

# *Managing for Student Academic Success: the Dialectic Relation of Structure and Agency*

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## *Student Exclusion Story*

- Student success and graduation rates exceeded the institutional targets in 2014/15 (80%; 18%), however,
- 7% of students from the School of Engineering did not qualify for semester examinations by June (1<sup>st</sup> year semester) of 2014/15
- 19% failed all their courses in June examinations,
- 25% failed examinations and were also excluded from the engineering program

# *PRESENTATION OUTLINE*

- *Background*
- *The dilemmatic of monitoring and evaluation (M&E)*
- *Contextual Analysis*
- *Research Approach*
- *Necessity and adequacy of academic monitoring and evaluation*
- *HELM Role in ME for student success*
- *The ontological Assumptions about M&E practice*
- *Results/Insights*
- *Discussion of Agency in relation to Institutional Structures and Culture*
- *Conclusion and Recommendations*

# Background

- **RSA Legislative Framework:** Performance regime, steering mechs: enrolment planning, quality assurance and funding
- **Senate Minute (March 2013),**
  - *“The reported poor performance by students in the examinations was viewed by Senate with serious concern and the faculties were advised to address this matter holistically and as early as possible with the assistance of the Quality Management Directorate and the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development”.*
- **DVC Management Report (April 2015),**
  - *“Each and every current class ...to report interim performance in terms of continuous assessment at each senate so that classes that are at risk can receive the attention of senate and the necessary support. All academics that are currently in class therefore should submit their current class performance in terms of tests, term papers or any other relevant performance indicator”.*

# *The Dilemmatic of Monitoring*

*“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”*

***Albert Einstein***

*“The moment a phenomenon is measured it improves, when it is reported, it improves more”*

***Anonymous***

*Success is what counts: Student data should tell stories about the journey from access to success and completion.*

**Rhonda Glover, “Achieving the Dream”**



# *Contextual Analysis*

- Moore & Lewis, 2004; Badat, 2006; HESA 2014: Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) capacity: change management; requisite skills, knowledge and attributes; contextual and dev issues
- Higgs et al, 2009: Decision making as
  - simple (events and processes)
  - complex (professional identity and choices/practices)
- Kemmis, 2009: HELM practices as reflexive and dialectical
  - Socially and historically constituted, and as reconstituted by human agency and social action

# *Research Approach*

- **Problem statement,**

- *Student academic exclusions perpetuate disadvantage and marginalisation, surfacing the need for credible explanations for the current HELM roles/practices/actions where university is a public good.*

- Evaluative case and qualitative study

- Purposive sampling: 8 Heads of Departments & 4 Deans of Faculties

- Survey questionnaire and analysis of organisational records

- **Research question,**

- *How structural and cultural conditions and mechanisms may be enabling or constraining agency in pursuit of student success/academic progress?*

# *Necessity & Adequacy of Academic Promotion, Monitoring and Support*

**Promotion:** coordination, partnership and consistent message in an eco-system for student success

**Monitoring:** acting on quality issues: responsiveness/relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (policies, systems, strategies and resources)

## **Monitoring and Evaluation Perspectives**

- Pragmatic approach: results & measurement (Vedung, 1997 and Rossi & Freeman, 1999); a black box but no explanation of why HE does what it does
- Realist approach: social embedded-ness (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), recognition of Context, the underlying Mechanisms and for the observable Outcomes: **C-M-O** (Danermark, 2014)



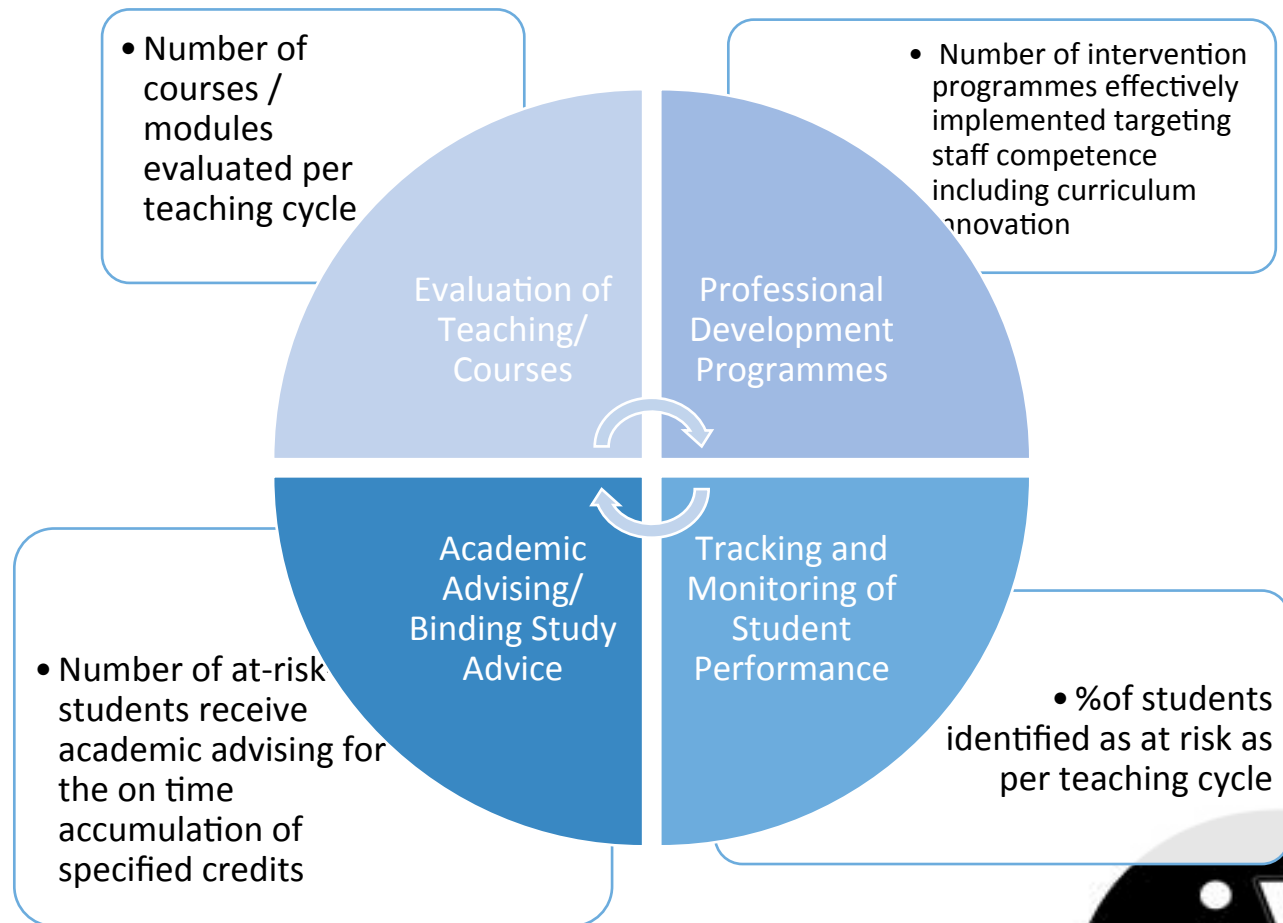
## HELM Role in M&E for Student Academic Success

- **HELM data management and developmental research function,**
  - to transform value inhibitors to value enhancers during the student learning journey,
  - along the institutional value chain (from student entry, to progression, to completion and to employment/citizenship)
- **Promotion Indicator:** The extent of decision making about student academic performance
- **M&E Indicator:** % of students-at-risk, identified, monitored and supported
- To deliberately intervene in T&L systems and processes for student academic success (Tinto, 2012)

# ACADEMIC MONITORING PROCEDURES, PILOT 2014-2015

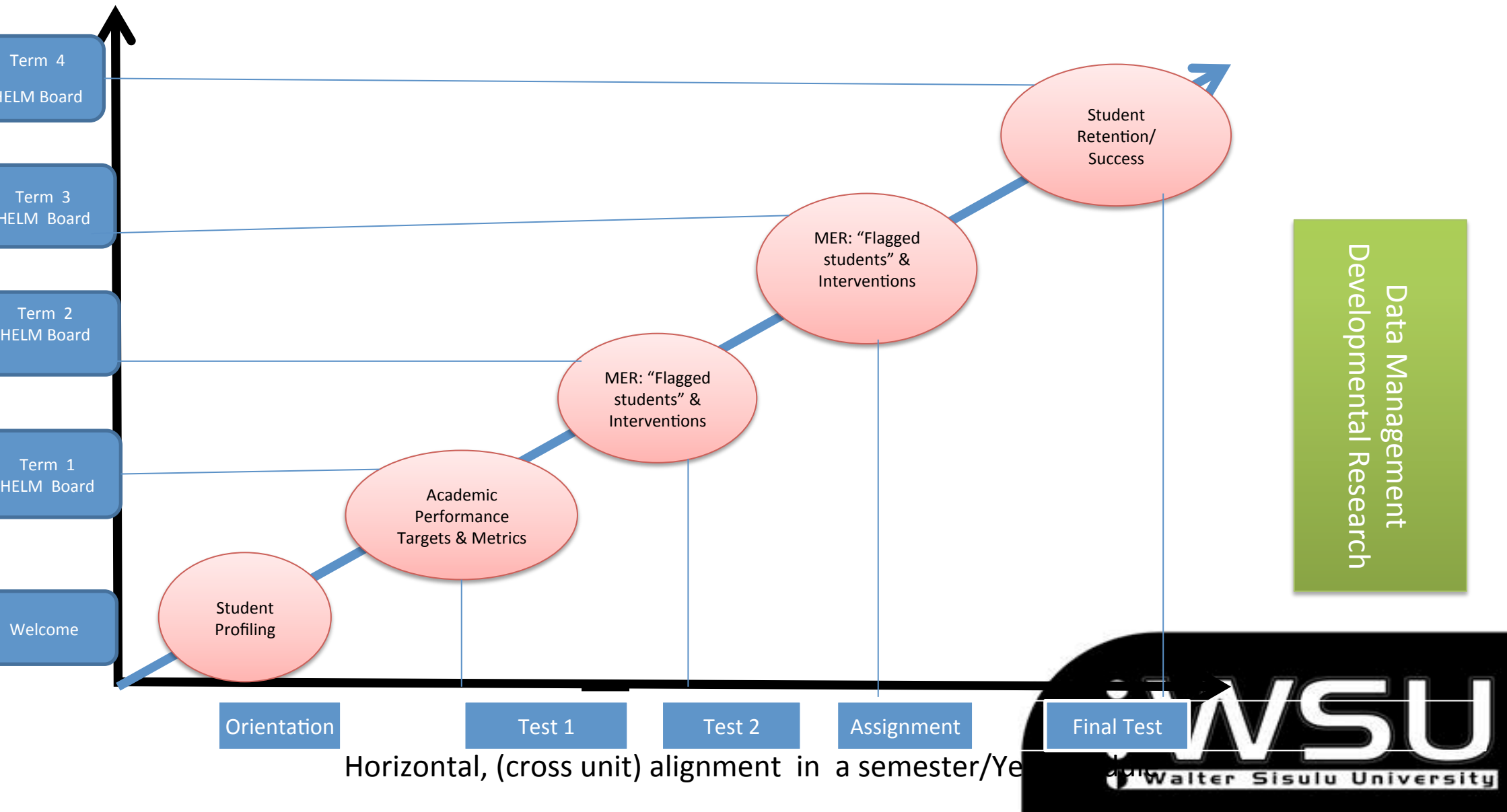
*Appropriate strategies and mechanisms for integrated academic development*

Emergent as effective programme management/reviews

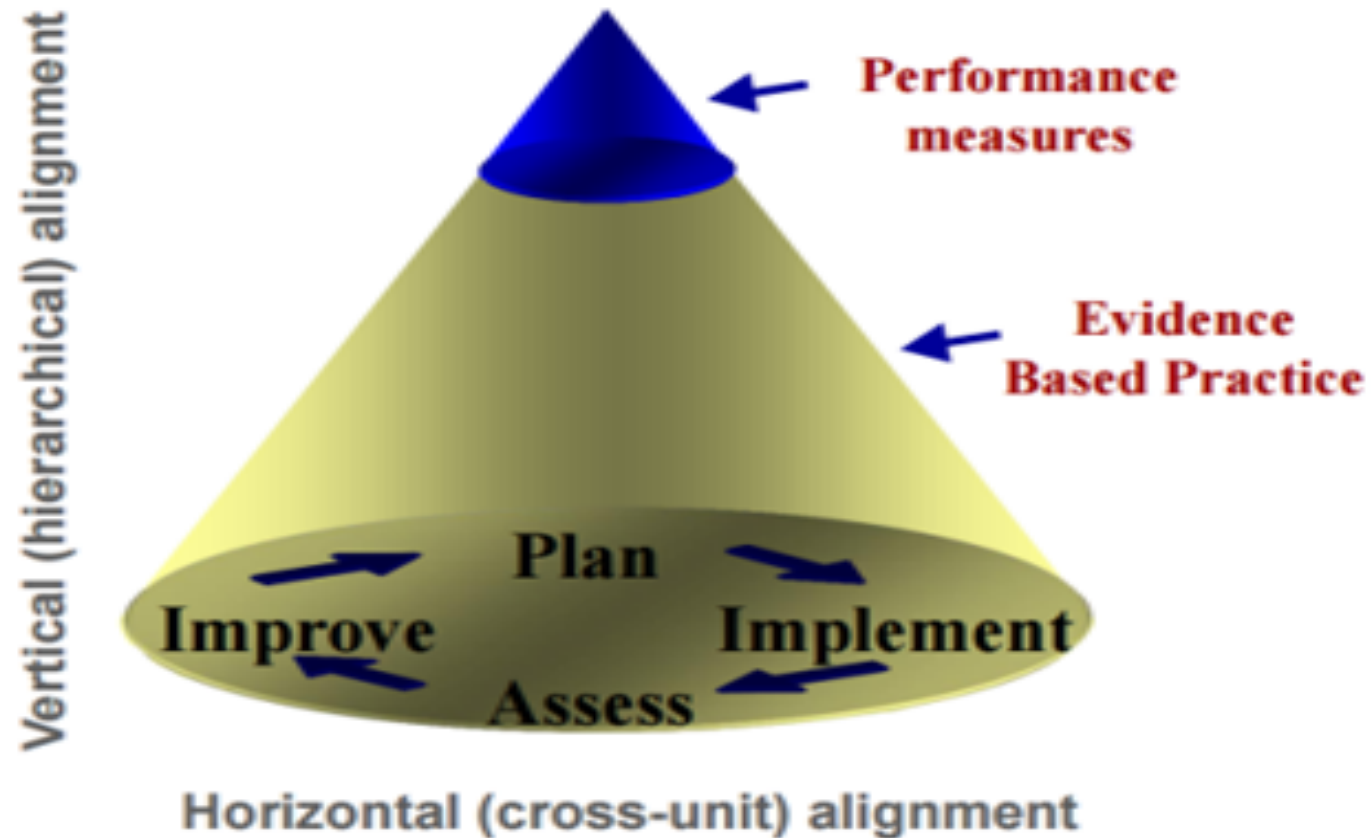


**Question: How do HELM ME practices promote and M&E student academic success by means of data management and developmental**

# Framework for Academic Performance Analyses

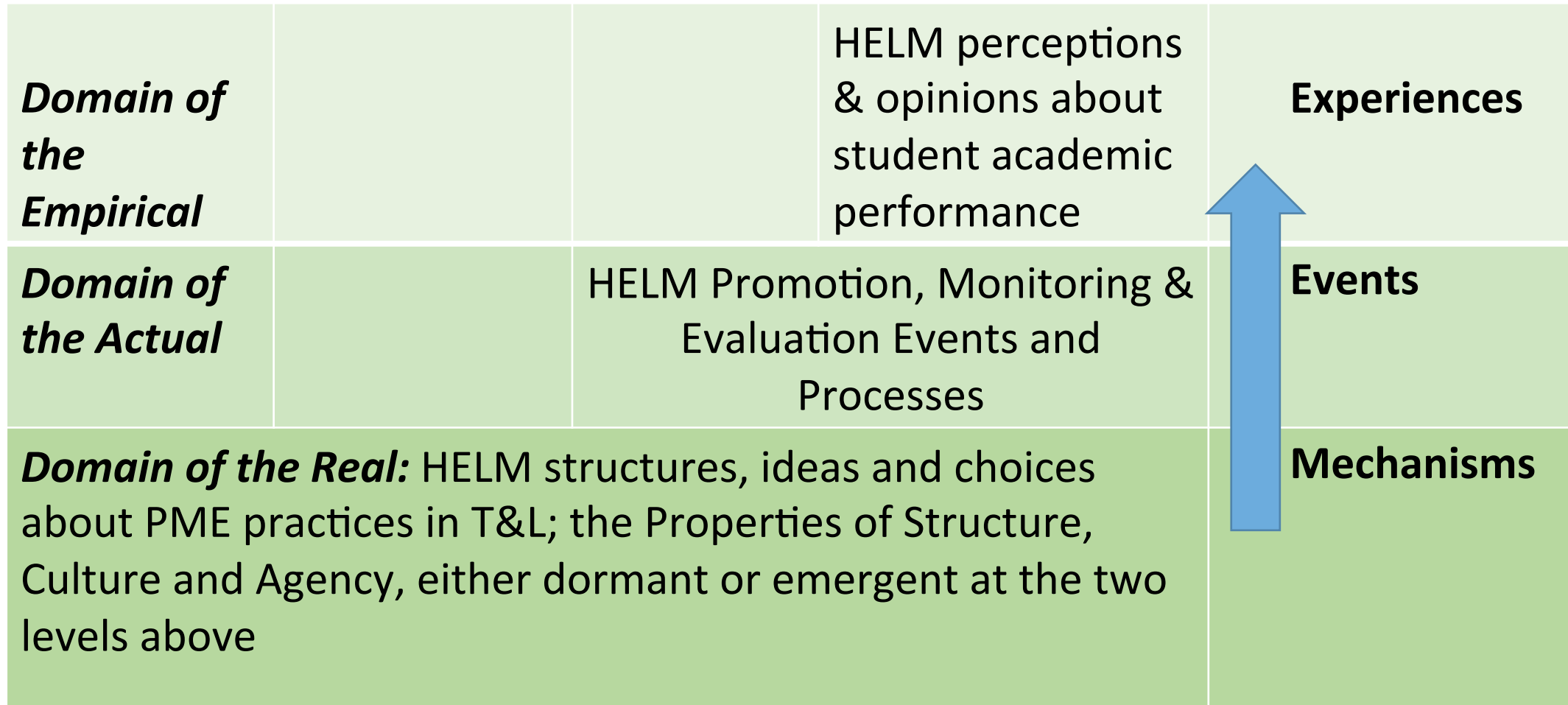


# Performance Measures as the Tip of the Evidence-Based Practice Iceberg

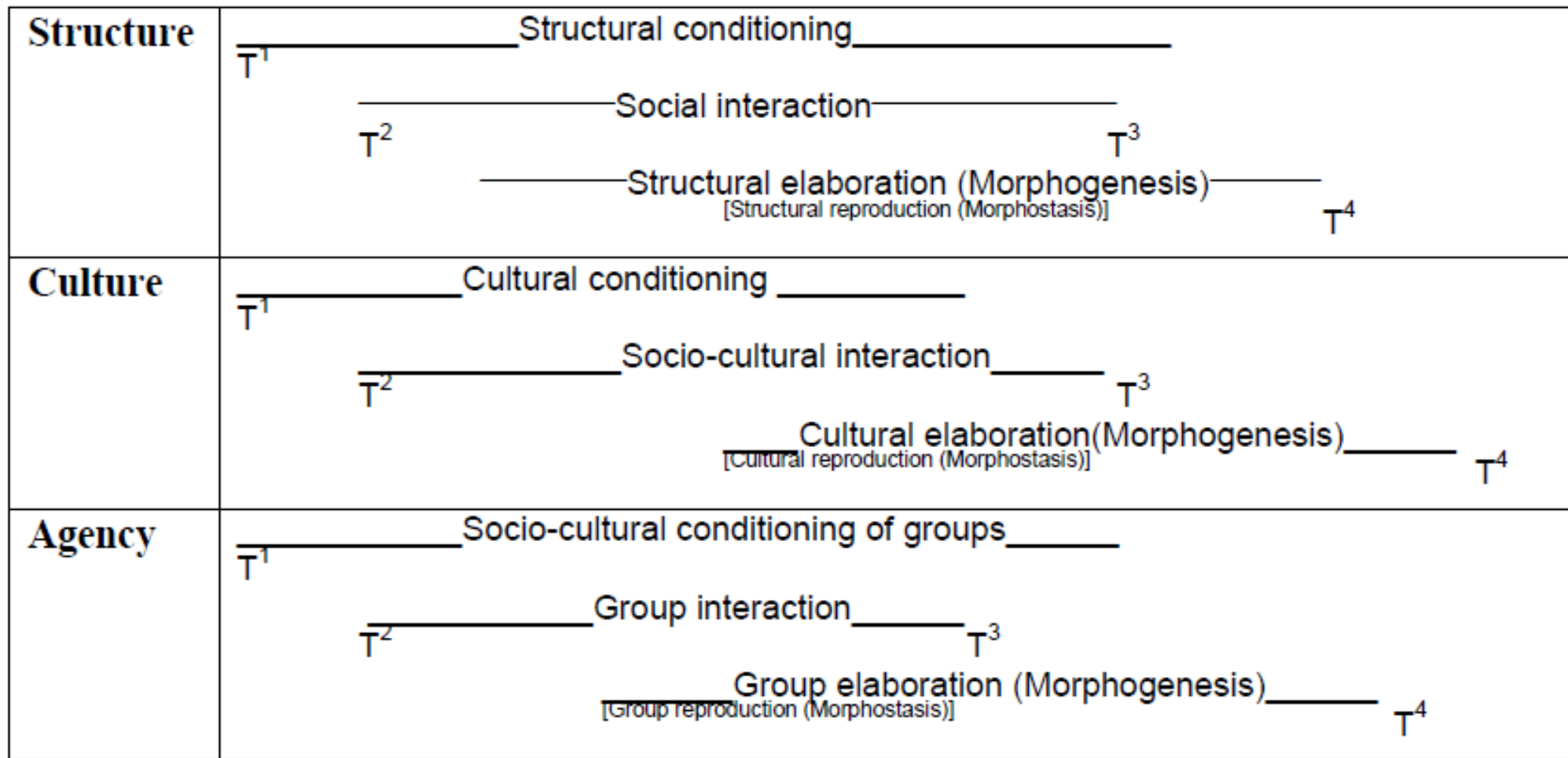


Borden, 2014: New Frontiers for Institutional Research

# Ontological Realism: Stratification, Emergence & Causation



# Archer's Theory of Morphogenesis



The morphogenetic sequence for structure, culture and agency  
 (Source: Archer, 1995, pp. 193-4)

# Emergent Structural and Cultural Properties of SC at Macro Level (Organisational Records)

<b>Institutional Values, 2007</b>	<b>Institutional Audit Recommendation, 2011</b>	<b>Administrator's Turn Around Goal and Objectives, 2013</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Cultural System</b>
<b>Access for Success</b>	<b>4: Student Academic Success, Throughput and Graduation Rates</b>	<b>Project 2 Objective 2.5: Implement student tracking and intervention</b>	<b>Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms</b>	<b>Ensure that the appropriate divisions take responsibility for the implementation of policies and plans</b>
<b>Caring University</b>	<b>16: Teaching, learning, and assessment</b>	<b>Project 2 Objective 2.11 Strategy to include curriculum design and program development for student academic success</b>	<b>Appropriate and institution-wide teaching and learning strategy</b>	<b>Appropriate and institution-wide .....to ensure the success of students..... and which linked to academic and pastoral support system</b>
<b>Quality</b>	<b>17-18: Integrated Quality Management Systems</b>	<b>Project 4 Objective 4.1.4 Procedures and processes for the quality of information</b>	<b>Quality and its monitoring across the institution</b>	<b>A collective understanding of ..... including surveys benchmarking activities and impact studies</b>

## Results: M&E Constraints as Socio-Cultural Conditioning of Groups (T1)

M&E Area (Procedures & Processes)	Heads of Departments, 2014
Tracking and Monitoring of Student Performance	<i>Unavailability of students for advice; Lack of communication and consultation; Political interference from the side of student organisations and SRC.</i>
Academic Advising	<i>Explanation of exclusion rules; Proper communication and consultation with academic staff and students; HODs to present about their required Grade Point Averages to students and for the Academic Advisors to present implications of BSA</i>
Evaluation of Teaching	<i>Lack of time; Workload; Insufficient knowledge of policies and procedure; Lack of awareness; proper management of the process; Access to computers for students</i>
Professional Development Programmes	<i>Need for staff appointments; Need for workshops on policies and procedures; QAOs and HoDs to convince departments on PDP use, relevance and significance to T &amp; L;</i>



# Results: M&E Constraints as Socio-Cultural Conditioning of Groups (T1)

ME Area (Procedures & Processes)	Deans of Faculty, 2014
Tracking and Monitoring of Student Performance	<i>Incorrect HEMIS data especially on credits; A user-friendly data management system that is aligned with other institutional data systems</i>
Academic Advising	<i>Supply Academic Advisors with correct information for proper calculations; HOD's can develop assessment calendars for the academic cycle and ensure that lecturers stick to those</i>
Evaluation of Teaching	<i>Lack of capacity as well as attitudinal tendencies amongst the academic staff members; Lack of proper training for academic staff and lack of co-ordination of functions of exams, academic departments and the CLTD</i>
Professional Development Programmes	<i>Capacitate the academic staff members in the application of the different teaching and learning strategies as well as the assessment</i>

# *Emergent Agential Themes: the Sociological Perspective*

- **Lacks:** understanding data about student performance and the ability to implement interventions; constrained decision making processes; limited forms of collaboration across institutional units
- **Tensions:** academic work which is more about research publications and the management responsibilities as purely administrative; “othering” as internal integration and external adaptation

## *Emergent Agential themes: the Sociological Perspective*

- **Inconsistency:** Strategic and Performance Plans but no system wide operational plans; audit reports but no corrective action plans; committee meetings but limited follow-throughs on decisions.
- **Contradictions:** No sustainable recognition and reward systems and processes on academic performance; systems instability, not conducive to development; project pilots but limited upscaling.

# *Conclusion: HELM Practices as Reflexive and Dialectical*

- Management for student success as both a learning process and the product requires enhanced reflexivity and institutional engagement
- HELM reflexivity as
  - praxis (education for the public good; for emancipation and student empowerment) and
  - artistic praxis (the art of institutional dialogue for social justice; for inclusive education)

# *Recommendations: T2-T3: Analytical Dualism*

- *From a description and explanation of what happened to what could have happened (T2-T3 Phase as HELM Group Interaction):*
  - *Academic Monitoring and Support Strategy, Senate approval, August 2015*
  - *Student Excellence Awards, Senate August 2015*
  - *Evaluation of Teaching/Courses: Category A, B, C Lecturer, Senate August 2016*
  - *Appointment and Promotions Policy, roll out in 2016*
- *Further, identification and analysis of “situational logics”, and possible correction of the current tensions of equity and quality*
- *To understand and explain the possibilities/alternatives for the future of conscious engagement, the ‘intentionality’ of student and staff performance evidence.*

“Enkosi”

I Thank You

