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TOWARDS EQUITABLE TEACHING WORKLOAD ALLOCATION IN ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE INTERNATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the importance of teaching workload in the context of the International Open University (IOU), a global online educational institution. The research highlighted the need for a comprehensive workload policy that ensures fair and equitable distribution of teaching responsibilities among academic staff. The study explored various factors that impact workload allocation, including student-lecturer ratios, classroom sizes, and the number of courses taught. It also considered the demographic characteristics of the academic staff at the IOU and their qualifications. The absence of a workload policy is identified as a challenge, leading to inconsistencies in task allocation and potential overload for faculty members. The study proposes the application of workload allocation models and the Academic Job Demands Theory as theoretical frameworks for assessing and managing workload. The research employed a survey method to gather data from lecturers and an interview schedule was sent to heads of departments to gain insights into workload allocation practices. The findings emphasized the importance of a workload policy that considers the unique demands of online education and ensures the well-being of faculty members while maintaining the quality of education. The study concluded by highlighting the significance of

implementing a workload policy to establish fairness, consistency, and improved educational standards at the IOU.

Keywords: *University, Teaching workload, Lecturers, On-line education, Workload policy.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Online education has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade, offering unprecedented access to learning opportunities worldwide. As a prominent player in this dynamic educational landscape, the International Open University (IOU) serves as a global online educational institution, catering to a diverse student population from various cultural backgrounds and geographic locations. With its commitment to providing high-quality education, the IOU faces the challenge of ensuring that its academic staff carries a fair and equitable teaching workload. Effective workload allocation is vital for sustaining faculty well-being, maintaining teaching excellence, and ultimately enriching the learning experiences of students.

Given the distinctive characteristics of online education, workload allocation at the IOU requires careful consideration of factors unique to the digital learning environment. These factors include student-lecturer ratios, class sizes, and the number of courses taught. Moreover, the demographic characteristics and qualifications of academic staff members contribute to the complexity of workload distribution. As such, an institutional workload policy that addresses these

specificities becomes essential to foster fairness, consistency, and optimal teaching and learning outcomes.

Currently, the IOU lacks a comprehensive workload policy, leading to inconsistencies in task allocation and potential workload imbalances among academic staff. Without a clear framework for workload management, faculty members may face an uneven distribution of teaching responsibilities, which can adversely impact their job satisfaction and overall well-being. Furthermore, this imbalance may affect the quality of education, jeopardizing the institution's reputation as a leader in online learning. This study aims to explore and address the importance of workload allocation in the context of the IOU, specifically focusing on the challenges and opportunities related to teaching responsibilities. In examining the factors influencing workload distribution and the potential consequences of an absence of a workload policy, this research seeks to shed light on the significance of establishing a comprehensive workload policy for online educational institutions like the IOU.

To provide a theoretical foundation for this study, the study drew on two established frameworks: workload allocation models and the Academic Job Demands Theory. Workload allocation models offer systematic approaches to distributing teaching responsibilities among academic staff members, promoting fairness and transparency in task assignments. Additionally, the Academic Job Demands Theory delves into the psychological and physical demands that faculty members encounter in their roles as educators, offering insights into the

potential impacts of workload on their well-being and job satisfaction.

This research employed a mixed-methods approach to gather comprehensive data and insights into workload allocation practices at the IOU. Through the use of surveys administered to lecturers and interview schedules conducted with heads of departments, the study aims to capture the perspectives of both faculty members and institutional leaders regarding workload distribution, challenges faced, and potential solutions.

As the demand for online education continues to rise, the IOU's commitment to maintaining teaching excellence and faculty well-being remains of utmost importance. By investigating the significance of workload allocation within the unique context of an online educational institution, this study seeks to advocate for the implementation of a comprehensive workload policy that ensures fairness, consistency, and improved educational standards at the IOU. Through the integration of workload allocation models and the Academic Job Demands Theory, this research aims to contribute valuable insights that support the enhancement of teaching and learning experiences within the realm of online higher education.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section discusses the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical reviews.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The concept of lecturer teaching workload in higher education institutions refers to the allocation of teaching responsibilities

to faculty members within a specified timeframe. It encompasses various factors such as the number of courses taught, class sizes, administrative duties, research commitments, and available resources. Effective management of the teaching workload is essential for maintaining the quality of education, promoting faculty well-being, and achieving institutional goals.

According to J. Voss, C. Warnock, and T. Hughes (2019), workload allocation is a complex process that involves balancing teaching responsibilities with other professional obligations such as research and administrative duties. Administrative duties further add to the workload of lecturers. Serving on committees, attending departmental meetings, and participating in curriculum development are some of the administrative responsibilities that require time and effort (Bergin, 2018). These duties should be accounted for when determining the overall teaching workload to ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities (Boyd, 2017). Furthermore, R. Lake and L. Boyd (2018) suggest that excessive teaching workload can lead to faculty burnout and have a negative impact on the quality of education. They emphasize the importance of supportive policies and resources to assist lecturers in managing their workload effectively. In terms of student experience, G. Gibbs (2015) argues that an optimal teaching workload allows lecturers to provide adequate attention and support to students. This includes timely feedback on assignments, individualized assistance, and engaging classroom interactions. Gibbs emphasizes that institutions should consider the impact of workload on the quality of education and the learning experience of students.

To address the challenges associated with workload allocation, G. Davis and J. Fisher (2019) propose a framework that incorporates flexibility and adaptability. They suggest that workload policies should be responsive to changes in instructional methods, evolving pedagogical practices, and individual faculty needs. The authors emphasize the importance of ongoing communication between lecturers and administrators to ensure that workload allocation aligns with institutional and individual goals.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In the context of Towards Equitable Teaching Workload Allocation in Online Higher Education: A Case Study of the International Open University, the theories of Workload Allocation Models and Academic Job Demands Theory can provide a theoretical framework that discusses and guides the assessment process based on these theories:

2.2.1 Workload Allocation Model

A workload allocation model is a framework or system used by educational institutions to distribute teaching responsibilities among faculty members (Smith, 2017). The significance of workload allocation models and their application lies in providing a structured approach to distributing teaching responsibilities in a fair and equitable manner (Johnson, 2019). These models take into account various factors such as the type of courses, number of students, level of difficulty, and non-teaching duties (Brown, 2020). In considering these factors, workload allocation models strive to distribute the workload in a way that recognizes the varying demands and requirements

of different courses and assignments (Davis et al., 2018). Courses can differ significantly in terms of content complexity, teaching format, and student enrolment, which in turn affect the time and effort required for effective teaching (Jones, 2021). For example, a course with a large number of students may necessitate additional time for grading and student support (Thomas, 2022). Therefore, workload allocation models aim to provide a more accurate representation of the time and effort needed for effective teaching by considering these course-specific factors (Smith, 2017).

Moreover, workload allocation models can be designed to accommodate flexibility and adaptability, allowing for regular review and adjustment based on changing circumstances such as changes in course offerings, student enrolment, or faculty availability (Johnson, 2019). This ensures that workload distribution remains up-to-date and aligns with the evolving needs of the institution and its students (Brown, 2020). One of the key benefits of workload allocation models is their promotion of transparency and effective communication among lecturers and administrators (Davis et al., 2018). When lecturers understand the criteria and considerations involved in workload allocation, it fosters a sense of transparency and fairness (Jones, 2021). Clear communication of the workload allocation process and decisions can help lecturers understand their responsibilities and contribute to a positive work environment (Thomas, 2022).

2.2.2 Academic Job Demands Theory

Academic Job Demands Theory (AJDT) is a theoretical framework that examines the unique challenges and demands

faced by faculty members in the academic setting. It aims to understand and explain the factors that influence faculty job performance, well-being, and retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This theory recognizes that academic jobs are characterized by a combination of high job demands and significant job resources. According to AJDT, job demands in academia can be classified into two categories: work-related demands and personal demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Work-related demands encompass factors such as high workload, time pressure, conflicting responsibilities, and work-home interference. Personal demands refer to individual factors like emotional exhaustion, work-life imbalance, and role ambiguity. The theory suggests that these job demands can lead to negative outcomes such as burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and intentions to quit the profession (Demerouti et al., 2001). However, the impact of job demands on well-being and performance is not solely negative. AJDT proposes that the presence of job resources can buffer the negative effects of job demands and foster positive outcomes. Job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational factors that facilitate job performance and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Examples of job resources in academia include autonomy, social support, feedback, opportunities for professional development, and work-life balance policies. These resources can enhance faculty members' motivation, engagement, and satisfaction, leading to increased job performance and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The Academic Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, derived from AJDT, posits that job demands and job resources have independent and interactive effects on employee outcomes

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). High job demands can deplete faculty members' energy and lead to burnout if not balanced by sufficient job resources. Conversely, when job resources are present, they can motivate faculty members and help them cope with job demands more effectively.

In the context of online education, the Academic Job Demands Theory (AJDT) offers valuable insights into the unique challenges and demands faced by faculty members delivering online courses. This theory provides a framework for understanding how job demands and resources influence faculty well-being, performance, and engagement in the online teaching environment.

Online education introduces specific job demands that differ from traditional face-to-face instruction. For instance, faculty members engaging in online teaching may encounter an increased workload due to the need to develop and adapt online course materials, facilitate online discussions, provide timely feedback, and manage online assessments (Dennen & Burner, 2008). These demands can lead to time pressures, increased cognitive load, and the need for continuous technological adaptation (Hew & Cheung, 2014). The online teaching environment may present personal demands on faculty members. These include managing work-life boundaries due to the blurred distinction between work and personal life, dealing with isolation and limited social interaction, and navigating the challenges of online communication and collaboration (Cain & Fink, 2016).

In the context of online education, job demands can manifest differently compared to traditional face-to-face teaching. For

instance, faculty members may experience an increased workload due to the additional time required for online course development, content delivery, and student engagement in virtual environments (Parker et al., 2021). They may also face technological challenges, such as adapting to new online platforms and troubleshooting technical issues, which can contribute to feelings of stress and role ambiguity (Martinez et al., 2020).

However, the AJDT also emphasizes the role of job resources in mitigating the negative impact of job demands. In the context of online education, job resources include technological support and training, access to instructional design expertise, opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and instructional support staff, and adequate time for course preparation and development (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009). These resources can help faculty members cope with the demands of online teaching and enhance their job satisfaction, engagement, and effectiveness. One of the job demands in online education is the need for faculty members to adapt to new technologies and instructional methods. Online teaching requires faculty to become proficient in using learning management systems, online communication tools, and multimedia resources (Bower, Dalgarno, Kennedy, Lee, & Kenney, 2015). This can create additional workload and stress as faculty members must invest time and effort into mastering these tools and ensuring effective online instruction.

Another job demand in online education is the management of increased student enrolment and engagement. Online courses often have higher student-to-faculty ratios compared to

traditional classroom settings (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009). Faculty members may need to handle larger numbers of student inquiries, provide timely feedback on assignments, and facilitate online discussions. The increased volume of interactions and the need for continuous online presence can contribute to workload demands.

Additionally, work-home interference can be more pronounced in online education. Faculty members may find it challenging to establish clear boundaries between their personal and professional lives, as online courses can be accessible to students and require constant monitoring and availability (Becker & Freitas, 2019). This can lead to difficulties in achieving work-life balance and contribute to heightened job demands.

2.3 Empirical Reviews

Martinez, Martínez, and Cabrera (2020) explore the workload challenges faced by faculty members in online teaching within the higher education context. The study focuses on faculty perspectives and discusses the implications of workload allocation in online education. The study employs a qualitative research approach, conducting in-depth interviews with faculty members who have experience in online teaching. The findings of the study highlight several key themes related to online teaching workload. One theme is the time and effort required for course development, especially in the initial stages of transitioning from traditional to online formats. Faculty members express the need for adequate support and resources to effectively develop online courses and adapt to new technologies. The study also identifies workload challenges

related to the assessment and grading process in online education. Faculty members express concerns about the time-consuming nature of grading online assignments and the need for clear guidelines and efficient assessment strategies.

Marchand, Johnson, and Farrar (2021) explore the challenges faced by part-time faculty in higher education and discuss the implications for workload management, professional development, and institutional culture. The study employs a qualitative research approach, conducting interviews with part-time faculty members to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives. The findings of the study highlight several key themes related to part-time faculty support. One theme is workload management, where part-time faculty members express challenges related to workload expectations and the lack of clear guidelines for workload allocation. They often experience heavy workloads and struggle to balance their teaching responsibilities with other professional and personal commitments. Based on these findings, the authors discuss the implications of supporting part-time faculty in higher education. They emphasize the need for institutions to develop clear workload policies and guidelines that consider the unique circumstances of part-time faculty and ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities.

Kyvik and Teigen (1996) titled "Part-time teaching in higher education: The influence of workload and conditions of employment on satisfaction and work motivation" investigated the impact of workload and conditions of employment on the satisfaction and work motivation of part-time faculty in higher education. The research employed a quantitative approach,

using survey data to gather information from part-time faculty members. The survey includes questions related to workload, conditions of employment, job satisfaction, and work motivation.

The findings of the study reveal several significant insights into the experiences of part-time faculty in higher education. One key finding is that workload plays a crucial role in shaping part-time faculty satisfaction and motivation. Part-time faculty members who perceive their workload as manageable and reasonable tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation. On the other hand, those who face heavy workloads or a lack of clarity in workload expectations are more likely to experience lower levels of satisfaction and motivation.

Another important factor identified by the study is the influence of employment conditions on part-time faculty satisfaction and motivation.

The study highlighted the importance of institutional support and recognition for part-time faculty. Institutions that prioritize clear workload expectations, provide access to professional development opportunities, and offer benefits to part-time faculty tend to have more satisfied and motivated faculty members.

The article by Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) titled "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction with online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education" explored the various factors that impact faculty satisfaction with online teaching and learning in higher education settings. The study employed a quantitative research approach, using survey data to gather information

from faculty members involved in online teaching. The authors aim to identify the key factors that contribute to faculty satisfaction with online teaching and learning. The findings of the study reveal several important factors that influence faculty satisfaction with online teaching. One significant factor is the faculty members' perceived level of support and training in using technology for online instruction. Faculty who receives adequate training and support in utilizing online tools and platforms tend to be more satisfied with their online teaching experiences. On the other hand, faculty members who lack access to training and support may feel overwhelmed by the technical aspects of online teaching, leading to lower satisfaction.

Another critical factor identified in the study is the design and organization of online courses. Faculty satisfaction is positively correlated with well-designed and structured online courses that promote student engagement and interaction. Effective course design can enhance faculty members' teaching experiences and contribute to a positive learning environment for students.

Interactions with students also play a significant role in faculty satisfaction with online teaching. Faculty who has meaningful and frequent interactions with their online students tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. These interactions can foster a sense of connection and engagement with students, which positively impacts the teaching and learning experience. Administrative support is another factor highlighted in the study. Faculty members who feel supported by their institutions and receive timely administrative assistance are more likely to

be satisfied with online teaching. Adequate administrative support can help faculty navigate logistical issues and concentrate on the instructional aspects of their roles. Furthermore, the study points out that professional development opportunities contribute to faculty satisfaction with online teaching. Institutions that offer opportunities for ongoing professional development related to online instruction and technology integration tend to have more satisfied faculty members. Continuous learning and skill development can enhance faculty confidence and expertise in online teaching.

The study by Guruz and Sahin (2016) titled "Student-instructor Interaction in Online Courses: The Relative Perceived Importance of Particular Instructor Actions on Performance and Satisfaction" explores the significance of student-instructor interaction in online courses and examines the perceived importance of specific instructor actions on students' academic performance and satisfaction. The research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing survey data to gather information from students enrolled in online courses. The survey focuses on capturing students' perceptions of various instructor actions and their impact on academic performance and overall satisfaction with the course. The authors aim to identify the most crucial instructor actions that influence student outcomes in online courses The study highlighted the observation that online courses tend to have larger student enrollments compared to traditional face-to-face classes. This finding is significant as it sheds light on one of the key characteristics of online education, which is the potential to accommodate a larger number of students in a single course. In conclusion, the study highlighted that online courses often have

larger student enrollments compared to traditional face-to-face classes. This characteristic of online education reflects its accessibility, flexibility, scalability, and global reach. While larger student cohorts offer benefits in terms of accessibility and cost-effectiveness, instructors need to implement effective instructional strategies to maintain quality and foster meaningful interactions with each student in the online learning environment.

The findings of Dennen and Burner (2008) highlight an important characteristic of online courses –the higher student-to-faculty ratios compared to traditional face-to-face courses. This characteristic is driven by the unique nature of online education, which allows institutions to reach a larger and more diverse student population, often without the constraints of physical classroom space. While this accessibility and scalability offer several advantages, it also presents specific challenges for instructors, who must manage larger cohorts of students and meet their diverse learning needs effectively.

Increased Student Inquiries: With larger student enrollments, instructors in online courses often experience a higher volume of student inquiries. Students may have questions related to course content, assignments, technical issues, or general concerns about the online learning environment. Responding to these inquiries in a timely and effective manner becomes crucial to maintaining a positive learning experience for students.

Timely Feedback: Providing timely feedback on assignments and assessments is essential in both face-to-face and online courses. However, in the online environment with larger class sizes, instructors face a higher workload in grading and

providing feedback to students. Timely feedback is crucial for students to understand their progress, make improvements, and stay motivated throughout the course.

Facilitating Online Discussions: Online discussions play a vital role in fostering engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking in online courses. With larger cohorts of students, managing and moderating these discussions becomes more complex. Instructors must ensure that discussions remain meaningful, inclusive, and focused on the course objectives while addressing the diverse perspectives and contributions of a larger number of students.

Personalization and Individual Attention: In traditional face-to-face classes, instructors can often provide more personalized attention to individual students due to the smaller class sizes. In the online setting, maintaining this level of personalization can be challenging. Instructors need to find strategies to connect with students individually, offer support, and address their unique learning needs despite the larger class sizes.

Time Management: The increased workload brought about by larger student enrollments can place significant demands on instructors' time. Balancing teaching responsibilities with other academic duties, research, and personal life becomes crucial for maintaining their well-being and effectiveness in the teaching role.

The study conducted by Bower, Dalgarno, Kennedy, Lee, and Kenney (2015), focuses on blended synchronous learning environments and investigates the design and implementation factors that influence the outcomes of such educational

settings. Blended synchronous learning combines both face-to-face and online interactions, allowing students and instructors to participate in real-time activities, discussions, and collaboration, even when geographically dispersed. This approach seeks to leverage the advantages of both traditional and online learning to create a more flexible and engaging educational experience. The research employs a cross-case analysis, which involves comparing and contrasting data from multiple blended synchronous learning environments. The study examines various factors that contribute to the effectiveness and success of these learning environments, including instructional design, technology integration, learner engagement, and outcomes. The study shed light on the importance of workload management in online education and its impact on teaching quality and student outcomes. Online teaching presents unique challenges and demands compared to traditional face-to-face instruction, and effective workload management is essential to ensure that instructors can provide high-quality education while maintaining their well-being.

The study by Huisman and van der Wende (2004) explores the views of European policymakers on the expansion of higher education towards a mass higher education system. The transition from an elite to a mass higher education system is a significant shift that has occurred in many countries across Europe and beyond. The study made a significant point regarding the importance of workload models that consider both teaching and research activities in higher education institutions. The balance between teaching and research is a crucial aspect that directly influences the overall quality and reputation of an academic institution. In conclusion, the study

emphasized workload models that consider both teaching and research activities to be well-founded. Such models foster an environment that promotes both teaching quality and research excellence, which are vital components of a reputable and successful academic institution.

The study conducted by Kinman and Jones (2008) explored the relationship between job demands, work-life balance, and well-being among academics in the UK. This research is particularly relevant given the growing recognition of the importance of work-life balance and well-being in the academic profession. The study shed light on the significant job demands faced by academics, including heavy workloads, research pressures, administrative tasks, and teaching responsibilities. In conclusion, the study highlighted that institutions play a vital role in promoting a healthier work environment for academic staff. Supportive policies and resources, such as flexible scheduling, workload redistribution, professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, and transparent communication, can significantly impact academics' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance

In their study, Cho and Heron (2015) investigated the role of motivation, emotion, and the use of learning strategies in students' self-regulated learning in the online environment. Self-regulated learning refers to students' ability to take control of their learning process, set goals, monitor their progress, and adjust their strategies to achieve better learning outcomes. The study highlighted the significance of motivation in students' online learning experiences. Motivated students are more likely to engage actively in their coursework, persevere through

challenges, and take the initiative to explore course materials. Online learning environments, with their flexibility and autonomy, require students to be self-motivated to stay on track and complete their assignments. In conclusion, the study highlighted the time-consuming nature of grading and providing feedback in online courses, particularly when dealing with large student enrollments. Addressing this challenge requires a careful balance between time management, quality feedback provision, and the use of technology and instructional strategies.

Singh and Thurman's (2019) research delved into the overtime culture of knowledge workers, shedding light on the number of hours worked per week by individuals in knowledge-intensive professions. The research examined the number of hours knowledge workers dedicate to their jobs each week. Often, knowledge workers find themselves working beyond the standard working hours, leading to concerns about work-life balance and potential negative effects on well-being. The study revealed that many knowledge workers regularly exceed the standard 40-hour workweek. In conclusion, the finding indicated that faculty members spend a significant amount of time responding to student emails and messages, while maintaining open communication channels is essential for student support and engagement, institutions need to recognize the potential workload implications for faculty.

The article by Swan (2001) titled "Virtual Interaction: Design Factors Affecting Student Satisfaction and Perceived Learning in Asynchronous Online Courses" investigates the design factors that influence student satisfaction and perceived

learning outcomes in asynchronous online courses, with a specific focus on virtual interactions. The research adopts a qualitative approach, using interviews and surveys to collect data from students enrolled in asynchronous online courses. The study explored various design factors related to virtual interaction, such as the structure of online discussions, instructor presence and feedback, peer interactions, and the use of multimedia and technology in course materials. The study highlighted the importance of instructor presence and engagement in online discussion forums. The time and effort instructors invest in reading and responding to student posts contribute significantly to creating an interactive and supportive virtual learning environment. Active participation in online discussions fosters a sense of community, enhances student satisfaction, and positively impacts perceived learning outcomes.

The report "Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States" by Allen and Seaman (2013) provides a comprehensive analysis of the trends and developments in online education over ten years. The study is based on data gathered from various surveys conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group, offering valuable insights into the growth and evolution of online education in the United States. The report covers a wide range of topics related to online education, including enrollment trends, institutional attitudes toward online learning, challenges faced by institutions, and the impact of online education on academic institutions and students. The report highlights the significant growth of online education in the United States over the ten years. The number of institutions offering online courses and

degree programs increased, leading to a greater number of students enrolling in online courses. The report explored the factors driving the growth of online education, such as the increasing demand for flexible learning options, advancements in technology, and the potential for cost savings for both institutions and students. Despite the growth and acceptance of online education, the report also identifies challenges faced by institutions, such as the need for adequate faculty training, ensuring the quality of online courses, and addressing concerns about academic integrity in online assessments. The reported finding indicated that faculty members spent an average of 6 to 12 hours per week preparing course materials for online courses highlighting the substantial time commitment required for effective online teaching.

The report titled "Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A Meta-analysis and Review of online learning studies" by Means, et. al (2010) is a comprehensive study conducted by the US Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development. The research aimed to examine the effectiveness of online learning compared to traditional face-to-face instruction by conducting a meta-analysis of existing studies on the topic. The researchers performed a rigorous meta-analysis, which is a statistical method that combines data from multiple independent studies to derive overall conclusions. The meta-analysis included studies conducted between 1996 and 2008, and the analysis covered a wide range of subjects, grade levels, and settings. The meta-analysis revealed that students who engaged in online learning generally performed better than those who received face-to-face instruction. The findings indicated that creating

high-quality online learning materials can require up to 100 hours of work per course highlighting the significant time and effort required to design and develop effective online learning experiences. This estimation reflects the complex and meticulous process involved in producing engaging and interactive online course content.

The article "A Workload Policy to Manage Faculty Workload Equity in a University" by Macdonald and Kamvounias (2009) addresses the important issue of faculty workload management and equity in higher education institutions. The study focused on the development and implementation of a workload policy to ensure the fair distribution of teaching and non-teaching responsibilities among faculty members within a university setting. The workload policy aims to strike a balance between teaching and research responsibilities, acknowledging the dual roles of faculty members as educators and scholars. It ensures that faculty members have sufficient time and support for both teaching and research activities. The findings made a significant contribution by emphasizing the importance of workload policies in addressing perceived inequities and grievances related to workload distribution among academic staff.

The research article "Workload Policies in Portuguese Higher Education Institutions" by Ponte and Silva (2015) delved into the examination of workload policies implemented in higher education institutions in Portugal. The study investigated the various workload allocation models used in Portuguese higher education institutions. The researchers analyzed how workload policies are implemented in practice and explored their impact on faculty members' work experiences and overall job

satisfaction. The study identified challenges faced by institutions in implementing and maintaining effective workload policies. The Study emphasized workload policies as a tool for performance evaluation and decision-making processes in higher education institutions highlighting their critical role in ensuring efficient and effective operations.

The article "Rethinking workload in higher education: Applying the 'dynamic equilibrium'" by Maher and Macfarlane (2017) presents a novel perspective on workload management in the context of higher education. The authors propose the concept of a 'dynamic equilibrium' to address the complexities and challenges of managing faculty workload effectively. The article critiques traditional workload models that often focus on quantifying and standardizing workload based on hours spent on specific tasks. Maher and Macfarlane introduce the concept of 'dynamic equilibrium' as an alternative approach to workload management. This concept recognizes that faculty workload can fluctuate based on various factors, such as changing student needs, research opportunities, and institutional priorities. The article highlighted the importance of empowering faculty members to have agency over their workload. Giving faculty the autonomy to shape their responsibilities can lead to higher job satisfaction and productivity. In their article, the authors highlighted the importance of rethinking workload policies in higher education to adapt to the changing landscape of academia. They argue that traditional workload models often focus on quantifiable aspects of faculty work, such as teaching hours and research outputs while neglecting other essential components that contribute to the broader mission of higher education. The authors emphasize the need for workload

policies to encompass factors beyond traditional academic activities and consider the significance of community engagement, interdisciplinary collaborations, and knowledge transfer.

The article "Measuring workload in higher education" by Harris and Woodcock (2010) addresses the critical issue of workload assessment in the context of higher education. Workload measurement is a complex and crucial aspect of managing academic responsibilities, as it directly impacts the quality of teaching, research, and overall job satisfaction for faculty members. The study explored various approaches and methodologies for workload measurement in higher education. It delves into the challenges faced in accurately assessing workload, considering the diverse range of academic activities that faculty members are engaged in, such as teaching, research, administrative duties, and community engagement. The study emphasizes the importance of involving faculty members in the development of workload measurement policies and procedures. Collaborative approaches that include faculty input can lead to a more accurate and fair workload assessment that considers the unique needs and circumstances of individual departments and disciplines. The study highlighted the significance of integrating workload measurement with performance evaluation and professional development initiatives. Aligning workload assessment with performance evaluation ensures that faculty members' contributions are recognized and appropriately rewarded. Moreover, linking workload measurement to professional development can help identify areas where faculty members may require additional support or training to enhance their effectiveness in their roles.

The article "Staff Workload and Motivation: A Critical Analysis of Public Universities in Uganda" by Tukamushaba, Kwesiga, and Kyoshaba (2020) investigated the relationship between staff workload and motivation in public universities in Uganda. The study examined how workload levels and other related factors impact the motivation and job satisfaction of academic staff. The study employs a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative data collection through surveys and qualitative data collection through interviews and focus group discussions. This mixed-methods design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the complex interactions between workload and motivation and provides a deeper understanding of the underlying issues. A key finding of the study is the significant impact of workload on the motivation of academic staff. The study highlighted the need for workload management strategies that take into account the unique challenges faced by academic staff in Ugandan public universities. In conclusion, compliance with workload policies maintains transparency, fairness, and institutional efficiency in workload allocation processes. These policies provide a structured and objective framework for distributing responsibilities among academic staff, ensuring that workload is equitably assigned and aligned with institutional priorities.

The article "Evaluating Faculty Workload and Productivity in the Online Environment: A Cross-institutional Analysis" by Richardson, Long, and Woodley (2012) focuses on assessing faculty workload and productivity specifically in the online learning environment. The study investigated how teaching online courses impacts faculty members' workload and productivity across multiple institutions. The study employed a

cross-institutional analysis, collecting data from multiple universities and colleges. One of the main objectives of the research is to explore the factors that influence faculty workload in the online environment. The findings of the research shed light on the complexities of faculty workload in the online environment. The study reveals that online teaching requires substantial effort and time commitment from faculty members, particularly during the course development and initial offering stages. This is due to the need to create engaging and interactive online content, set up communication channels, and familiarize themselves with the online learning platform. In conclusion, integrating performance indicators into workload allocation can be a powerful strategy to enhance faculty motivation and engagement. Equitable workload distribution, recognition of achievements, targeted support, and ongoing improvement efforts all contribute to fostering a positive and productive work environment for faculty members.

The article "Professional Cultures as Learning Cultures: The Case of Workloads for Teachers in Further Education" by Blackmore, Blackwell, and Bowden (2011) explored the relationship between professional cultures and learning cultures, focusing on the case of workloads for teachers in further education institutions. The study delved into how the professional culture within these educational settings influenced workload perceptions and experiences, ultimately shaping the learning culture of the institution. The authors draw on a qualitative research approach, using interviews and focus groups with teachers and institutional leaders to gather data. The study also highlights the interplay between workload and the learning culture of further education institutions. Workload

perceptions impact how teachers engage in their teaching practices, support students, and participate in professional development activities. In conclusion, Blackmore et al. (2011) emphasized workload allocation as a mechanism for promoting teaching excellence and enhancing student learning experiences underscoring the critical role that equitable workload distribution plays in the overall quality of education within further education institutions. Proper workload allocation supports faculty members in delivering high-quality instruction, fosters professional development, and contributes to a positive learning environment for students.

The article by Briggs and Ockey (2014) explored the use and impact of performance metrics in faculty workload agreements within higher education institutions. The study investigated how performance metrics are utilized to determine faculty workloads and the implications of such agreements for faculty members and institutions. Faculty workload agreements help in establishing the distribution of responsibilities and tasks among academic staff. These agreements are designed to ensure that faculty members' workload aligns with the institution's goals, expectations, and priorities. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on using performance metrics and quantitative measures to assess faculty productivity and performance. The study revealed that performance metrics should be carefully chosen and contextually relevant. Not all academic disciplines and roles can be adequately assessed using standardized metrics. Different fields have diverse ways of evaluating research output and scholarly contributions. It is essential to acknowledge these disciplinary differences when designing workload agreements. In conclusion, clear criteria and

transparent processes in workload allocation are crucial for promoting faculty engagement, satisfaction, and professional growth. When faculty members have a clear understanding of the criteria used to allocate their workload and feel involved in the decision-making process, it enhances their commitment to the institution and fosters a positive and collaborative work environment.

The book "The Experience of Learning and Teaching in Australian Universities," authored by Coates, Goedegebuure, van der Lee, and Meek, provides a comprehensive exploration of the higher education landscape in Australia, with a specific focus on the experiences of learning and teaching in universities. The book delved into various aspects of learning and teaching, highlighting key challenges, successes, and areas for improvement in the Australian higher education system. Workload policies play a critical role as monitoring tools in higher education institutions. They help maintain workload equity, prevent workload pressures, and support faculty members' professional development. By regularly assessing workload allocation and making necessary adjustments, institutions can create an environment that supports faculty well-being, enhances productivity, and ultimately improves the overall quality of education and research.

The article by McFarlane-Tranquilla, Baldwin, Kickul, Carrington, and Main (2018) investigated how organizations manage across different boundaries and the performance implications of various workload allocation strategies. To explore these dynamics, the researchers employ a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative data from interviews

and surveys with quantitative data analysis. They investigated the experiences and perspectives of employees regarding workload allocation strategies, boundary management practices, and their perceptions of organizational performance. The study highlights that boundary management plays a crucial role in workload allocation and employee performance. Employees' ability to navigate and manage boundaries affects their work effectiveness and overall job satisfaction. Effective boundary management is associated with improved employee performance, whereas poor boundary management can lead to stress, burnout, and reduced performance. Furthermore, the research indicates that workload allocation strategies can influence employees' boundary management practices. In particular, boundary-spanning allocation requires employees to manage diverse responsibilities and interact with individuals from different organizational units or geographical locations. Effective boundary management in such scenarios involves clear communication, collaboration, and coordination across boundaries. workload policies are essential tools for enforcing workload equity, avoiding workload overload, promoting transparency, and aligning workload distribution with organizational goals. These policies serve as a safeguard against arbitrary decision-making, providing a structured and fair approach to workload allocation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey method to gather data from all lecturers across academic departments at the International Open University. This approach allowed for the collection of information on lecturers' workload and various aspects of their teaching assignments in an online educational institution. The

survey was conducted using a questionnaire specifically designed to capture relevant data related to workload and teaching assignments. To ensure comprehensive data collection, the questionnaire covered various aspects, such as the number of courses taught, student enrollment, grading responsibilities, preparation time, availability of resources and support, and any non-teaching duties. The questionnaire was distributed to the lecturers through email, providing them with a convenient platform to respond at their own pace. A two-week response period was provided to allow sufficient time for completion.

To enhance the response rate, multiple reminders were sent during the data collection period. Reminders can serve as effective prompts to encourage participation and ensure that the lecturers did not overlook or forget to respond to the survey. The use of reminders helped maximize the representation of lecturers' perspectives and experiences in the study.

In addition to the survey component, the study also employed a purposive sampling technique to collect data from heads of departments responsible for managing educational programs. Purposive sampling allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who possess specific knowledge or expertise relevant to the research objectives. The heads of departments were chosen based on their roles in managing the educational programs at the International Open University. For data collection from the heads of departments, a structured interview schedule was employed. The interview schedule was carefully designed to capture comprehensive information

regarding workload allocation, management, and monitoring techniques implemented for the various educational programs. The structured nature of the interview schedule ensured consistency in data collection and enabled comparability across different department heads.

Through the interview schedule, the study aimed to explore factors such as workload distribution criteria, strategies for assigning teaching responsibilities, methods for monitoring workload, and support mechanisms available to faculty members. The insights gained from the heads of departments provided valuable perspectives on the managerial aspects of workload allocation and shed light on the processes and practices involved in managing educational programs. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, while excerpts and direct quotations were used to analyze the qualitative data.

4. RESULTS

The result is presented in the form of tables, graphs, and direct quotations, while the discussion is based on the significant findings of the research.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Lecturers

ID	Gender	Position	Department	Qualification	Employment Status	Years of Teaching Experience
1	Female	Lecturer	Education	PhD	Contract	14
2	Female	Lecturer	Education	Masters	Full time	10

3	Male	Lecturer	Arabic language	Masters	Part-time	6
4	Male	Lecturer	Arabic language	PhD	Part-time	4
5	Male	Lecturer	Education	Masters	Part-time	6
6	Female	Lecturer	BBA/IBE	PhD	Part-time	6
7	Female	Lecturer	Education	M.Phil.	Part-time	7
8	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	Masters	Part-time	13
9	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	Masters	Full time	10
10	Male	Lecturer	Arabic language	Bachelors	Full time	10
11	Male	Lecturer	Arabic language	Masters	Contract	19
12	Male	Lecturer	BBA/IBE	PhD	Part-time	6
13	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	Masters	Full time	9
14	Female	Lecturer	GQMC	High School	Part-time	2
15	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Contract	14
16	Female	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Part-time	12
17	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Contract	12
18	Female	Lecturer	Psychology	M.Phil.	Full time	8

19	Female	Lecturer	Directorate of Research	PhD	Full time	18
20	Male	Lecturer	BBA/IBE	Masters	Part-time	8
21	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	Bachelors	Full time	9
22	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Full time	25
23	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Full time	25
24	Male	Lecturer	Arabic language	Bachelors	Full time	9
25	Male	Lecturer	Arabic language	Masters	Part-time	8
26	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Full time	9
27	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	Masters	Full time	10
28	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Full time	9
29	Male	Lecturer	Islamic Studies	PhD	Full time	2
30	Female	Lecturer	Directorate of Research	PhD	Full time	18
31	Male	Head of Departme nt	Arabic language	PhD	No Response	No Response

32	Male	Head of Department	Psychology	No Response	No Response	No Response
33	Male	Head of Department	Education	No Response	No Response	No Response
34	Male	Head of Department	Islamic Studies	No Response	No Response	No Response
35	Male	Head of Department	Information Technology	No Response	No Response	No Response
36	Male	Head of Department	Islamic Economic, Banking and Finance	No Response	No Response	No Response

Source: Field survey March-June 2023.

Table 2. The Number of Students in Each Course

How many students are enrolled in each of your online courses?	Frequency	Percent
	3	9.7
1 in one ayah program, 2 in one-on-one Memorization and 3 in 101,	1	3.2
224	1	3.2
228	1	3.2
244	1	3.2
34,27,39,37	1	3.2

38	1	3.2
434	1	3.2
492, 166, 150, 39, 38, 8	1	3.2
Course code: (Students' number) -Psy 102 (234), Psy 127), Psy 105 (127), Psy 402 (65), Psy 404 (58), POA - (107), TH402 (50)	1	3.2
45	1	3.2
In some more than 40 and less than that	1	3.2
It's about 15 to 135 and more than this in some courses	1	3.2
Each varies per subject	1	3.2
On average 300-400.	1	3.2
Option 1	12	38.7
Some have few students and some others have more than 100	1	3.2
Total	31	100.0

Source: Field survey March-June 2023

Table 3. The Number of Courses Taught by Each Lecturer

	Frequency	Percent
Missing response	2	6.7
Eight	7	23.3
Eleven	1	3.3
Five	1	3.3
Four	3	10.0

Nine	2	6.7
One	5	16.7
Seven	3	10.0
Six	1	3.3
Three	3	10.0
Two	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Source: Field survey March-June 2023

Table 4. The Number of Hours Spent in Tasks Per Week

	Frequency	Percent
Missing response	2	6.7
14hrs	1	3.3
16hrs	1	3.3
18hrs	1	3.3
2-3hrs	1	3.3
2hrs	1	3.3
30hrs	1	3.3
3hrs	1	3.3
40- 45hrs	1	3.3
40hrs	2	6.7

48hrs	1	3.3
4hrs	1	3.3
54hrs	1	3.3
5hrs	2	6.7
6hrs	3	10.0
7hrs	2	6.7
8-12hrs	1	3.3
8hrs	1	3.3
8hrs or more	1	3.3
between 4-5hrs	1	3.3
I don't have weekly classes this semester but as far other due tasks are concerned, I always spare myself to accomplish them given timelines.	1	3.3
24hrs	1	3.3
25hrs	1	3.3
This differs from time to time, at grading time, I sit from until late at night.	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

Source: Field survey March-June 2023

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Table 5. Common Tasks and Activities Involved in Teaching an Online Course

	Frequency	Percent
facilitating discussions.	1	1.9
facilitating discussions, creating lectures, and providing feedback	27	3.7
Managing groups in the assigned courses.	1	1.9
answering questions.	2	3.7
Meeting the deadlines of all the tasks related to the smooth going of the online teaching processes.	1	1.9
Conducting weekly, midterm, and final term revision live sessions in all the courses.	1	1.9
Providing general guidance and encouragement to my student to engage in research thereby making sure they do not lose focus and hope in their studies.	1	1.9
I also check for errors in the available course content including MCQs and give back a report to the responsible department.	1	1.9
Attending IOU Zoom meetings in which we learn a lot about how to do our tasks easily and perfectly.	1	1.9
Making timely relevant announcements of any new developments to the students.	1	1.9
Taking time to familiarize myself with the course contents	1	1.9
Monitoring and replying to student forums as well as the discussion forums.	1	1.9
Responding to students' emails when they have queries related to the courses.	1	1.9

Attending and responding to students WhatsApp messages mainly during working hours.	1	1.9
Preparing and grading Assignments, open-ended questions for both the mid-term and the final term exams.	1	1.9
Preparing the multiple-choice questions for a new course to which I have been recently assigned.	1	1.9
Answering the questions of the students, grading the exams and assignments, conducting weekly and revision sessions.	1	1.9
Assignments	1	1.9
Check mail, forums, and interaction with students.	2	3.7
Correcting MCQs etc.	2	3.7
Engaging students on forums, emails and social media, live classes.	1	1.9
Forum discussion, online meetings, live classes, WhatsApp conference.	1	1.9
Giving fatwas when asked.	2	3.7
Guiding students related to research, or other things they ask.	2	3.7
I carry out answering questions from students in the Arabic department and also participate in setting questions in assignments and final exams, also carry out benefits ideas for the students to ensure their quality education, after all these we perform a monthly live session with students to help them revise their previous topics.	1	1.9
I have a revision class only before mid-term and final.	1	1.9
I have just started.	1	1.9

I prepare lectures properly, make slides for students' convenience, and try to make them interactive if there is sufficient strength of students in the classroom.	1	1.9
I study, explore, develop my own learning - help students in general, help them with their challenges - work very closely with my thesis students to help them produce quality work in particular.	1	1.9
Lesson preparation, resource sourcing, and creation.	1	1.9
Monitor forums, respond to queries from students, communicate via e-mails, prepare study aides, and share them with students.	1	1.9
Motivational feedback.	1	1.9
Online class, responding to emails, a guide to students, answering to students, etc.	1	1.9
Posting on the announcements forum, sharing extra learning resources, answering course-related queries, reading course material.	1	1.9
Preparation and Presentation Slides	1	1.9
Prepare study aides, frequently check forums and e-mails, one-on-one chat with students.	1	1.9
Prompt guidance, clarifications, and evaluation of assessment.	1	1.9
Responding to students' queries.	1	1.9
Student queries via emails, forum posts, messages, and other means, MCQ-related matters, live sessions and other tasks given by the Faculty Manager, meeting the monthly deadlines, etc.	1	1.9

Time management, utilizing a variety of technology options, connected students individually.	1	1.9
Total	54	100.0

Source: Field survey March-June 2023

Excerpts From Respondents

"*Yes, we are now in the fifth semester, and the workload is very huge". Respondent 31.*

''No, we don't have any workload Policy". *Respondent 32.*

"Not at the department level." Respondent 36.

1- The strong teacher in the Arabic language, and this returns to most of the time native speakers.

2-Lack of student complaints from the teacher.

3-Fewer errors in preparing OEQ and assignments.

4-Fewer errors in correcting the assignments.

5-The teacher's commitment to deadline.

6-Arabic-speaking teachers teach higher levels of the BA ALS program, and non-native Arabic speakers teach the lower levels." Respondent 31.

"The staff qualification and experience with meeting up the deadlines are considered for the allocation of workload". Respondent 33

"I use the Standard Workload Formula." Respondent 35.

"It is decided by HR. HoDs are not consulted in this matter." Respondent 36.

"Field of specialization, academic degree, experience, competence, gradual customization to tasks, individual differences". Respondent 34.

"Weekly and monthly live sessions, midterm and final exam revision sessions, grading of assignments, correcting MCQ errors, responding to students' queries on forums and emails, office hours, thesis supervision, moderation tasks, developing new course materials, etc." Respondent 35.

5. DISCUSSION

The workload in academia is essential to ensure fair distribution of work, which will ultimately improve the quality of education. Academic workload entails the teaching-related activities as well as administrative activities that facilitate effective teaching and learning. The execution of these duties of an academic staff constitutes his workload. According to Brown (2020), workload allocation in higher education involves distributing tasks and responsibilities among staff members, taking into account factors such as the number of hours worked, the complexity of the work, and the capacity of individuals. It must be understood that any activity in pursuit of this requires a proper measure that determines the total amount of work done by such personnel. According to Davis et al. (2018), workload allocation models facilitate transparency and effective communication among lecturers and administrators. When lecturers have a clear understanding of the criteria and considerations involved in

workload allocation, it promotes a sense of fairness and transparency.

The Demographic Characteristics of the academic staff at the IOU in this study constitute 66.7% (n=20) of the respondents are males and the remaining 33% (n=10) are females. 43.3%(n=13) are in full time employment,40%(n=12) are part time and the remaining 13% (n=4) of the lecturers are on contract. 40%(n=12) of the respondents gained a PhD, 36.7% (n=11) gained a Master's degree. The conditions of full-time employment are associated with tasks and responsibilities to be performed for the institution. Employees with this status are obliged to execute duties enshrined in the terms and conditions of their employment that must be commensurate with the capacity and the level of activity determined in measurable terms to prevent overload. In most academic institutions, full-time employment constitutes working 40 hours a week spread over the tasks and activities executed by staff. In modern-day workload allocation, this standard measure (40 hours) does not only account for the hours spent in class or in contact with the students but includes a range of activities required to ensure effective teaching, not only at work but extends at home where activities such as design and preparation of lectures, marking and evaluating assignments are usually executed. Martinez et al. (2020) found that workload allocation in academia now involves tasks such as designing course materials, facilitating discussions, providing feedback, and managing assessments, which are not limited to classroom hours. In this connection, workload allocation requires the careful measure of all the activities executed by a lecturer both at work and at home. It must also take note of other non-teaching responsibilities such

as meetings, practical supervision visits, thesis supervision activities as well as many more not outlined in this paragraph. According to Bolliger and Wasilik (2009), workload allocation in online education includes instructional activities as well as non-instructional tasks like facilitating online discussions, managing online platforms, and providing student support. It must be understood that part-time or contract employment, must also identify the tasks and responsibilities commensurate with the desired work output in definite and measurable terms. A similar finding was observed by Marchand et al. (2021) who argue that clear job descriptions, explicit expectations, and measurable deliverables are essential for establishing fair workload allocation for part-time faculty members while Kyvik and Teigen (1996) argue that part-time academic staff should have their tasks and responsibilities clearly defined and measured to ensure their contributions align with desired outcomes.

However, it is important to note that the student-lecturer ratio is an important consideration in effective teaching workload allocation. In its entirety, the student-lecturer ratio basically calculates classroom size for each course. In this survey, this ratio extends from 15 students in a class/course to 495 students in a single course. A similar finding was observed by Guruz and Sahin (2016) who found that online courses often have larger student enrollments compared to traditional face-to-face classes while Dennen and Burner (2008), posited that online courses often have higher student-to-faculty ratios compared to traditional face-to-face courses and intimated that the increased student enrollment in online courses places additional demands on lecturers, requiring them to handle larger numbers of student inquiries, provide timely feedback,

and facilitate online discussions. A larger classroom size proffers a substantially larger workload for its lecturer. In this situation, a single lecturer is responsible to prepare and design lecture notes, lecturing, conducting a formative and summative assessment, provide feedback. It is a common practice that online programs admit a large number of students in a course, particularly in the synchronized methodology. Access to the lecture material is adequate, but what is fashionable to question is the adequacy of a proper process to assess and evaluate student learning progress, live discussion sessions, and the quality of timely feedback. It must be remembered that a workload calculation model built on the institutional workload policy is required to prevent excessive work that will ultimately adulterate the quality of education in an online platform. Bower, Dalgarno, Kennedy, Lee, and Kenney (2015) highlighted the significance of workload management in online education to maintain teaching quality and enhance student outcomes and suggested that institutions need to establish workload policies and guidelines that consider the unique demands of online teaching, including time required for course development, interactions with students, and assessment activities. Besides the classroom size, the number of courses taught is another important indicator of workload allocation.

In this study it became evident that 60% (n=18) of the lecturers handled between four to nine online courses. This may be considered excess and beyond normal threshold particularly in situations where the class size reaches 495 students. The ability for these lecturers to effectively conduct the normal routines of the process involved in on-line course lecturing may not reach acceptable quality standards. A measure to model an equitable

and fairer job load model for academic staff is required for consistency, and conformity that will instigate a transformative improvement in the quality of standards in delivery and wellbeing. Similar finding was corroborated by Huisman and van der Wende (2004) who emphasized the importance of workload models that account for both teaching and research activities, as they contribute to the overall quality and reputation of an institution while Kinman and Jones (2008) highlighted the need for institutions to provide supportive policies and resources, such as flexible scheduling, workload redistribution, and professional development opportunities, to foster a healthier work environment for academic staff. The activities involved in the online course teaching includes facilitating discussions, creating lectures, and providing feedback amongst other responsibilities such as weekly live revision sessions, monitoring and responding student discussion forums, emails, and WhatsApp discussion platforms, preparing and grading assignments as well as on-line meetings all require the lecturers time and attention. Cho and Heron (2015) highlighted the time-consuming nature of grading and providing feedback in online courses, Singh and Thurman (2019) found that faculty members reported spending a significant amount of time responding to student emails and messages, while Swan (2001) found that instructors spent a considerable amount of time reading and responding to student posts in online discussion forums. It is explicitly and clearly indicated in this research that between 2 to 54 hours (table 4) are spent on either one or more of these tasks identified in Table 3 above. A similar finding was corroborated by Allen and Seaman (2013) who reported that faculty members spent an

average of 6 to 12 hours per week preparing course materials for online courses, indicating the significant time commitment required while Means et al. (2010), posited that creating high-quality online learning materials can require up to 100 hours of work per course. With all these series of activities requiring that time to accomplish in conducting an online course teaching at the International Open University, there is no academic workload policy to ensure equitable and fair distribution of job responsibilities among staff.

The workload policy is not only a framework to ensure fair and equitable distribution of job tasks, but It also serves as a tool for measuring work tasks and responsibilities executed by the members of the academic staff. Macdonald and Kamvounias (2009) highlighted the importance of workload policies in reducing perceived inequities and grievances related to workload distribution among academic staff, Ponte and Silva (2015) emphasized the importance of workload policies as a tool for performance evaluation and decision-making processes in higher education institutions, while Maher and Macfarlane (2017) emphasized the need for workload policies to consider the changing landscape of higher education and encompass factors such as community engagement, interdisciplinary collaborations, and knowledge transfer. It requires the careful measurement and distribution of tasks to determine the performance and progress of work done by staff. Harris and Woodcock (2010) emphasized the importance of workload measurement in higher education, as it allows for more accurate workload distribution and helps prevent workload inequities among faculty members. Compliance with the policy is a quality assurance indicator for both the administration enforcing it as

well as the lecturers in conformance to it. It generally indicates how tasks are measured and proportioned. Tukamushaba et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of compliance with workload policies in maintaining transparency and fairness in workload allocation processes. The absence of a workload policy brings inconsistencies in allocating tasks to the various departments at the International Open University. Here is an excerpt from these respondents.

"The staff qualification and experience with meeting up the deadlines are considered for the allocation of workload". Respondent 33.

In this department, the lecturer's workload is assigned based on the statement above. It is considered to be a crude form of allocation, where performance cannot be measured or indicators cannot be appraised. Richardson et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of performance indicators in workload allocation to enhance faculty motivation and engagement while Blackmore et al. (2011) emphasized the role of workload allocation as a mechanism for promoting teaching excellence and enhancing student learning experiences. Briggs and Ockey (2014) highlighted the importance of clear criteria and transparent processes in workload allocation to foster faculty engagement and support their professional growth. While in another department a workload standard formula was used to allocate tasks. Here is an excerpt "*I use the Standard Workload Formula. "Respondent 35*. However, evidence of this assertion has never been verified in this research and no other respondent has ever mentioned or referred to the existence of the standard workload formula. A careful review of the

institution's policies does let bare the existence of the standard workload formula purported by the respondent. *While respondent 36 intimated that "It is decided by HR. HoDs are not consulted in this matter*." Coates et al. (2017) highlighted the role of workload policies as monitoring tools to ensure workload equity and identify workload pressures while McFarlane-Tranquilla et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of workload policies as a means to enforce workload equity and ensure that workload decisions are based on established guidelines. Where a workload policy does not exist, it is hard to provide both the management technique and monitoring tool for its implementation and enforcement, much more of the expected improvements that will ultimately transform the quality profile of the institution.

6. CONCLUSION

The demographic characteristics of the academic staff at the International Open University (IOU) revealed a gender imbalance, with a higher percentage of male staff compared to females. Additionally, the study highlighted that a significant portion of the lecturers were in full-time employment, while others were part-time or on contract. Each employment category requires careful consideration of tasks and responsibilities that are commensurate with the desired work output Traditionally, workload allocation in academia was primarily focused on the number of hours spent in the classroom or in direct contact with students. However, in modern times, workload allocation extends beyond teaching hours and includes various activities such as lecture design and preparation, assignment marking, administrative tasks,

supervision, and more. The workload calculation model should encompass all these activities, both within the institution and at home. Another important factor to consider in workload allocation is the student-lecturer ratio. Larger classroom sizes, especially in online programs, can result in substantial workloads for lecturers. Ensuring an adequate process for assessing and evaluating student learning progress, facilitating live discussions, and providing timely feedback becomes crucial in such situations.

The number of courses taught is also a significant indicator of workload allocation. The study revealed that some lecturers were handling a high number of online courses, which may exceed the acceptable threshold for effective teaching and the maintenance of quality standards. It is essential to establish an equitable and fair workload model that takes into account the capacity of lecturers and promotes consistent and high-quality delivery. Having a well-defined workload policy serves as a framework for measuring work tasks and responsibilities and ensures consistency and conformity within the institution. Compliance with the policy becomes a quality assurance indicator for both the administration and the lecturers. The absence of a workload policy can lead to inconsistencies and challenges in task allocation, hindering the institution's progress and the professional development of faculty members. implementing a workload policy at the IOU is crucial for establishing an equitable distribution of job tasks, promoting the well-being of academic staff, and improving the quality of education. This policy should consider various factors, such as gender balance, employment status, student-lecturer ratio, and the number of courses taught. With the establishment of a fair

workload allocation system, the IOU can foster a transformative improvement in the quality standards of teaching and enhance the overall educational experience for both students and faculty members.

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