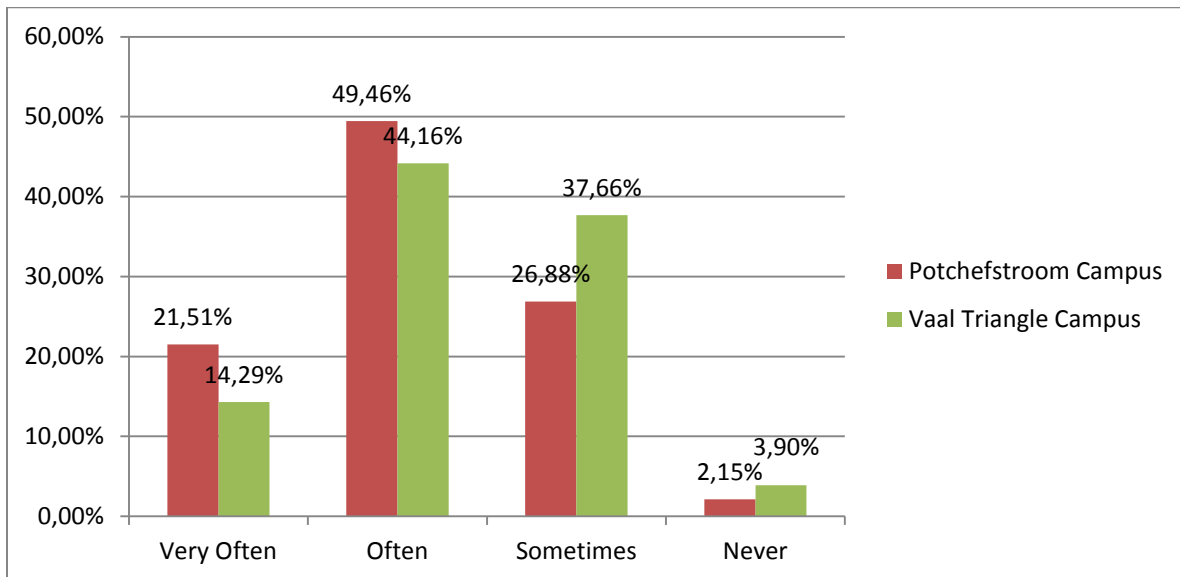
The results clearly reveal that respondents often (44.09% & 40.26%) examine the strengths and weaknesses of their own arguments. Self-assessment is important for students to realise where they could improve themselves or where their ideas or

arguments have a strong foundation (Martin, 2015:1). When students assess their own views they also learn to find their optimal learning level and can adjust their views based on their findings (Barkley, 2010:129). The results mean that most students are prepared to analyse their own views and perspectives and so experience cognitive development and personal growth.



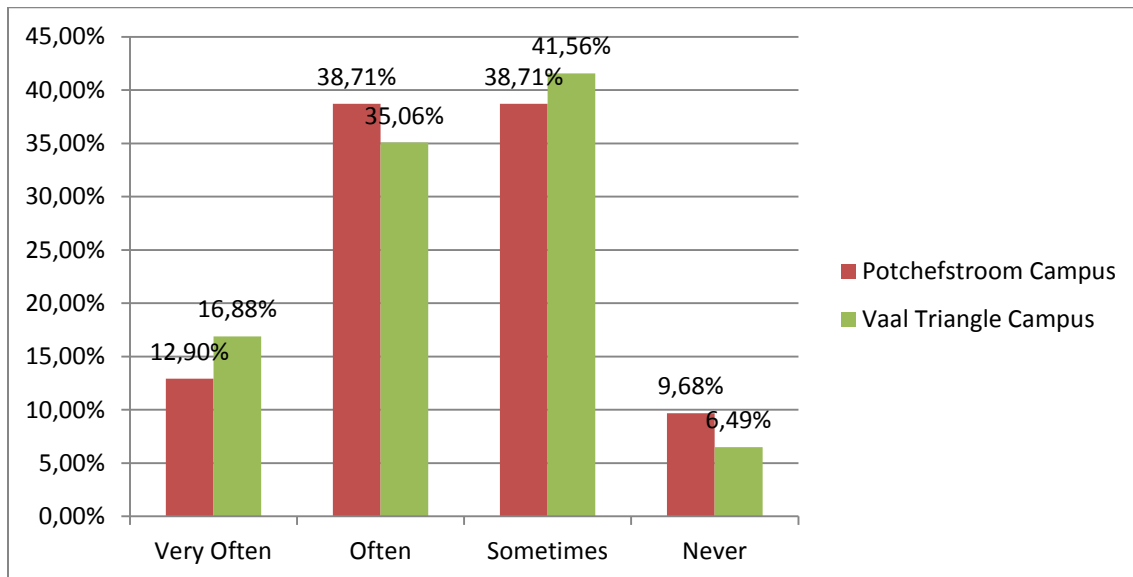
**Figure 4.67: Tried to better understand other viewpoints**

When reviewing the views and opinions of somebody else that is different to one’s own it assists students in challenging their own way of thinking, which could even lead to a transformation or growth, allowing views to grow, become more diverse and inclusive and students become more inquisitive, tolerant and inclusive in their thinking and learning (Cohen, 1999:1). Most Potchefstroom campus students responded with either often (39.78%) or sometimes (33.33%), while most Vaal campus students responded with either sometimes (46.75%) or often (38.96%) trying to understand another’s viewpoint. Students seem to include diverse perspectives parsimoniously, while clinging to the familiar and do not as see things from different viewpoints that often. This limits their views and restricts them to single-track thoughts and severely diminished the pool of knowledge that is available to them to construct knowledge.



**Figure 4.68: Learned something that changed the way in which a student understood a concept/issue**

As propagated by Constructivism, learning is not merely the addition of more information, but rather the construction and building of ideas and knowledge from the information provided to accommodate new ways in which things are understood, so in order to engage with students lecturers need to change the way that students think and feel about concepts and ideas. Learning is, thus, an active process where transformation takes place (Mathieson, 2015:65). The following question asked how often students had learned something that had changed the way in which they understood a concept or an issue with almost half the Potchefstroom campus class (49.46%) stating that this has often happened while 44.16% of the Vaal campus respondents agreed. The results reveal that students are mostly open to new learning experiences and are willing to adapt or change the way in which they think when provided with new information.



**Figure 4.69: Connected ideas from PA to prior experiences and knowledge**

Presuming that students are empty vessels that require information in order to be fulfilled, is unwise. Students have their own previous experiences and knowledge and lecturers should develop students in a manner that connects this with new knowledge and shape or transform it accordingly as (Mathieson, 2015:66). The next question asked how often students had connected ideas from PA modules to prior experiences and knowledge with most of the Potchefstroom campus class stating either often (38.71%) or sometimes (38.71%). At Vaal campus most students stated either sometimes (41.56%) or often (35.06%) having made the connection between PA and prior experience of knowledge. The results seem to correlate with findings pertaining to respondents' answers in making connections between theory and societal problems as well as between theory and practical applications done in class. Diedericks (2016) believes students should have an informed understanding of the functions or functioning of government at the completion of his module. Poe (2016) elaborates on this stating students should understand what is meant by the term 'public', the role of the bureaucracy, the role of communities in the governing process, the processes and steps of public policy and what government budgets are and how they are maximised and safeguarded.

The following set of questions assessed how much the students felt their experience at this institution has contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development on a

scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being very much and 4 being very little. Figure 4.70 and Figure 4.71 below indicate the Potchefstroom campus results.

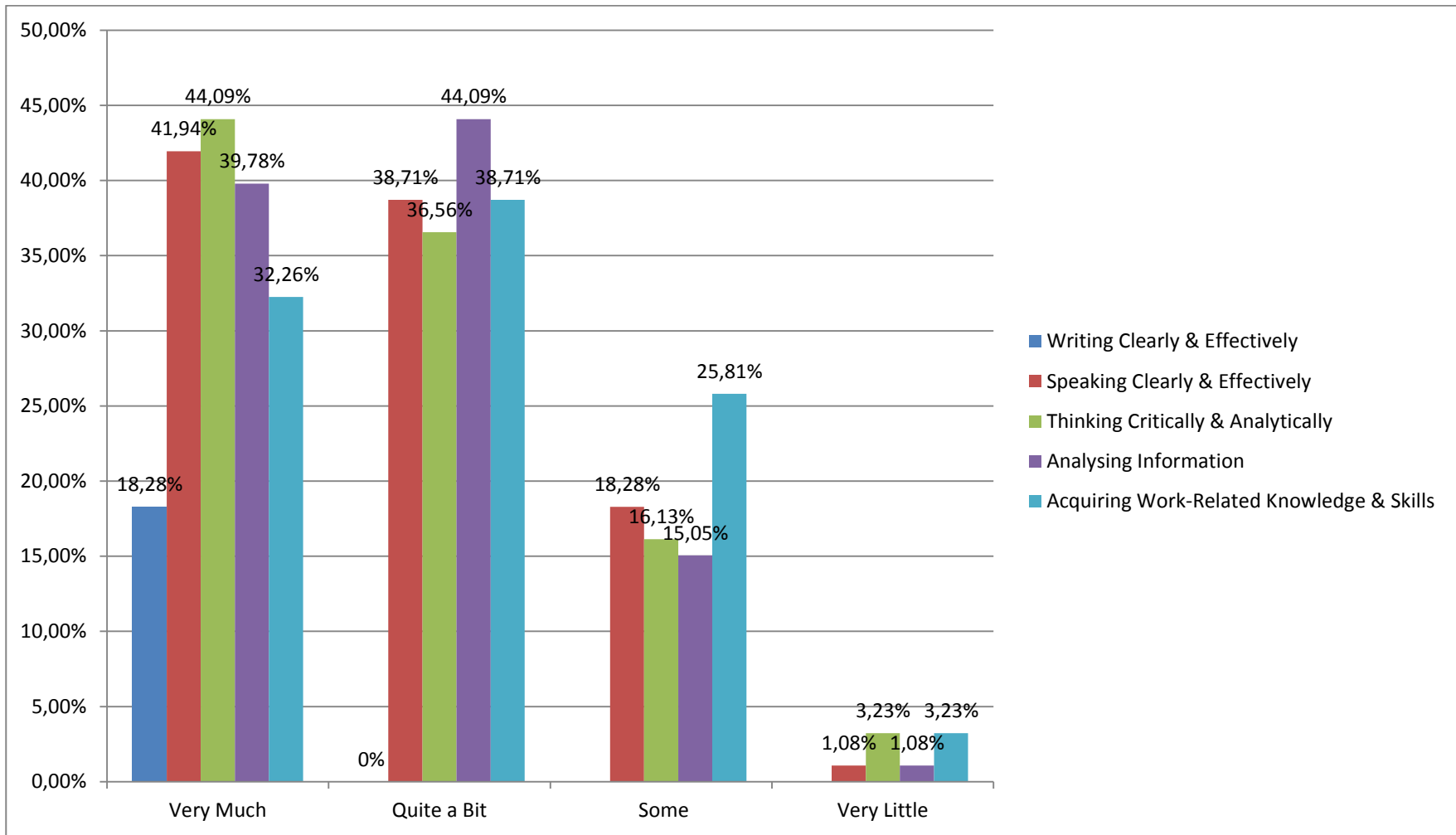


Figure 4.70: Practical skills development (Potchefstroom)

The results depicted above indicate skills development in academic literacy aspects such as writing and speaking clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically, analysing information and acquiring work-related knowledge and skills. As seen in Figure 4.70 above most students felt that they had learned to write and speak more clearly and effectively, think more critically and analytically and had become much more familiar with analysing information. Most students also felt that they had acquired job- or work-related knowledge and skills since starting their studies. Only a few individuals felt differently.

As seen in the following figure, most students also felt that they had learned to work more effectively with other people, had developed or clarified a personal code of conduct, began to understand people from different backgrounds than themselves. Since starting their studies most students also felt that they had developed their skills in solving complex real-world problems and are on the path to becoming more informed and active citizens. As with the above diagram, only a few individuals felt differently.

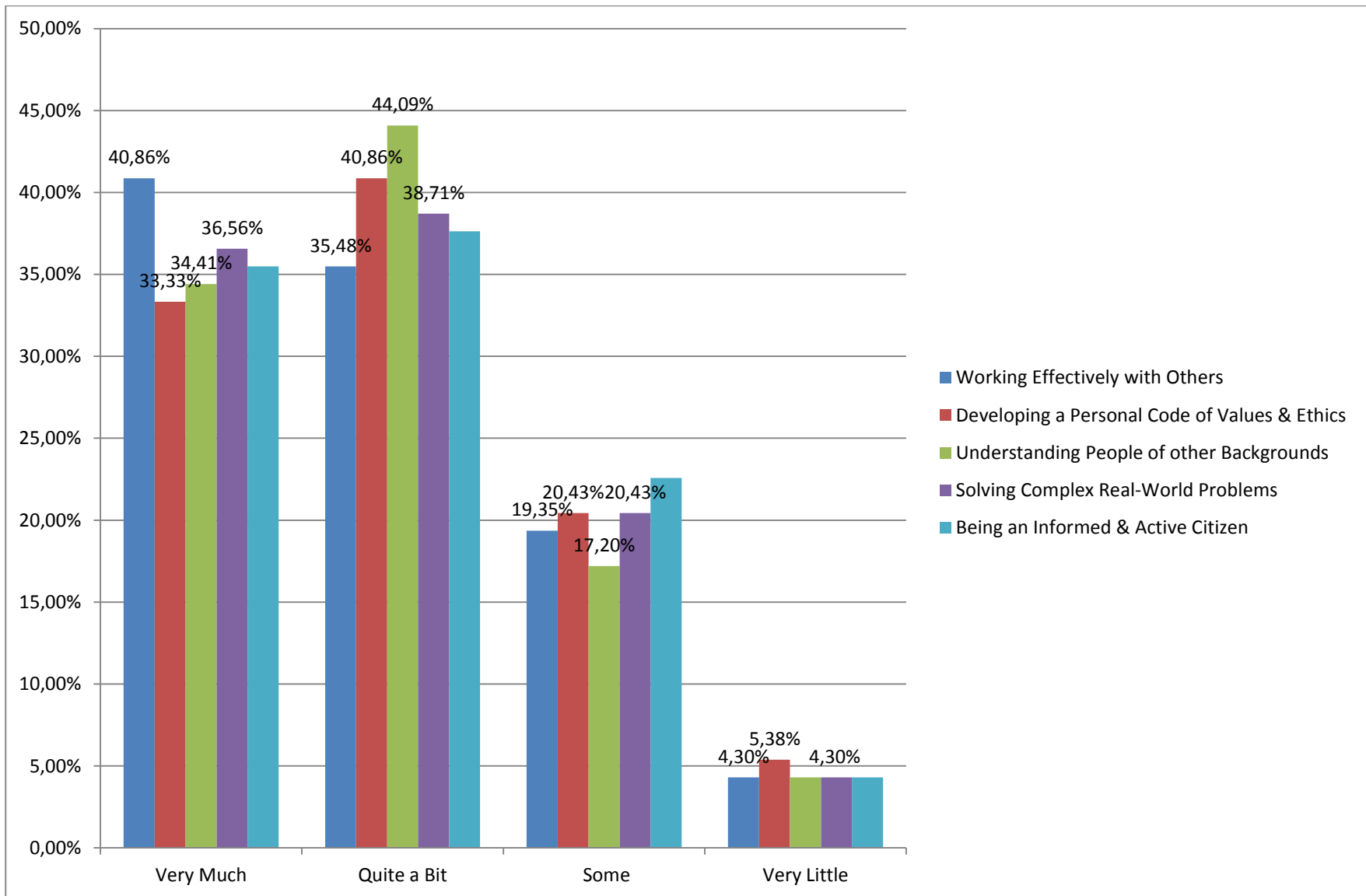


Figure 4.71: Personal development (Potchefstroom)

As seen in Figure 4.72 below most Vaal campus students felt that they had learned to write and speak quite a bit more clearly and effectively, think more critically and analytically and had become more well read in analysing information. Most students also felt that they had acquired job- or work-related knowledge and skills since starting their studies, however some still felt that this was not the case.

As seen in Figure 4.73 below, most Vaal respondents also felt that they had learned to work more effectively with other people, had developed or clarified a personal code of conduct, began to understand people from different backgrounds than themselves. The Vaal respondents also felt a strong tendency towards the quite a bit option. Since starting their studies most students also felt that they had developed their skills in solving complex real-world problems and had learned to become more informed and active citizens. As with the above diagram, a handful of individuals felt differently.

In general, students struggle with application and don't understand how PA fits into the world or how it correlates with other disciplines. Students are also not as engaged in class sessions as they could be and at Vaal campus students appear to function in isolated environments based on the data. The following section will discuss some general observations about the previous sections and the overall student engagement at these two campuses.

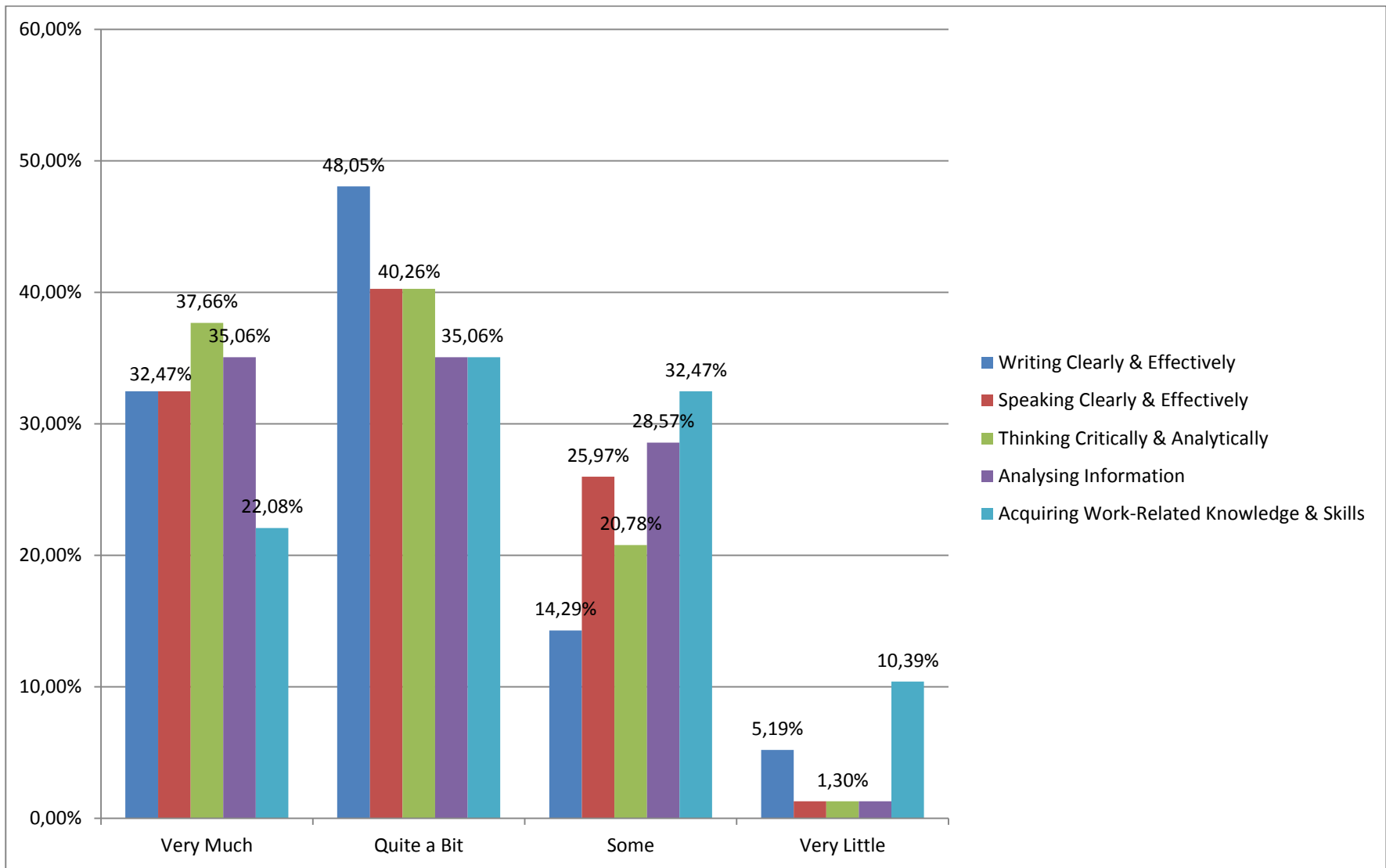


Figure 4.72: Practical skills development (Vaal Triangle)

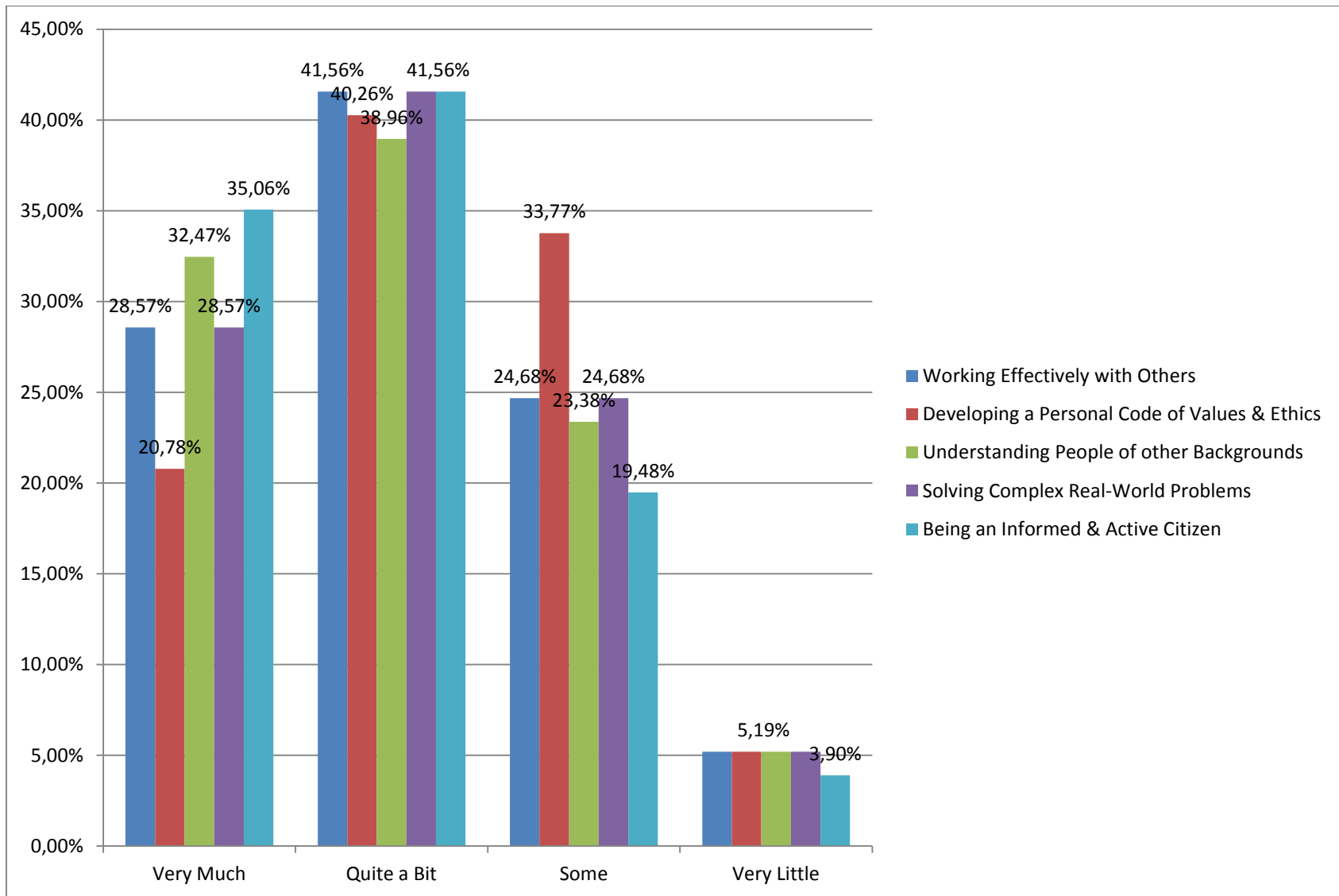


Figure 4.73: Personal development (Vaal Triangle)

## 4.8 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Figure 4.74 on the following page indicates the overall educational experience of students at the two campuses of the NWU.

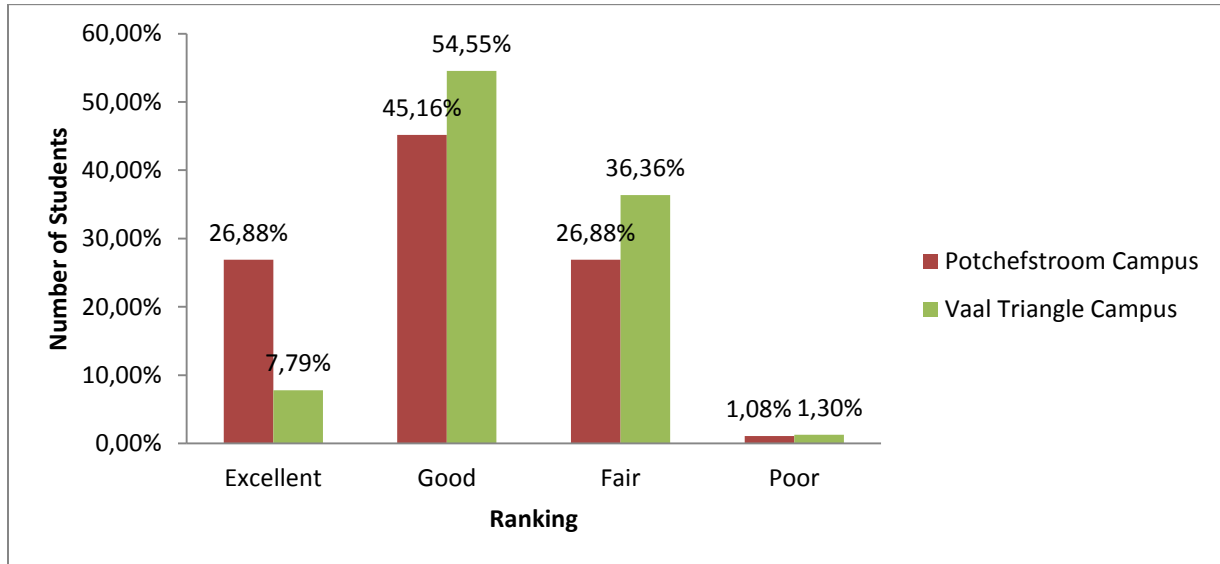


Figure 4.74: Educational Experience

As can be seen in Figure 4.74, most students had an excellent to good educational experience at the Potchefstroom campus. Students listed the excellent resources and facilities, the inclusive and academic atmosphere, the diversity of the campus, the ranking of the institution, the high-quality lecturers and the well managed campus as factors for the ranking of their experience. The only student to give a poor ranking stated that the campus was merely using students to make a profit and vaguely referred to the University as a “static system” possibly indicating unwillingness to change. As can be seen in Figure 4.74, most students had a good to fair educational experience at the Vaal Triangle campus. Students listed the good resources and facilities, the quiet and peaceful atmosphere, the ranking of the institution, the high-quality academics and the well managed campus as factors for the ranking of their experience. The caveat should be included here that data collection was concluded before the #feesmustfall campaign caused class disruptions and campus closure on the Vaal Triangle Campus.

Diedericks (2016) stated that Psychology students in particular don't enjoy PA as the module is compulsory for them and they fail to commit to it. He continues by stating that

students who are enrolled in the module enjoy it fairly, although in many cases the module was not their first choice. He explains by stating that students who do not meet the minimum requirements for programmes in the Management and Economics or Law faculties are referred to the PA programme by the University's administration due to the low entry requirements. Since the PA programme was not a first choice programme, students may struggle with the modules and lecturers find it difficult to engage the students in active learning. Pooe (2016) feels that students enjoy the module as they are constantly challenged to be better students and the topics covered are current and relevant.

Figure 4.75 below indicates whether students would choose their institution again if they could start over. As seen in Figure 4.75 below when presented with the opportunity to start over, most Potchefstroom campus students would again choose the institution they are currently attending indicating fair treatment, the high ranking of the institution and the high quality of the education they are receiving as factors. Quite a few students however listed the geographical distance from their homes as a reason for perhaps choosing to attend a different institution.

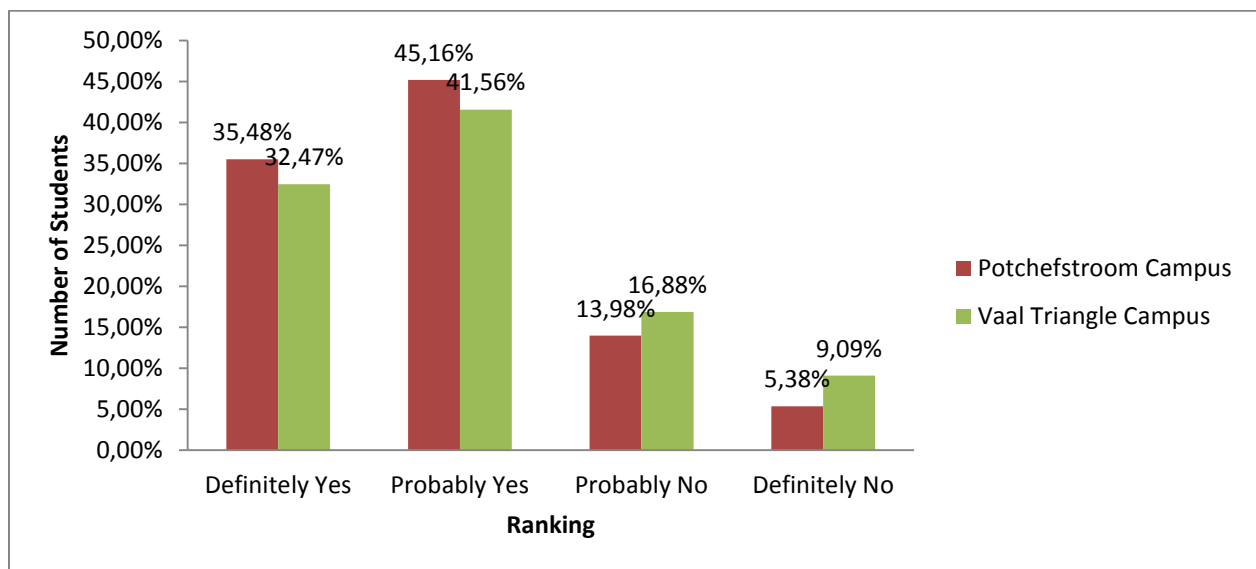


Figure 4.75: Re-attendance ranking

As seen in Figure 4.75 above when presented with the opportunity to start over, most Vaal campus students would again choose the institution they are currently attending

indicating fair treatment, the high ranking of the institution and the high quality of the education they are receiving as factors. A number of students stated that the campus was far from their homes and most of the negative ratings were due to this or desires to have gone to other specific institutions such as University of Limpopo or private universities for personal reasons.

Diedericks (2016) states that a good PA student should be diligent in order to attend classes and meet the reading(s) requirements, as well as be motivated, enthusiastic and a problem solver in order to change the public sector one day by applying these qualities in their career. Pooe (2016) feels a good PA student should have a great general knowledge, be up to date with relevant legislation and policies, have an ability to interpret global governance matters, be able to debate and reason well and must be able to write in a convincing and lucid manner.

Based on the data it would appear that the NWU's Potchefstroom campus has a sufficient level of challenge present in the PA programme, but could do more to facilitate interaction between staff and students outside of scheduled class sessions. More could also be done in terms of educational experiences that enrich classroom experience, while students interact with a wide variety of different people, experiences such as internships, research opportunities and community-based projects are limited. Most students view the campus as constructive and as a healthy, beautiful and diverse learning environment.

Another area that could use improvement at the Potchefstroom campus is that of collaborative and interactive learning processes. Students could learn to become more actively engaged in classes, understand how theory is applied and how other modules are linked to PA. All in all however the campus seems to do well for itself in terms of student engagement in the PA programme.

Based on the data it would appear that the NWU's Vaal Triangle campus students experience a higher level of challenge, but could also do more to facilitate interaction between staff and students as students don't even approach staff about their performance. The general ranking for the quality of interaction with staff is also

unsatisfactory. Students seem to have a lot of plans for participating in enriching experiences such as internships and research, but the limited diversity of the campus has led to students not being very exposed to other points of view or perspectives leading to a more isolated and closed perspective. Most students view the campus as well equipped with a peaceful atmosphere and adequate facilities, however some students feel excluded.

Collaborative and interactive learning processes lack in the sense of students working together and assisting one another. Students also exhibit limited participation in classes and this should be facilitated to encourage them to think more creatively.

For the overall improvement of student engagement Diedericks (2016) states that all lecturers should always come prepared for class and that they have to make use of interactive learning strategies or blended learning in order to engage students and to provide the ultimate learning experience. He also suggests that a tutor system can work where a more focused approach is followed to deal with content which the learners seem to struggle with. Pooe (2016) suggests raising the entry requirements for the programme, building a greater relationship with government institutions to encourage and show students what the end result of their studying could be, working with writing institutions to improve and assist students with technical aspects related to academia and not require PA academics to deal with this problem.

#### **4.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter served as the empirical research chapter. The first section reviewed the demographic profiles of the students at the Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses of the NWU. The second section reviewed the level of challenge finding that students believed it adequate, while lecturers felt otherwise. The section thereafter reviewed the quality of interaction between staff and students, finding that while the lecturers and their classes were seen as satisfactory, students rarely approached lecturers outside of class. Educational experiences that enrich the classroom experience were then analysed, finding that Potchefstroom students enjoy a more diverse campus than Vaal students and that most students had plans to participate in these experiences in the future. In

terms of a constructive campus environment, the research finds that while the campuses were generally viewed as such in some cases some students still felt left out, feeling separated from their peers and the institution itself, often due to geographical factors. Students appear to struggle somewhat with application and in the case of the Vaal campus rarely consulted their fellow students, overall interactive and collaborative practices were present but not perfect. The final section found that most students were however satisfied with their educational experience and would choose the same institution. The following chapter will be a concluding chapter and will bring the research to a close.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to analyse the nature of student engagement in PA students, focusing on first years enrolled at the three campuses of the NWU. Chapter One laid down the methodology to be utilised in order to conduct the research. Chapter Two provided a literature review on learning theories, the concept of student engagement and the instruments that are used to conduct studies regarding student engagement. Chapter Three also provided a literature review, focusing on the role of higher education and the development of PA as a discipline in its own right. The participants in this study, students and lecturers, offered their insights and how they understood student engagement and in the case of the lecturers provided possible recommendations for the improvement thereof. The main aim of the research was to bring attention to the current levels of student engagement in first year PA modules at the NWU and identify any shortcomings therein. This concluding chapter will provide a summary of the chapters involved in the research and assess whether the goal has been achieved and provide recommendations for the improvement of student engagement based on the benchmarks that were used for the study.

### **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN FIRST YEAR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MODULES**

In this section of the chapter, recommendations for the successful facilitation of the five benchmarks of student engagement will be provided. The recommendations are provided in response to the last study objective identified in Chapter One. These recommendations are based on the findings and the interpretation of the data in Chapter Four.

#### **5.2.1 Level of challenge**

Overall the level of challenge seems to be sufficient at all three campuses. Students overall feel challenged to do their best and have for the greater part given positive feedback relating to the requirements of this benchmark. The one area where students

did not provide very desirable answers was in connection with the amount of assigned reading and preparation for class sessions. Some students didn't prepare or read at all. The students also felt that their level of challenge was sufficient, whereas lecturers felt that more could be done and students were not challenged at all and spent no time preparing and reading outside of class sessions.

More could be done to encourage completing the required reading or preparing before attending classes, this could be done in the form of small tests to assess whether students are prepared or where students are struggling. Lecturers could stress to students the importance of being prepared for class and that the class session should be perceived as facilitating more enriching activities such as academic discussions which could take place where students already maintain a background knowledge of the topic. The study, thus, recommends:

- Recommendation 1: In order to facilitate an engaged level of learning both staff and students should collaborate in setting academic expectations for modules. Both staff and students should share the reading and preparation requirements so that students understand the consequence of them not actively participating in their learning. Lecturers should also expect from students to actively contribute to class discussions that reflect their reading and preparation.

### **5.2.2 Interaction between staff and students**

Probably the biggest pitfall on all three campuses is the quality of interaction between staff and students. Students rarely approach lecturers outside of class and have less than satisfactory relationships with non-academic staff. The university could do more to encourage positive relations between different groups and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect. Many students also felt that some staff members simply don't care about them, this should be voiced to staff who could make a greater effort to empathise and assist students. However any relationship is a two-way street and care should be taken to not make one group, be it students or staff, feel superior over the other. As for the lecturers they could make more effort in reaching out to the class and make clear instructions on their availability and encourage struggling students to schedule an

appointment for discussion of their performance. The lecturers believe that the communication opportunities and mediums are sufficient but stated that students rarely make use of contact session until it is too late. The study, thus, recommends that:

- Recommendation 2: In order to facilitate interaction between staff and students specific spaces and times should be built into the class schedules during which students and staff could interact about careers, academic issues and personal challenges. By creating communities of shared learning staff and students will experience the space created as inviting and caring.

### **5.2.3 Educational experiences that enrich classroom experience**

While the Potchefstroom campus was more satisfactory in terms of academic discussions with people from different backgrounds, Vaal Campus performed less satisfactory in this section. More could be done to facilitate interaction across racial, religious, political and economic lines as many students are deprived of this enriching and eye-opening experience. A more eclectic and diverse campus should be fostered where students are all treated equally and tolerance is the order of the day. Transgressions should be dealt with to ensure a diverse, co-operative and productive campus.

Many students also voiced plans to engage in enriching experiences such as internships, field research and learning communities; however by third year most of these responses will have bared little fruition. Students would probably be more engaged in these activities if the university accommodated for this in the programme. The institution can also establish a formalised and accredited internship program with local governments or inter-campus research projects. More community based projects could be implemented as it helps very little to learn theory but never interact with the people whose lives you are supposed to change. Students could use this to apply their knowledge and see how ideas fit into the real-world. The study, therefore, recommends:

- Recommendation 3: In order to enhance educational experiences that enrich classroom experiences staff should encourage diverse perspectives to be brought out and discussed during class. Students and staff should share and reflect on the

value that diversity brings to learning experiences and staff should encourage more diversity in determining group composition as well as encouraging peer learning and reflection when engaged in group activities.

#### **5.2.4 Constructive campus environment**

In terms of a constructive campus environment the institution fared reasonably acceptable. The area where the students felt the most unsatisfied was in terms of helping students manage non-academic responsibilities and support for the overall well-being of students and to a lesser degree participation in social events. The institution could perhaps do more to accommodate students with non-academic responsibilities such as taking care of family members and work, who have to balance these responsibilities with their studies. The institution could do more in terms of notifying students, especially those who do not live on campus, of events and activities that they could attend. The study recommends:

- Recommendation 4: In order to create a constructive campus environment staff should liaise with campus activity organisers in creating time and space for all students to participate. Staff should encourage student support services to create awareness of their services during formal classes so that struggling students may be accommodated. The institution should strive towards ensuring a caring environment by making sure all staff and students are aware of the support services offered to all.

#### **5.2.5 Collaborative and interactive learning processes**

Many collaborative and interactive learning processes are underused in this institution's first year classes such as students working together and discussing ideas amongst themselves, presentations and seeing the views of others in an objective and analytical manner. Many students, especially at Vaal rarely communicate with their peers and don't rely on notes made in classes. Lecturers could perhaps present students with a project where they have to work as a group, use multiple perspectives and then present their findings. Lecturers should also place emphasis on the interconnectivity of PA with other subjects, as well as the fact that multiple approaches exist for a single concept as

students often fail to grasp this according to the data in Chapter Four. The study recommends:

- Recommendations 5: In order to facilitate collaborative and interactive learning experiences modules should curriculate community engagement as part of students' learning experience. Staff should identify communities and establish networks with communities in which students may one day be placed, i.e. public sector organisations. Collaboration with these communities will enhance students' understanding of the material as well as provide them with opportunities to develop skills necessary to succeed in practice on day. The inclusion of a community project should be emphasised from the first year of study in order for students to start building relationships with the employers they one day will be working with.

While the above recommendations are made in the context of the study, recognition should be given to further research opportunities which may include:

- cohort studies tracking students' performance throughout their academic years of study;
- trend studies which over a period of time (longitudinal study) could determine specific trends in student engagement; and/or
- student engagement studies spanning academic programmes and not focused on a specific programme as was done in this study.

### **5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARIES**

Chapter One introduced the research topic through an orientation that provided some background to the reasons for the importance of the study. The orientation reviewed how student engagement has become an active and integral part of modern day higher education, which is not always prepared for this transformation of the learning process and provided the benchmarks used to assess student engagement and a generalised idea of how the programme was presented at the NWU. The chapter also provided the objectives of the research, the research questions and the methodology that the research will utilise. This study made use of mixed method research, using a case study, a semi-structured questionnaire and open interviews to acquire the data to determine

the current state of student engagement. This study's sample was taken from first year PA students and lecturers at the NWU's three campuses in Potchefstroom and the Vaal Triangle. The chapter further outlined the limitations and provided an outline of the format for the remainder of the research.

Chapter Two as previously stated served as a literature review. This chapter fulfilled the first research objective, namely to describe and analyse the theoretical frameworks for student engagement at the tertiary level of education. The first section focused on learning theories that were popularised and developed over the years such as behaviourism, humanism, cognitive development theories and most importantly constructivism, which had a great degree of influence on the idea of student engagement in learning and constructing information. The second section of this chapter reviewed the theoretical perspectives on student engagement by reviewing what was regarded as engaged students and what the requirements for its presence was. Various developmental theories were discussed to determine how development occurred and how this was linked to the concept of engagement. College impact models were reviewed in terms of how external influences such as environment and unique experiences have an effect on the development of individual students. The chapter then analysed the benchmarks used by George Kuh's National Survey of Student Engagement which heavily influenced this research. This section first reviewed the origin of the use of the instruments and how they were used to measure student engagement and then reviewed the instruments themselves. These included the level of challenge students experienced, the level of interaction between students and staff at higher education institutions, educational experiences that enriched the learning experience for students, how the campus environment aided students in their learning and how collaborative and interactive learning processes were used to facilitate engagement. The literature also reviewed two benchmarks that were used in the AUSSE, namely work integrated learning and higher order thinking outcomes.

Chapter Three served as a second literature review for this study. This chapter also fulfilled the second research objective, namely to describe the higher education policy framework that facilitates student engagement. This first section of this chapter

contextualised the role of higher education by firstly reviewing the traditional views and origins of higher education. The section then reviewed the legal and policy framework that enabled higher education in South Africa, as well as the current conditions surrounding higher education in the South African context. The second section reviewed how PA had developed over the years into an independent discipline by assessing the origins of the discipline in Central European states before moving to the U.S, where it was greatly expanded upon. The section then reviewed in greater detail how the discipline developed in terms of its theoretical basis and the field's search for finding its true focus and the opposing views regarding this and the reliance on other subjects such as Sociology, Politics and Law. The section finally also reviewed how PA was presented at the three campuses of the NWU, in other words in what faculty they were located, what the outcomes were the different curricula and what each was composed of.

Chapter Four focused on student engagement and the challenges it faces at the NWU's two campuses by using the questionnaires and interviews discussed in Chapter One. This chapter achieved the objective of determining the nature of student engagement in first year PA modules offered by the NWU's Vaal and Potchefstroom Campuses as well as determining the manner in which student engagement is facilitated by lecturers responsible for first year PA modules offered by the NWU. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed and distributed among students in PA classes with the consent of the lecturers, to determine how they experienced the programme according to the five NSSE benchmarks discussed in Chapter Two. Students were also asked about their general experience at the institution and whether they would attend the same institution if given the opportunity to do so. The interviews focused on these benchmarks as well as the expectations of the institution and the lecturer regarding the students' performance and participation and the feelings of the students towards the discipline as experienced by their lecturers. The responses were analysed and interpreted to provide answers for the final three objectives of the research, namely to determine the nature of student engagement in first year PA modules offered by the NWU, to determine the manner in which student engagement is facilitated by lecturers, tutors and/or facilitators responsible for first year PA modules and to provide possible solutions or recommendations to improve student engagement in first year PA modules.

Chapter Five of the research concluded the study and presented recommendations for the improvement of student engagement at the three NWU campuses based on the findings of the research that was conducted. This chapter also assessed whether the research objectives outline in Chapter One were achieved and provided possible solutions and recommendations to improve student engagement in first year PA modules offered by the NWU.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

The research focused on determining the extent to which student engagement was facilitated in first year modules of PA programmes offered at the Potchefstroom and Vaal campuses of the NWU. The basic theoretical argument is that engaged students are successful students. This research study established that the overall level of student engagement was satisfactory, but that there were key areas that were lacking as well as room for improvement throughout all five benchmarks. The research identified that on many aspects, especially regarding the overall preparedness and level of challenge, students and lecturers had vastly different views. Whereas students felt effectively prepared for contact sessions and that they were sufficiently challenged by the module lecturers felt that students were ill prepared and struggling with prescribed reading. Lecturers also felt that students were not challenged enough and that students initially regard the module as easy only to struggle with it later. Based on the literature students were also not prepared enough for contact sessions.

The interaction between students and staff has definite room for improvement in the sense that students should make more use of opportunities for interaction with lecturers outside of class sessions. It would appear that enough was done in terms of providing this opportunity however students did not make use of this and if they approached lecturers about their performance it was often too late in the semester and the lecturers were beyond assisting them. The relationship between the non-academic staff and students was tenuous at times and students often felt that academic staff were apathetic towards their concerns.

Many students at both campuses also felt marginalised and isolated from the main student body, especially students that lived outside of walking distance from the campus or that had no private transportation. The university provided opportunity for social engagement but did not consider details such as geographical location or the financial implications these activities and events would have on students. Students that have to balance non-academic responsibilities also felt as if they were sometimes left in the dark. The institution should facilitate closer relationships with students and seek more feedback in order to gain insight on the student perspective.

In terms of interactive and collaborative learning students were presented with opportunities such as group work, however most students still maintained a preference to “go at it alone”. Students should be encouraged to work together so as to broaden their knowledge and perspectives in order to grow emotionally as well as intellectually. Educational experiences such as internships, community projects and presentations were often underutilised due to logistical difficulty such as large classes or lack of interaction and communication between the academic and practical aspects of PA.

Overall, healthy student engagement based on the literature had a positive effect on the performance of students and the continuation of students’ studies. This research concludes that student engagement is important for students to be able to perform academically and that while most students at the NWU were engaged in their PA module some felt isolated and the institution should address this problem to prevent a growing feeling of dissatisfaction. The role of higher education in South Africa is changing and understanding how to facilitate student success through enhanced student engagement should be a primary concern to all academics.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Abbott, S. 2014. The glossary of education reform. <http://edglossary.org/student-engagement/> Date of Access: 27 May 2015.

Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J.A. 2010. Why is Africa poor? *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 25(1):21-50.

Acts see South Africa.

Aderibigbe, A.M. & Olla, J.O. 2014. Towards a theoretical definition of public administration. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 16(3):65-70.

Ajdini, S. 2014. Public administration in ancient Rome and Egypt.

[http://www.academia.edu/7519360/Public\\_Administration\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Rome\\_and\\_Egypt\\_By\\_Sherife\\_Ajdini](http://www.academia.edu/7519360/Public_Administration_in_Ancient_Rome_and_Egypt_By_Sherife_Ajdini). Date of Access: 31 May 2016.

Anderson, L.W. & Krathwohl, D.R. 2007. A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: a revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. New York, NY: Longman.

Asia E-University. 2002. Learning theories - cognitive learning theories.

[http://peoplelearn.homestead.com/beduc/chapter\\_5.pdf](http://peoplelearn.homestead.com/beduc/chapter_5.pdf). Date of Access: 21 Aug 2015.

Asrat, D. 2007. First-generation student engagement in effective educational practices at a four-year public university. Paper presented at the 47th Annual Forum of Association of Institutional Research. Kansas City, 2-6 June.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238116865\\_First-Generation\\_Student\\_Engagement\\_in\\_Effective\\_Educational\\_practices\\_at\\_a\\_Four\\_Year\\_Public\\_University](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238116865_First-Generation_Student_Engagement_in_Effective_Educational_practices_at_a_Four_Year_Public_University). Date of Access: 26 Jan 2016.

Astin, A.W. 1999. Student involvement: a developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5):518-529.

Atherton, J.S. 2011. Cognitive theories.

<http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/cognitive.htm>. Date of Access: 09 Nov 2015.

Atherton, J.S. 2013. Learning and teaching, Piaget's developmental theory.

<http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/piaget.htm>. Date of Access: 07 Nov 2015.

AUSSE **see** Australasian Survey of Student Engagement.

Australasian Survey of Student Engagement. 2010. Doing more for learning: enhancing engagement and outcomes.

<http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=ausse>. Date of Access: 29 Jul 2015.

Australasian Survey of Student Engagement. 2012. Student engagement briefing.

[http://www.acer.edu.au/files/AUSSE\\_2012\\_Australasia\\_University\\_Engagement\\_Briefing.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/files/AUSSE_2012_Australasia_University_Engagement_Briefing.pdf). Date of access: 28 May 2015.

Australian Council For Educational Research. 2015. Australasian survey of student engagement. <https://www.acer.edu.au/ausse/background>. Date of Access: 15 Nov 2015.

Ayres, R. 2015. *Lecturing, working with groups and providing individual support*. (In Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marsha, S. eds. *A handbook for teaching & learning in higher education*. 4th ed. London: Routledge. p. 94-106).

Badat, S. 2010. The challenges of transformation of higher education and training institutions in South Africa.

<https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/vc/documents/The%20Challenges%20of%20Transformation%20in%20Higher%20Education%20and%20Training%20Institutions%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf> Date of Access: 21 Apr 2016.

Bamber, V. & Jones, A. 2015. *Challenging students: enabling inclusive learning*. (In Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marsha, S. eds. *A handbook for teaching & learning in higher education*. 4th ed. London: Routledge. p. 152-168).

Banks, J.A. 2002. *An introduction to multicultural education*. Boston, MA: Allyn and

Bacon.

Barkley, E.F. 2010. *Student engagement techniques: a handbook for college faculty*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Barnett, R. 2007. *Learning for an unknown future*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0729436042000235382> Date of Access: 28 May 2015.

Bharuthram, S. 2012. Making a case for the teaching of reading across the curriculum in higher education. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(2):205-214.

Bimpitsos, C. & Petridou, E. 2012. A transdisciplinary approach to training: preliminary research findings based on a case analysis. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36(9):911-929.

Bitzer, E. 2009. Journeying with higher education studies and research. (In Bitzer, E. ed. *Higher Education in South Africa a Scholarly look behind the scenes*. Stellenbosch: SUN MEDIA. p. 305-328).

Black, K. 2011. *Business statistics: for contemporary decision making*. 7th ed. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Blewitt, J. 2010. Higher education for a sustainable world. *Education + Training*, 52(6):477-488.

Boix-Mansilla, V. 2005. Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads. *Change*, 23(1):14-21.

Bloxham, S. 2015. Assessing assessment: new developments in assessment design, feedback practices and marking in higher education. (In Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marsha, S. eds. *A handbook for teaching & learning in higher education*. 4th ed. London: Routledge. p. 107-122).

Boston University School Of Public Health. 2015. The social cognitive theory.  
<http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/SB721-Models/SB721-Models5.html>  
Date of Access: 05 Nov 2015.

Boud, D. 2001. Introduction: making the move to peer learning. (In Boud, D., Cohen, R. & Sampson, J. eds. *Peer learning in higher education*. London: Kogan Page Limited. p. 1-17).

Boulding, K.E. 1984. B.F. Skinner: a dissident view. *Behavioral and Brain Science*, 7(4):483-484.

Bruning, R.H., Schraw, G.J., Norby, M.N. & Ronning, R.R. 2004. *Cognitive psychology and instruction*. 4th ed. Prentice Hall: London. 426p.

Bryman, A & Bell, E. 2011. *Research Methodology: Business and Management Contexts*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social research methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2015. *Business research methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Business Dictionary. 2015. Theory.  
<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/theory.html> Date of Access: 17 Nov 2015.

Butcher, C. 2015. Describing what students should learn. (In Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marsha, S. eds. *A handbook for teaching & learning in higher education*. 4th ed. London: Routledge. p. 80-93).

Butner, B. & De Larrosa, L.L. 2000. Chickering's seven vectors of student development explained. <http://kvccdocs.com/KVCC/2013-Spring/FY125-OLA/content/L-17/Chickering-Vectors-Explained.pdf> Date of Access: 07 Nov 2015.

BYU Idaho. 2016. Prepare. <http://www.byui.edu/learning-and-teaching/instructional-tools>  
Date of Access: 01 Sep 2016.

Carini, R.M., Kuh, G.D. & Klein, S.P. 2006. Student engagement and student learning: testing the linkages. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(1):1-32.

Chaiklin, S. 2003. The zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's analysis of learning and instruction. (In Kozulin, A., Gindis, B., Ageyev, V. & Miller, S. eds. *Vygotsky's educational theory and practice in cultural context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 1-21).

Chapman, E. 2003. Assessing student engagement rates.  
<http://www.ericdigests.org/2005-2/engagement.html> Date of Access: 27 May 2015.

Cherry, K. 2015. The thinkers behind major developmental theories.  
<http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentstudyguide/p/devthinkers.htm> Date of Access: 09 Nov 2015.

Chickering, W.A. & Gamson, Z.F. 1987. Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. <http://www.lonestar.edu/multimedia/SevenPrinciples.pdf> Date of Access: 18 Jul 2015.

Cloete, J.J.N. 1997. *Public administration or public management?* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Cloete, N. 2009. Comments on the CHE's the state of higher education report (2009).  
<http://chet.org.za/files/uploads/reports/Cloete%202009%20Comments%20on%20CHE%20State%20of%20Higher%20Education.pdf> Date of Access: 21 Apr 2016

Cohen, L.M. 1999. Section iii - philosophical perspectives in education.  
<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/ed416/PP1.html> Date of Access: 04 Sep 2016.

Collins English Dictionary. 2014. 12th ed.  
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/managerialism> Date of Access: 03 June 2016

Constitution **see** South Africa.

Cornell College. 2016. How much time should you devote to studying?

<http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/study-tips/time-to-study.shtml> Date of Access: 01 Sep 2016.

Council on Higher Education. 2016. 2013 Higher education data: participation. [http://www.che.ac.za/focus\\_areas/higher\\_education\\_data/2013/participation](http://www.che.ac.za/focus_areas/higher_education_data/2013/participation) Date of Access: 21 Apr 2016.

Cretchley, G. & Castle, J. 2001. OBE, RPL and adult education: good bedfellows in higher education in South Africa? *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(6):487-501.

De Bruin, G.P. 2002. The relationship between personality types and vocational interests. *SA Journal of Psychology*, 28(1):49-52.

Denler, H., Wolters, C. & Benzoni, M. 2014. Social cognitive theory. <http://www.education.com/reference/article/social-cognitive-theory/> Date of Access: 05 Nov 2015.

Denman, B. 2005. What is a university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 17(2):9-28.

Department of Education **see** South Africa. Department of Education.

Department of Higher Education and Training **see** South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training.

Dhillon, J.K., McGowan, M. & Wang, H. 2006/ What do we mean by student support? Staff and students' perspectives of the provision and effectiveness of support for students.

<http://wlv.openrepository.com/wlv/bitstream/2436/7596/1/What%20Do%20We%20Mean%20By%20Student%20Support.pdf> Date of Access: 04 Sep 2016.

Diedericks, M. 2016. Student engagement in first year public admin programmes. [personal interview] 17 Aug, Potchefstroom.

Du Plessis, P. & Majam, T. 2010. Mixed method research - a new paradigm? *Journal of Public Administration*, 45(3): 456-472.

Duberstein, A. 2009. Building student-faculty relationships.

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Building-Student-Faculty-Relationships.aspx> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

Edwards, R. & Holland, J. 2013. *What is qualitative interviewing*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Elias, J.L. & Merriam, S.B. 2005. *Philosophical foundations of adult education*. 3rd ed. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing.

Entwistle, N. 2009. *Teaching for understanding at university*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fenwick, J. & Mcmillan, J. 2014. Public administration: what is it, why teach it and does it matter? *Teaching Public Administration*, 32(2): 194-204.

Ferruolo, S.C. 2001. The origins of the university: the schools of Paris and their critics, 1100-1215. *History of Education Quarterly*, 26(3):435-437.

Fletcher, A. 2005. Meaningful student involvement: *guide to students as partners in school change*. 2nd ed. Olympia, WA: SoundOut.

Fouché, C.B. & De Vos, A.S. 2007. Selection of a researchable topic. (In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L., eds. 2007. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik. p. 89-99).

Fox, W. & Bayat, M.S. 2013. *A guide to managing research*. Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd.

Frederickson, H.G. 2010. *Social equity and public administration: origins, developments, and applications*. New York, NY: M.E. Sharpe Inc.

Gazeley, L. & Aynsley, L. 2012. The contributions of pre-entry interventions to student retention and success: a literature synthesis of the widening access, student retention

and success national programmes archive.

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/WP\\_synthesis/Gazeley\\_Aynsley](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/WP_synthesis/Gazeley_Aynsley) Date of Access: 04 Sep 2016.

Geiger, R.L. 2014. *The history of American higher education: learning and culture from the founding to world war ii*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Goldin, C. & Katz, L.F. 1999. The shaping of higher education: the formative years in the United States, 1890 to 1940. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13(1):37-62.

Gottfredson, G.D. 1985. Holland's theory and person-environment interactions. Paper presented at the 93rd Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA, 23-27 August. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED265478> Date of Access: 11 Nov 2015.

Gredler, M.E. *Learning and instruction: theory into practice*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Greene, J.C. 2007. *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Grippin, P. & Peters, S. 1984. *Learning theory and learning outcomes: the connection*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America.

Gumede, N. & Dipholo, K.B. 2014. Governance, restructuring and the new management reform: South African perspective. *Journal of Education and Social Research*, 4(6):43-50.

Habib, A. 2016. Goals and means - reimagining the South African university. *University World News*, 12 Feb.

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20160211070052665> Date of Access: 04 Sep 2016.

Hall, M. 2013. Perry's scheme - understanding the intellectual development of college-aged students. <http://ii.library.jhu.edu/2013/12/13/perrys-scheme-understanding-the-intellectual-development-of-college-age-students/> Date of Access: 28 Jul 2015.

Harden, R.M. & Crosby, J. 2000. The good teacher is more than a lecturer - the twelve roles of the teacher. *Medical Teacher*, 22(4):334-347.

Henry, N. 2015. *Public administration and public affairs*. 12th ed. New York, NY: Pearson.

Hone, D. 2009. Knowledge and the application of knowledge.  
<https://archosaurmusings.wordpress.com/2009/08/24/knowledge-and-the-application-of-knowledge/> Date of Access: 10 Sep 2016.

Hu, S. & Kuh, G.D. 2002. Being (dis)engaged in educationally purposeful activities: the influences of student and institutional characteristics. *Research in Higher Education*, (43(5):555-575.

Huggins, J.S. 2000. Quotations by Native Americans.  
[http://www.jamesshuggins.com/h/quo1/quotations\\_native\\_americans.htm](http://www.jamesshuggins.com/h/quo1/quotations_native_americans.htm) Date of Access: 25 May 2015.

Huitt, W. 2003. The information processing approach to cognition. *Educational Psychology*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University.  
<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cognition/infoproc.html> Date of Access: 29 Jul 2015.

Huitt, W. & Hummel, J. 2003. Piaget's theory of cognitive development.  
<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/piaget.html> Date of Access: 28 Jul 2015

Hummel, R.P. 1997. On the uselessness of theory to practitioners. *Journal of Public Administration Education*, 3(3):375-382.

Illeris, K. 2003. Towards a contemporary and comprehensive theory of learning. *International journal of lifelong education*, 22(4):396-406.

Indiana University. 2015. NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice along with relative questions asked for each specified benchmark.  
[http://www.iue.edu/academics/assessment/documents/NSSEBenchmarksdefined\\_001.p](http://www.iue.edu/academics/assessment/documents/NSSEBenchmarksdefined_001.p)

df Date of Access: 22 Mar 2016.

Indiana University. National survey of student engagement.

[http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/survey\\_instruments/2013/NSSE%202013%20US%20English](http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/survey_instruments/2013/NSSE%202013%20US%20English)

Date of Access: 01 Sep 2016.

James Cook University. 2015. Australasian survey of student engagement.

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/learning-and-teaching/staff/teaching-evaluation/australasian-survey-of-student-engagement-ausse> Date of Access: 18 Nov 2015.

Johnson, R.B. & Christenson, L. 2007. *Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research*. [http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/oh\\_master/Ch14/Tab14-02.pdf](http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/oh_master/Ch14/Tab14-02.pdf) Date of access: 10 Jan. 2015.

Johnson, R.B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. 2004. Mixed methods research: a research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7):14-26.

Johnson, R.B., Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Turner, L.A. 2007. Towards a definition of mixed method research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2):112-133.

Jones, A. 2012. Where has all the public administration gone? *Teaching Public Administration*, 30(2):124-132.

Jucker, R. 2002. 'Sustainability - never heard of it?' Some basics we shouldn't ignore when engaging in education for sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 3(1):8-18.

Jupp, V. 2006. *The SAGE dictionary of social research methods*. London: SAGE Publications.

Kandiko, C.B. 2015. Feedback to and from students: building an ethos of student and staff engagement in teaching and learning. (In Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marsha, S. eds. *A handbook for teaching & learning in higher education*. 4th ed. London: Routledge. p. 123-138).

Kaplan, R.M. & Saccuzzo, D.P. 2012. Psychological testing: principles, applications, and issues. 8th ed. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.

Kim, B. 2001. Social constructivism. (In Orey, M. Ed., *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching and technology*.

[http://epltt.coe.uga.edu/index.php?title=Social\\_Constructivism](http://epltt.coe.uga.edu/index.php?title=Social_Constructivism) Date of Access: 18 Nov 2015).

King, J. 2012. Asked students to help each other understand ideas or concepts.

<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/pod-idea-notes-on-instruction/idea-item-no-18/> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

Kleiber, C. 2001. *What kind of science does our world need today and tomorrow? A new contract between science and society.* (In Thompson Klein, J., Grossenbacher-Mansuy, W., Häberli, R., Bill, A., Scholz, R.W. & Welti, M. eds. *Transdisciplinarity: joint problem solving among science, technology, and society: an effective way for managing complexity*. Basel: Birkhäuser. p. 47-58).

Kohrs, D.G. 2015. Chautauqua: the nature study movement in Pacific Grove, California.

<http://chautauqua.stanford.edu/Chapter%202.pdf> Date of Access: 08 Jun 2016.

Kolb, A.Y. & Kolb, D.A. 2005. The Kolb learning style inventory - version 3.1 2005 technical specifications.

[http://learningfromexperience.com/media/2010/08/Tech\\_spec\\_LSI.pdf](http://learningfromexperience.com/media/2010/08/Tech_spec_LSI.pdf) Date of Access: 29 Jul 2015.

Komives, S.R. & Woodard, D.B. 2003. *Student services: a handbook for the profession*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Kosmicki, J. 2006. Research paper rough draft information sheet.

[kosmicki.com/102/Rprd.pdf](http://kosmicki.com/102/Rprd.pdf) Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

Kroukamp, H. & De Vries, M.S. 2014. The dilemma of public administration education in South Africa: Teaching or learning? *Teaching Public Administration*, 32(2): 158-168.

Kuh, G.D. 2001. Assessing what really matters to student learning: inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 33(3):10-17.

Kuh, G.D. 2004. Student engagement in the first year of college. (In Upcraft, M.L., Gardner, J.N. & Barefoot, B.O. eds. *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p 86-107.)

Kuh, G.D. 2008. *High impact educational practices: what they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Kuh, G.D. 2010. What we're learning about student engagement from NSSE: benchmarks for effective educational practices. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 35(2):24-32.

Kuh, G.D. 2011. What we're learning about student engagement from NSSE: benchmarks for effective educational practices. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 25(2):24-32.

Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J.A., Bridges, B.K. & Hayek, J.C. 2006. What matter to student success: a review of the literature.

[http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/kuh\\_team\\_report.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/kuh_team_report.pdf) Date of Access: 04 Sep 2016.

Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J.H. & Whitt, E.J. 2011. *Student success in college: creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bates.

Lanthier, L. 2002. *Case study*. Available at:

<http://www.nvcc.edu/home/elanthier/methods/case-study.htm> Date of access: 16 April 2014.

Light, G., Cox, R. & Calkins, S. 2009. *Learning and teaching in higher education*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Lindenfeld, D.F. 1997. *The practical imagination: the German sciences of state in the nineteenth century*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Long, D. 2012. Theories and models of student development. (In Hinchcliffe, L.J. & Wong, M.A. Eds. *Environments for student growth and development: librarians and student affairs in collaboration*. Chicago, IL: Association of College & Research Libraries. p. 41-55).

Macdonald, W.M. 2007. *Creating campus community: in search of Ernest Boyer's legacy*. New York, NY: Wiley & Sons.

Macnamara, J., Kift, S., Field, R., Brown, C. & Gamble, N. 2012. Work-integrated learning as a component of the capstone experience in undergraduate law. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(1): 1-12.

Mandela, N.R. 2003. Lighting your way to a better future.  
[http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub\\_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMs909&txtstr=education%20is%20the%20most%20powerful](http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMs909&txtstr=education%20is%20the%20most%20powerful) Date of Access: 12 Jul 2016.

Maoz, Z. 2002. Case study methodology in international studies: from storytelling to hypothesis testing. (In Harvey, F.P. & Brecher, M. eds. *Evaluating Methodology in International Studies*. Anne Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. p. 162-186).

Markwell, D. 2007. *A large liberal education: higher education for the 21st century*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing.

Martin, M. 2015. Conducting a personal SWOT analysis for your career.  
<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5543-personal-swot-analysis.html> Date of Access: 04 Sep 2016.

Mathieson, S. 2015. Student learning. (In Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marsha, S. eds. *A handbook for teaching & learning in higher education*. 4th ed. London: Routledge. p. 80-93).

McCurdy, H.E. & Cleary, R.E. 1984. Why can't we resolve the research issue in public administration? *Public Administration Review*, 43(1):49-55.

McKeachie, W.J. 2002. *McKeachie's Teaching tips: strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. 11th ed. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin.

Mcleod, S. 2007. Humanism. <http://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html> Date of Access: 20 Aug 2015.

Mcleod, S. 2009. Jean Piaget. <http://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html> Date of Access: 02 Jul 2015.

Mcleod, S. 2015. Humanism. <http://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html> Date of Access: 17 Aug 2015.

Mcneil, M., Gosper, M. & Xu, J. 2012. Assessment choices to target higher order learning outcomes: the power of academic empowerment. <http://www.researchinlearningtechnology.net/index.php/rlt/article/view/17595> Date of Access: 16 Jan 2016.

Medin, D.L. & Lee, C.D. 2012. Diversity makes better science. *Observer*. 25(4):1-3. <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2012/may-june-12/diversity-makes-better-science.html> Date of Access: 06 Sep 2016.

Merriam, S.B., Caffarella, R.S. & Baumgartner, L.M. 2009. *Learning in adulthood*. 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Milakovich, M.E. & Gordon, G.J. 2013. *Public administration in America*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Miller, K.J. 2012. The future of the discipline: trends in public sector management. (In Diamond, J. & Liddle, J. eds. *Emerging and Potential Trends in Public Management: An Age of Austerity*. 1st ed. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. p. 1-24).

Mittelmark, M.B., Bitarello Do Amaral-Sabadini, M., Anderson, P., Gual, A., Braddick, F., Matrai, S. & Ysa, T. 2012. Computer-mediated communication in ALICE RAP: a methodology to enhance the quality of large-scale transdisciplinary research. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, 17(3):1-14.

Moss, M. 2015. *The advantages and disadvantages of mixed method research*.  
<http://classroom.synonym.com/advantages-disadvantages-mixed-methodology-research-4263.html> Date of Access: 09 May 2015.

Mullendore, R.H. & Hatch, C. 2000. *Helping your first-year college student succeed: a guide for parents*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina National Research Centre for First Year Experience & Students in Transition.

Nagda, B.A., Gregerman, S.R., Jonides, J., Von Hippel, W. & Lerner, J.S. 1998. Undergraduate Student-Faculty Research Partnerships Affect Student Retention. *The Review of Higher Education*. 22(1):55-72.

Neufield, J.E., Rasmussen, H.N., Lopez, S.J., Ryder, J.A. & Magyar-Moe, J.L. 2006. The engagement model of person-environment interaction.  
[http://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=edu\\_fac](http://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=edu_fac)  
Date of Access 11 Nov 2015.

Newmann, F.M. 1992. *Student engagement and achievement in American secondary schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Newswander, L.K. & Newswander, C.B. 2012. Encouraging cognitive flexibility and interdisciplinarity in public administration programs. *Administration & Society*, 44:285-309.

Nitko, A.J. & Brookhart, S.M. 2007. *Educational assessment of students*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

North West University. 2010. General academic rules.  
[http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/7P-Academic\\_Rules\\_e.pdf](http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/7P-Academic_Rules_e.pdf) Date of Access: 29 May 2015.

North West University. 2014a. *Public management and administration skills*.  
<http://www.nwu.ac.za/public-management-and-administration/skills> Date of Access: 9 Jan. 2015.

North West University. 2014b. *Public management and administration skills*.  
<http://www.nwu.ac.za/public-management-and-administration/skills> Date of Access: 9  
Jan. 2015.

North West University. 2015a. 2015 Faculty calendars. [CD]

North West University. 2015b. Calendar 2015 faculty of humanities undergraduate.  
[http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/v-  
acad/documentation/Calendars%20%20Yearbooks/VTC%202015%20HUMANTIES%20  
Undergraduate%20Final%20%20Lelanie%2023okt2014.pdf](http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/v-acad/documentation/Calendars%20%20Yearbooks/VTC%202015%20HUMANTIES%20Undergraduate%20Final%20%20Lelanie%2023okt2014.pdf) Date of Access: 29 May  
2015.

North West University. 2016a. Calendar 2016 faculty of arts undergraduate  
Potchefstroom Campus. [http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/p-  
academic-administration/dokumente/Yearbooks2016/2016-PC-ArtsUndergraduate.pdf](http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/p-academic-administration/dokumente/Yearbooks2016/2016-PC-ArtsUndergraduate.pdf)  
Date of Access: 01 May 2016.

North West University. 2016b. Calendar 2016 faculty of humanities undergraduate.  
[http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/v-  
acad/documentation/Calendars%20%20Yearbooks/2016%20VTC%20Humanities%20U  
ndergrad%20Calendar%20Eng%20%20Lelanie%20%2030jun2015.pdf](http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/v-acad/documentation/Calendars%20%20Yearbooks/2016%20VTC%20Humanities%20Undergrad%20Calendar%20Eng%20%20Lelanie%20%2030jun2015.pdf) Date of Access:  
02 May 2016.

North West University. 2016c. School of social and government studies.  
<http://www.nwu.ac.za/pc-ssgs/history> Date of Access: 08 Jun 2016

NSSE: benchmarks for effective educational practices. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*. 35(2):24-32.

NWU **see** North West University.

Oblinger, D.G. 2006. Learning spaces. <http://www.educause.edu/learningspaces> Date of  
Access: 29 Jul 2015.

OECD. 2004. Student learning: attitudes, engagement and strategies.

<http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programme-for-international-student-assessment-pisa/33918006.pdf> Date of Access: 10 Sep 2016.

Osborne, S.P. 2006. The new public governance? *Public management Review*. 8(3):377-387.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 2010. 8th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oxford Dictionary of Sociology. 2009. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ozaki, C.C. & Renn, K.A. 2014. Engaging multiracial college students. (In Quaye, S.J. & Harper, S.R. eds. *Student engagement in higher education: theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. 2nd ed. p. 91-104).

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. 2005. *How college affects students: a third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pascarella, E.T., Seifert, T.A. & Blaich, C. 2010 How effective are the NSSE benchmarks in predicting important educational outcomes. *Change: Magazine of Higher Learning*, 42(1): 16-22.

Pauw, J.C. 1999. *The concept public administration* (In Wessels, J.S. & Pauw, J.C., eds. *Reflective public administration: views from the south*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 9-25).

Perozzi, B. 2009. *Enhancing student learning through college employment*. Bloomington, IN: Association of College Unions International.

Peters, B.G. & Pierre, J. 1998. Governance without government? Rethinking public administration. *Journal of Public Management Research and Theory*, 8(2):223-243.

Pike, G.R. 2012. NSSE benchmarks and institutional outcomes: a note on the importance of considering the intended uses of a measure in validity studies. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 54(2):149-170.

Pooe, T.K. 2016. Student engagement in first year public admin programmes. [personal

interview] 19 Aug, Vanderbijlpark.

Politt, C. 2010. Envisioning public administration as a scholarly field in 2020. *Public Administration Review*, 70(special issue):292-294.

Raadschelders, J.C.N. 1999. A coherent framework for the study of public administration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 9(2):981-303.

Rahim, A. 2006. Education, development and the common good. *Journal of Public Administration*, 41(4.1):851-865.

Random House Unabridged Dictionary. 1997. Public administration.  
<http://dictionary.infoplease.com/public-administration> Date of Access: 01 May 2015.

Rao, V.K. 2004. *Higher education*. New Delhi: APH Publishing.

Roberts, A. 1994. Demonstrating neutrality: the Rockefeller philanthropies and the evolution of public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 54(3):221-227.

Rosenbaum, A. 2014. Putting first things first: critical issues for public administration. *Teaching Public Administration*, 32(1):80-94.

Rutgers, M.R. 2010. Theory and scope of public administration: an introduction to the study's epistemology. *The Foundations of Public Administration Series*: 1-45.  
<http://www.aspanet.org/public/aspadocs/par/fpa/fpa-theory-article.pdf> Date of Access: 25 Apr 2016.

San Diego State University. 2016. Evaluating Information.  
<http://library.sdsu.edu/research-services/research-help/evaluating-information> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

Sanz, N. & Bergan, S. *The heritage of European universities*. 2nd ed. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Sarantakos, S. 2012. *Social research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

SASSE **see** South African Survey of Student Engagement.

Sax, L.J. & Wartman, K.L. 2010. Studying the impact of parental involvement on college student development. (In Smart, J.C. ed. *Higher education: handbook of theory and research volume 25*. London: Springer Science and Business Media. 586 p.)

Scholz, R. & Marks, D. 2001. Learning about transdisciplinary: where are we? Where have we been? Where should we go? (In Thompson Klein, J., Grossenbacher-Mansuy, W., Häberli, R., Bill, A., Scholz, R.W. & Welti, M. eds. *Transdisciplinarity: joint problem solving among science, technology, and society: an effective way for managing complexity*. Basel: Birkhäuser. p. 236-252).

Schuetze, H.G. & Slowey, M. 2000. *Higher education and lifelong learners: international perspectives on change*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Schunk, D.H. 1996. *Learning theories: an educational perspective*. Princeton, NC: Merrill Publishing.

Schunk, D.H. 2000. *Learning theories an educational perspective*. 3rd ed. London: Prentice-Hall.

Schunk, D.H. 2008. *Learning theories an educational perspective*. 5th ed. London: prentice-Hall.

Scott, I. 2009. Academic development in South African higher education. (In Bitzer, E. ed. *Higher Education in South Africa A Scholarly look behind the scenes*. Stellenbosch: SUN MEDIA. p. 21-50).

Sharma, A. 2015. Learning: meaning, nature, types and theories of learning. <http://www.psychologydiscussion.net/learning/learning-meaning-nature-types-and-theories-of-learning/652> Date of Access: 18 Nov 2015.

Shin, J.C., Youtkoushian, R.K. & Teichler, U. *University rankings: theoretical basis, methodology and impacts on global higher education*. London: Springer Science & Business Media.

Shuell, T.J. 1986. Cognitive conceptions of learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 56(4): 411-436.

Shuell, T.J. 2013. Theories of learning.

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/theories-of-learning/> Date of Access: 03 Jul 2015.

Sincerco, S.M. 2011. Cognitive learning theory. <https://explorable.com/cognitive-learning-theory> Date of Access: 09 Nov 2015.

Slowey, M. & Schuetze, H. 2012. *Global perspectives on higher education and lifelong learners*. London: Routledge.

South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996.

South Africa. 1997. Education White Paper 3: A programme for higher education transformation (*Government Gazette* 18207 of 1997). Pretoria: Government Printers.

South Africa. 1997. Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.

South Africa. 2007. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework. (Notice 928). *Government Gazette*, 30353:3-29, 5 Oct.

South Africa. Department of Education. 1997. Education White Paper 3. Pretoria.

South Africa. Department of Education. 2001. Draft national plan for higher education in South Africa. Pretoria.

South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training. 2012. Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training.

South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training. 2015. Higher Education Amendment Bill. Pretoria.

South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training. 2016. Universities in South Africa.

<http://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/New%20site%20Documents/Universities%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf> Date of Access: 04 Jun 2016

South African Student Engagement Survey. 2013. About SASSE.

<http://sasse.ufs.ac.za/default.aspx?DCCode=Z27> Date of Access: 28 May 2015.

Steiner, G. & Posch, A. 2006. Higher education for sustainability by means of transdisciplinary case studies: an innovative approach for solving complex, real-world problems. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 14:877-890.

Stone, A.B. & Stone, D.C. 1975. (In Mosher, F.C. ed. 1975. *American Public Administration: past, present, future*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press. p. 11-48).

Strickland, K., Mclatchie, J. & Pelik, R. 2011. Reflections on the development of a dynamic learning, teaching and assessment strategy. *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, 28(4): 295-298.

Strydom, J.F. & Mentz, M. 2010. *Focusing the student experience on success through student engagement*. [http://www.che.ac.za.za/documents/d000208/SASSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.che.ac.za.za/documents/d000208/SASSE_2010.pdf) Date of Access: 27 May 2015.

Syracuse University. 2016. Master of public administration.

[https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/paia/degrees/Master\\_of\\_Public\\_Administration/](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/paia/degrees/Master_of_Public_Administration/) Date of Access: 14 Jun 2016.

Teddlie, C. & Tashakkori, A. 2003. The past and future of mixed method research: from data triangulation to mixed model designs. (In Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. eds. *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. p. 671-701).

Thornhill, C. & Van Dijk, H.G. 2010. Public administration theory: justification for conceptualisation. *Journal of Public Administration*, 45(1.1):95-110.

Tinto, V. 2005?. Taking student success seriously: rethinking the first year of college.

[http://www.uky.edu/ie/sites/www.uky.edu.ie/files/uploads/CF\\_Taking%20Student%20Success%20Seriously..pdf](http://www.uky.edu/ie/sites/www.uky.edu.ie/files/uploads/CF_Taking%20Student%20Success%20Seriously..pdf) Date of Access: 06 Sep 2016.

Tijssen, R.J.W. 2010. Discarding the 'basic science-applied science' dichotomy: a knowledge utilization triangle classification system of research journals. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 61(9):1842-1852.

Umbach, P.D. & Wawrzyński, M.R. 2005. Faculty do matter: the role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research In Higher Education*, 46(2):153-184.

University of Cambridge. 2016. Early records. <http://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/history/early-records> Date of Access: 19 Jul 2016.

University of Denver. 2016. Why seminars and workshops are important to the graduate experience. <http://daniels.du.edu/why-seminars-and-workshops-are-important-to-the-graduate-experience/> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

University of Nebraska Omaha. Master of Public Administration. <http://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/public-administration/academics/mpa.php> Date of Access: 14 Jun 2016.

University of Oxford. 2016. Introduction and history. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/history?wssl=1> Date of Access: 19 Jul 2016.

University of Pretoria. 2016. School of Public Management and Administration. <http://www.up.ac.za/en/school-of-public-management-and-administration/article/42593/about-the-school> Date of Access: 08 Jun 2016.

University of South Carolina Student Success Center. 2016. <https://www.regiscollege.edu/UserFiles/Files/academics/ACE/study-tips-before-during-after%20class.pdf> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

University of Stellenbosch. 2016. The Stellenbosch school of public leadership: an emerging concise history. <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/faculty/economy/spl/about/history> Date of Access: 08 Jun

2016.

University Of Surrey. 2013. *Module 9: introduction to research*.

[http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page\\_51.htm](http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page_51.htm) Date of Access: 5 Apr. 2014.

University of the Free State. 2016. Public administration and management home.

<http://www.ufs.ac.za/econ/departments-and-divisions/public-administration-and-management-home> Date of Access: 08 Jun 2016.

Van Der Waldt, G. 2004. *Managing performance in the public sector: concepts, considerations and challenges*. Cape Town: Juta And Co Ltd.

Van Der Waldt, G. 2008. *Public management and leadership*. Potchefstroom: NWU, Potchefstroom Campus. (Study guide PUMA 621 PEC).

Van der Waldt, G. 2009. *Public management and leadership*. Potchefstroom: NWU, Potchefstroom Campus. (Study Guide PUMA 621 PEC).

Van der Waldt, G. 2010. *Public management & governance*. Potchefstroom: NWU, Potchefstroom Campus. (Study guide PUMA 122 PEC).

Van der Waldt, G. 2012. Regeerkunde in 'n ontwikkelingstaat: 'n relevansiediskoers. [http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/8571/Van\\_der\\_Walt\\_G.pdf?sequence=1](http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/8571/Van_der_Walt_G.pdf?sequence=1) Date of Access: 28 Apr 2016.

Van der Waldt, G. 2013. Public administration as study domain: the relevance debate. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 6(7):72-85.

Van Dijk, H.G. 2013. A theoretical understanding of student engagement in curriculum review and development. *Administratio Publica*, 21(1):84-101.

Weber, L. & Bergan, S. 2005. The public responsibility for higher education and research. [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Resources/Public-responsibility-for-higher-education-and-research\\_webversion.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Resources/Public-responsibility-for-higher-education-and-research_webversion.pdf) Date of Access: 18 Jul 2016

Welman, C., Kruger, F. & Mitchell, B. 2006. *Research methodology*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, R. & Ewan, C. 1991. *Clinical teaching in nursing*. 1st ed. London: Chapman & Hall.

Wilson, W. 1886. The study of administration. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2(2):197-222.

Woodward, A. 2015. Community-knowledge framework to design writing assignments. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/using-a-discourse-community-knowledge-framework-to-design-writing-assignments/> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016.

Yin, R.K. 2009. *Case study research: design and methods*. 4th ed. London: Sage Publications.

Yong, K. Creativity of same-disciplines interactions. [http://druid8.sit.aau.dk/acc\\_papers/qm2ghdssm316y5180k4kug6y312o.pdf](http://druid8.sit.aau.dk/acc_papers/qm2ghdssm316y5180k4kug6y312o.pdf) Date of Access: 18 Jul 2016.

Write. 2016. Writing the rough draft. <http://www.write.com/writing-guides/research-writing/writing-process/writing-the-rough-draft/> Date of Access: 02 Sep 2016

Zalmanovitch, Y. 2014. Don't reinvent the wheel: the search for an identity for public administration. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 80(4):808-826.

Zimmerman, B.J. 2001. Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: an overview and analysis. (In Zimmerman, B.J. & Schunk, D.H. eds. *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: theoretical perspectives*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. p. 1-37).

## APPENDIX A: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to obtain feedback regarding your views on student engagement in Public Administration (PA) programmes at the NWU. This is part of a Masters' study on determining the nature of student engagement for first year students in Public Administration and Management modules. Your participation is integral to understanding the challenges associated in creating a conducive and supporting learning environment. The questionnaire comprises 2 sections, namely a demographic section and a student engagement section. Please read the instructions carefully and clearly place an X in the appropriate place.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. Indicate your consent to participate by clearly placing an X in the appropriate box. Should you not want to participate, please hand the questionnaire back to the researcher.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | I understand my participation in voluntary and that all information shared will be anonymous and used for academic purposes only. |
|--|---|

### Section A: Demographic profile

1. What is your gender?

| Male | Female | Other |
|------|--------|-------|
| 1    | 2      | 3     |

2. What is your age?

| Younger | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | Older |
|---------|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 1       | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6     |

3. What is your racial identification?

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Black                 | 1 |
| 2. Coloured              | 2 |
| 3. White                 | 3 |
| 4. Indian                | 4 |
| 5. Asian                 | 5 |
| 6. Middle Eastern        | 6 |
| 7. Other                 | 7 |
| 8. Prefer to not respond | 8 |

4. Which of the following describes where you are living while attending university?

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Campus Dormitory or Residence                   | 1 |
| 2. Private residence within walking distance       | 2 |
| 3. Private residence farther than walking distance | 3 |
| 4. Other   | 4 |

5. How many modules are you registered for in this semester?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8  |

6. Which curriculum are you registered for? Fill in the block applicable to your campus.

| <b>Potchefstroom Campus</b>   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. Public Management and Governance</b>                                      | 1 |
| <b>2. Public Management with Human Resource Management and Labour Relations</b> | 2 |
| <b>3. Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</b>                      | 3 |
| <b>4. Public Management and Governance with Economics</b>                       | 4 |
| <b>5. Public Management and Governance with Sociology</b>                       | 5 |
| <b>6. Public Management and Geography</b>                                       | 6 |
| <b>7. Other - specify _____</b>   | 7 |

| <b>Vaal Triangle Campus</b>   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. Public Management and Governance</b>                                      | 1 |
| <b>2. Public Management with Human Resource Management and Labour Relations</b> | 2 |
| <b>3. Public Governance and Politics with Law Subjects</b>                      | 3 |
| <b>4. Public Management and Governance and Society</b>                          | 4 |
| <b>5. Public Management and Environment</b>                                     | 5 |
| <b>6. Other - specify _____</b>   | 6 |

7. How would you rate your academic performance at this institution?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. I am an excellent student and obtain 75%+ for all my modules</b>                | 1 |
| <b>2. I am an above average student and obtain between 60%-74% for all my modules</b> | 2 |
| <b>3. I am an average student and pass all my modules</b>                             | 3 |
| <b>4. I struggle with modules and am unable to pass all my modules</b>                | 4 |
| <b>5. I struggle with all my modules</b>  | 5 |

8. Did you begin your studies at this institution?

| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|------------|-----------|
| 1          | 2         |

9. Have you previously attended any of the following? (Check all that apply)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1. Vocational or Technical School</b>                                   | 1 |
| <b>2. Independent university i.e. Varsity College, Boston College etc.</b> | 2 |
| <b>3. University other than this one</b>                                   | 3 |
| <b>4. None</b>   | 4 |
| <b>5. Other (Please specify)</b>   | 5 |

## Section B: Student Engagement

Please read the instructions carefully before each question to avoid mistakes and take note of the scale used. Mark with an **X** in the appropriate box.

1. During the current academic year, how often have you done the following?

| Questions |   | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|-----------|---|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1.        | Asked questions or contributed to class discussions                                     | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 2.        | Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before submission                  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 3.        | Asked another student to help you understand module material                            | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 4.        | Explained module material to one or more students                                       | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 5.        | Prepared for exams by discussing or working through module material with other students | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 6.        | Worked with other students on module projects or assignments                            | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 7.        | Gave a presentation   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 8.        | Attended a seminar or information session in addition to scheduled class times          | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |

2. During the current academic year, how often have you done the following?

| Questions |   | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|-----------|---|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1.        | Combined ideas from different modules for PUMA assignments  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 2.        | Connected your learning to societal problems or issues  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 3.        | Included diverse perspectives in module discussions or assignments  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 4.        | Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue                                 | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 5.        | Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 6.        | Learned something that changed the way you understand a concept or issue                                    | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 7.        | Connected ideas from PUMA modules to prior experiences and knowledge  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |

3. During the current academic year, how often have you done the following?

| Questions |   | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|-----------|---|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1.        | Talked about my career plans with a lecturer  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 2.        | Worked with a lecturer on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.) | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 3.        | Discussed topics, ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of scheduled class times          | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 4.        | Discussed my academic performance with a lecturer   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |

4. During the current academic year, how much has the coursework emphasised the following?

| Questions |  | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|-----------|--|-----------|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1.        | Memorising module material i.e. facts or processes                                 | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 2.        | Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations       | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 3.        | Analysing an idea, experience or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 4.        | Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source                         | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 5.        | Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information             | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |

5. During the current academic year, to what extent have your instructors done the following?

| Questions |   | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|-----------|---|-----------|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1.        | Clearly explained module goals and requirements                               | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 2.        | Taught module sessions in an organised way                                    | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 3.        | Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points, concepts or ideas | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 4.        | Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress                              | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 5.        | Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments       | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |

6. During the current academic year, about how often have you done the following?

| Questions |   | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|-----------|---|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1.        | Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of information                                       | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 2.        | Used module information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, public health etc.) | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 3.        | Evaluated what others have concluded from information   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |

7. During the current academic year, about how many papers, reports or other writing assignments of the following length have you been assigned? (Include those not yet completed.)

| Amount           | None | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 20+ |
|------------------|------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|
| 1. Up to 5 pages | 1    | 2   | 3   | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7   |
| 2. 6: 10 pages   | 1    | 2   | 3   | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7   |
| 3. 11+ pages     | 1    | 2   | 3   | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7   |

8. During the current academic year, about how often have you had academic discussions with people from the following groups?

| Questions |  | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|-----------|--|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1.        | People from a race or ethnicity other than your own    | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 2.        | People from an economic background other than your own | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 3.        | People with religious beliefs other than your own      | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 4.        | People with political views other than your own        | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |

9. During the current year, about how often have you done the following?

| Questions |   | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|-----------|---|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1.        | Identified key information from reading assignments         | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 2.        | Reviewed my notes after class                               | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |
| 3.        | Summarised what I learned in class or from module materials | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4     |

10. During the current academic year, to what extent have your modules challenged you to do your best work?

Not at all

Very Much

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

11. Which of the following have you done, or plan to do before you graduate?

| Questions |   | Done or in progress | Plan to do | Do not plan to do | Have not decided |
|-----------|---|---------------------|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1.        | Participate in an internship, field research or student teaching  | 1                   | 2          | 3                 | 4                |
| 2.        | Hold a formal leadership role in a student organisation or group  | 1                   | 2          | 3                 | 4                |
| 3.        | Participate in a learning community or some other formal programme where groups of students take two or more classes together | 1                   | 2          | 3                 | 4                |
| 4.        | Work with a faculty member on a research project  | 1                   | 2          | 3                 | 4                |

12. Has your PUMA course included a community-based project?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 1   | 2  |

If yes, please describe the nature of the project

---



---

13. Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution.

| Group |   | Poor<br>1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Excellent<br>7 |
|-------|---|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1.    | Students  | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7              |
| 2.    | Academic Advisors   | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7              |
| 3.    | Lecturers   | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7              |
| 4.    | Student Services Staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.) | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7              |
| 5.    | Administrative staff (registration, financial aid, etc.)                    | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7              |

14. How much does your institution emphasise the following?

| Questions |   | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|-----------|---|-----------|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1.        | Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work                              | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 2.        | Providing support to help students succeed academically   | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 3.        | Using learning support services (tutoring, writing centre, etc.)                                | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 4.        | Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial, religious, etc.) | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 5.        | Providing opportunities to be involved socially   | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 6.        | Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc.)       | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 7.        | Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)                      | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 8.        | Attending campus activities and events (sports, performances, etc.)                             | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 9.        | Attending events that address important social, economic or political issues                    | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |

15. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?

| Questions |   | 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | 30+ |
|-----------|---|---|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 1.        | Preparing for class   | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 2.        | Participating in co-curricular activities (organisations, student government, sports, etc.) | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 3.        | Working for pay <b>on</b> campus  | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 4.        | Working for pay <b>off</b> campus   | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 5.        | Doing community service or voluntary work   | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 6.        | Relaxing and socialising  | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 7.        | Providing care for dependants (children, parents, etc.)                                     | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |
| 8.        | Commuting to campus (driving, walking, taxi, etc.)  | 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |

16. Of the time you spend preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how many hours are spent on assigned reading?

| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | 30+ |
|---|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8   |

17. How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas?

| Questions |   | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|-----------|---|-----------|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1.        | Writing clearly and effectively                               | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 2.        | Speaking clearly and effectively                              | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 3.        | Thinking critically and analytically                          | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 4.        | Analysing information   | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 5.        | Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills           | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 6.        | Working effectively with others                               | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 7.        | Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 8.        | Understanding people of other backgrounds                     | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 9.        | Solving complex real-world problems                           | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |
| 10.       | Being an informed and active citizen                          | 1         | 2           | 3    | 4           |

18. How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

| Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
|-----------|------|------|------|
| 1         | 2    | 3    | 4    |

Please elaborate on your answer provided above

---

19. If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

| Definitely Yes | Probably Yes | Probably No | Definitely No |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1              | 2            | 3           | 4             |

Please elaborate on your answer above and provide reasons for your choice

---

**Thank you for your participation in this questionnaire.  
Your input is greatly appreciated.**

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS LIST**

1. Which module do you teach?
2. How would you define student engagement?
3. One of the benchmarks is supportive campus environment - what do you think a supportive campus looks like? Do you believe students have this at your campus? What would you change?
4. The second benchmark is level of challenge - what do you think this comprises? Do you believe students at your campus are challenged? What would you change?
5. The third is interaction between students and staff - what relationships do you think this entails? Do you believe there is good communication between the different groups (students, lecturers, admin personnel) on campus? What would you change?
6. Education experiences that enrich classroom experience is the fourth benchmark - what kind of experiences do you think this could be? Do you have any at your campus? What would you change?
7. Collaborative and learning processes are the fifth benchmark - What do you think serves as collaborative and learning experiences? Are any of these present at your campus? What would you change?
8. What do you believe should students be able to do and know once they completed the module?
9. Do you allow active participation in class? What do you believe is the value of participation in class? How do you facilitate participation?
10. Do you have a particular structure to your class i.e. starting with module outcomes, building in class activities, assessment and reflecting on outcomes at end of the class? Do you believe this is important? Why?
11. Have you ever assigned students group work and presentations in this module? If yes, what is the nature of group work? Do they choose their own groups or do you assign them to groups? Why have you done it like that? If no, why not?

12. Has your module asked of students to engage their community in completing an assignment or a community based project? If yes, why? If no, why not?
13. Do you allow students to make contact outside of class to discuss career plans, coursework, performance or ideas? If so, do students take this opportunity?
14. Do you believe feedback on essays, tests and drafts are important? Why?
15. Do you encourage students to think freely and create new ideas as they learn? How do you facilitate this?
16. Do you believe students struggle with the module? Why? What would you suggest to address this?
17. How do you facilitate communication between yourself and your students?
18. Does your campus encourage students to participate in student events and activities? How? Do you encourage your students to become more involved in campus life? If yes, why? If no, why not?
19. Do you believe the first year class is representative of the population and have all been given the same opportunity by the module? Why?
20. About how many hours in a 7 day week do you expect students to prepare for class? Do you provide students with extra reading? If yes, why? If no, why not?
21. Do you believe students prepare adequately and engage with the module? Why?
22. Do you believe learning affects behaviour? If yes, how? if no, why not? Do you believe the module changes the way students behave, think and process information? How do you know this?
23. What qualities would a good PA student possess?
24. Do students enjoy the module? Why do you think so?
25. What recommendations would you make to improve student engagement?