



UNIVERSITY OF TM
KWAZULU-NATAL
—
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

EXPERIENCES OF POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS AT UKZN :

RAJEN PADAYACHI – QPA Consultant
LUMKILE LALENDLE – Director QPA UKZN
SEPTEMBER 2013



EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

HOWARD COLLEGE CAMPUS

NELSON R MANDELA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS

WESTVILLE CAMPUS

INSPIRING GREATNESS

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

- **UKZN** Strategic plan 2007 – 2016 has identified the Post Doctoral research as one of the focus areas
- In May 2012 the Executive Management Team sanctioned an institution wide research to:
 - Gather perspectives of Masters, Doctoral students and Post Doctoral fellows
 - Address concerns about the failure of some schools and colleges to meet enrolment targets at a PG levels including Post Doctoral Fellows
 - Challenges in retaining masters and doctoral and Post Doctoral Fellows

CONTEXT

- **National Development Plan of 2011:**
- Sets targets for Higher Education which include:
 - Increase % of PhD staff from 34% to over 75% over next 20 years
 - Double number of graduate, post graduate and first rate scientists
 - Increase African and women postgraduates, especially PhDs
 - Improve research and innovation capacity
 - Creation of conducive teaching, learning and research environments

OBJECTIVES

- Over arching objective is to:
 - Understand the experiences of Post Doctoral Fellows in respect to services and support provided in their research education
- Other objectives are to:
 - Gather PDFS perceptions on the intellectual and institutional climate
 - Get an appraisal on the appropriateness of available infrastructure that support the research endeavors at UKZN
 - Gain insights on institutional factors that impact on intake, retention and success.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the experiences of Post Doctoral Fellows at UKZN in respect to supervision, resourcing and support?
2. Has UKZN created intellectual and institutional climate that enables them to achieve their goals?
3. What areas within the University's provision of services will need focused attention in order to improve the experiences of Post Doctoral fellows?

METHODOLOGY

- Design
 - Qualitative and quantitative paradigms
- Sample –Quantitative
 - PDF in 2012
 - Sample size – 615 students sampled
 - Return rate - 22%
- Population
 - PDF in four Colleges of UKZN all disciplines

METHODOLOGY.

Data Collection and instruments

- **Survey instrument** was developed using established instruments from Australian Graduate student survey
- **47 questions** were generated covering the following areas:
 - Supervision - Intellectual Culture; Living conditions ; Administrative processes; Infrastructure ; College support; Approach to research; Consultations and Biographical data

METHODOLOGY ..

Data collection - Qualitative

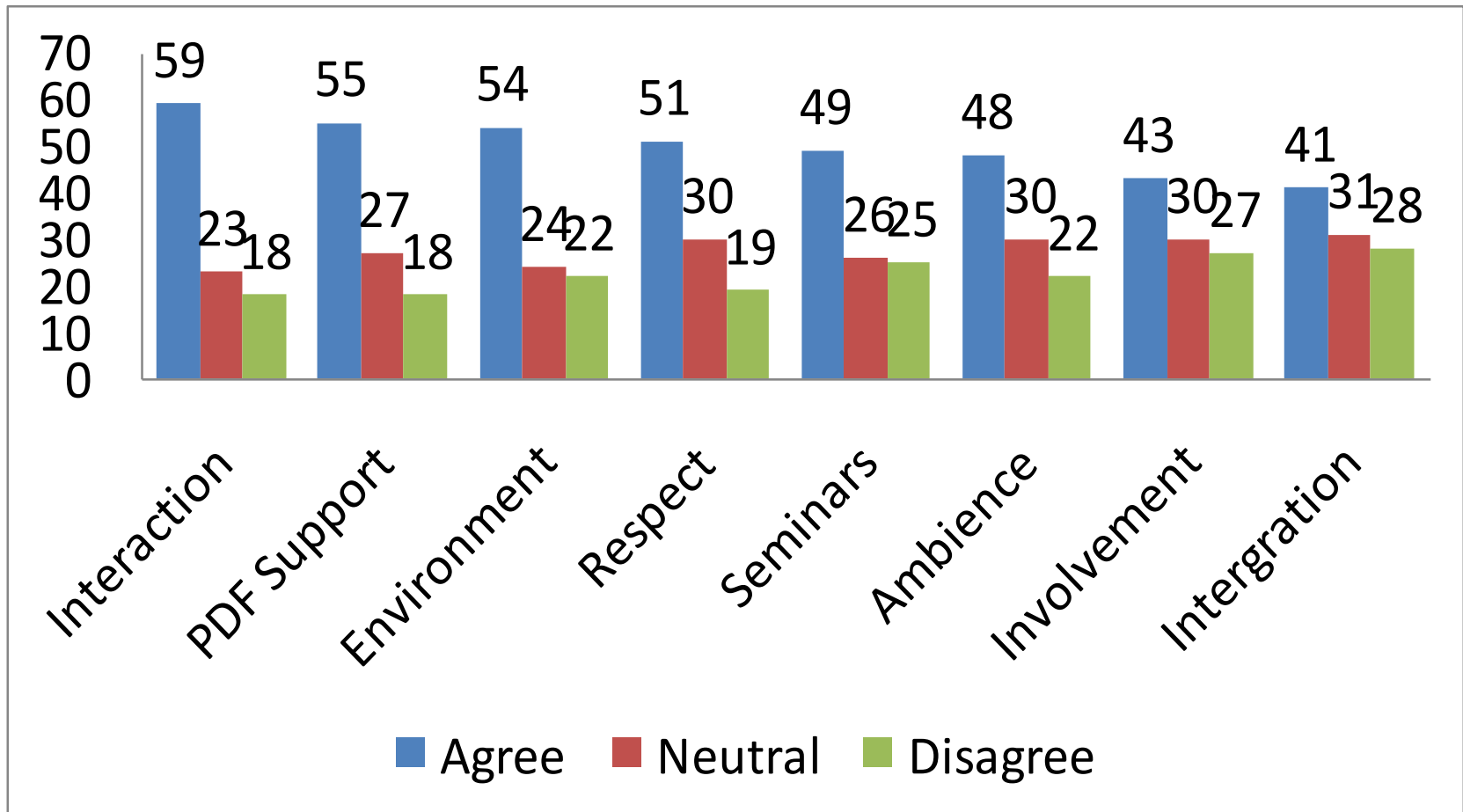
- Semi-structured face to face interviews with
 - College Research Deans and Academic leaders Research and Post-graduate Education
 - Postgraduate Officers & Postgraduate Research administrators

METHODOLOGY...

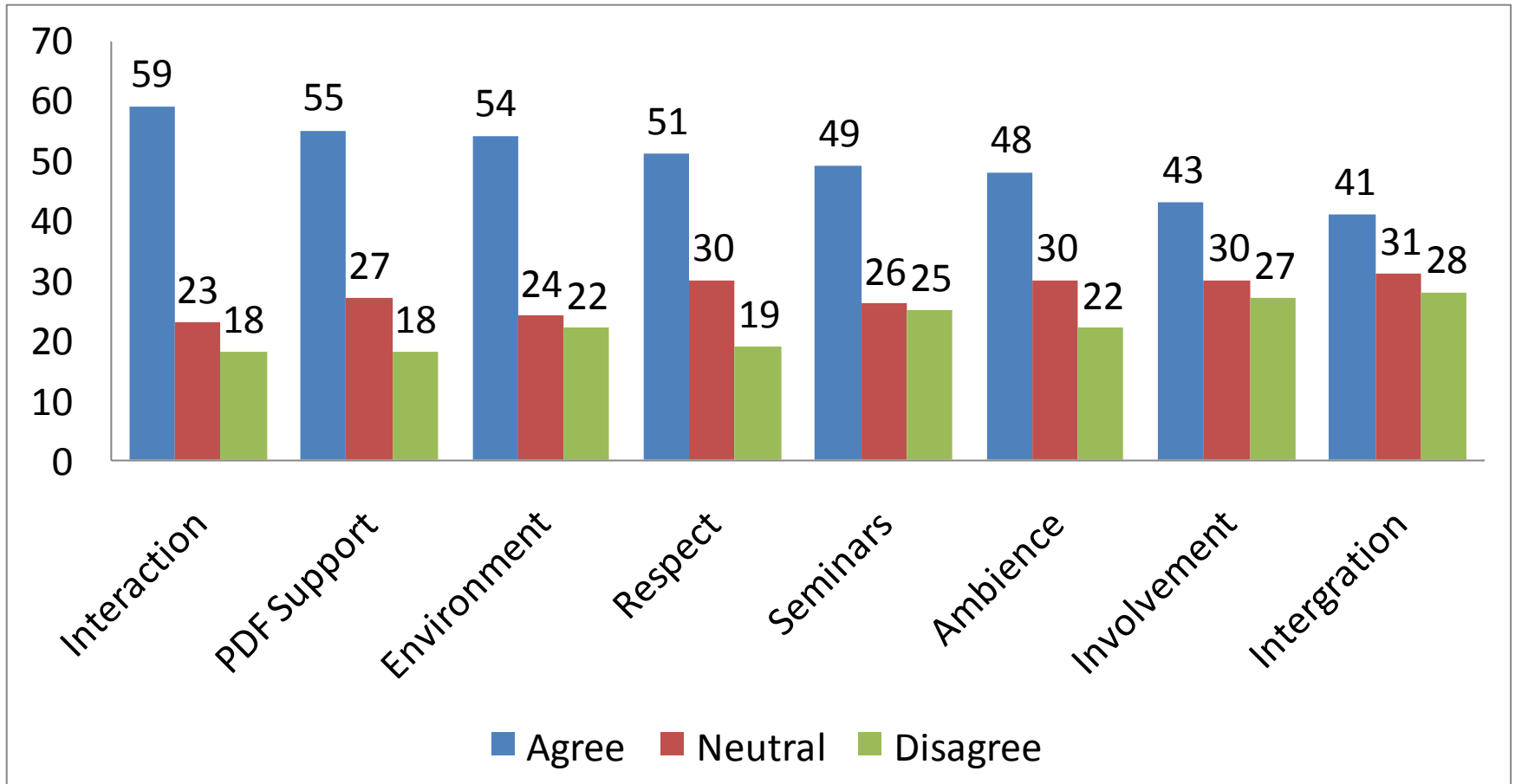
- Data Analysis
 - Analysis of qualitative data by researchers for establishing themes
 - Presentations of preliminary results to the research team and refinement of interpretation of data
 - Validation workshop with research team and research leaders

FINDINGS

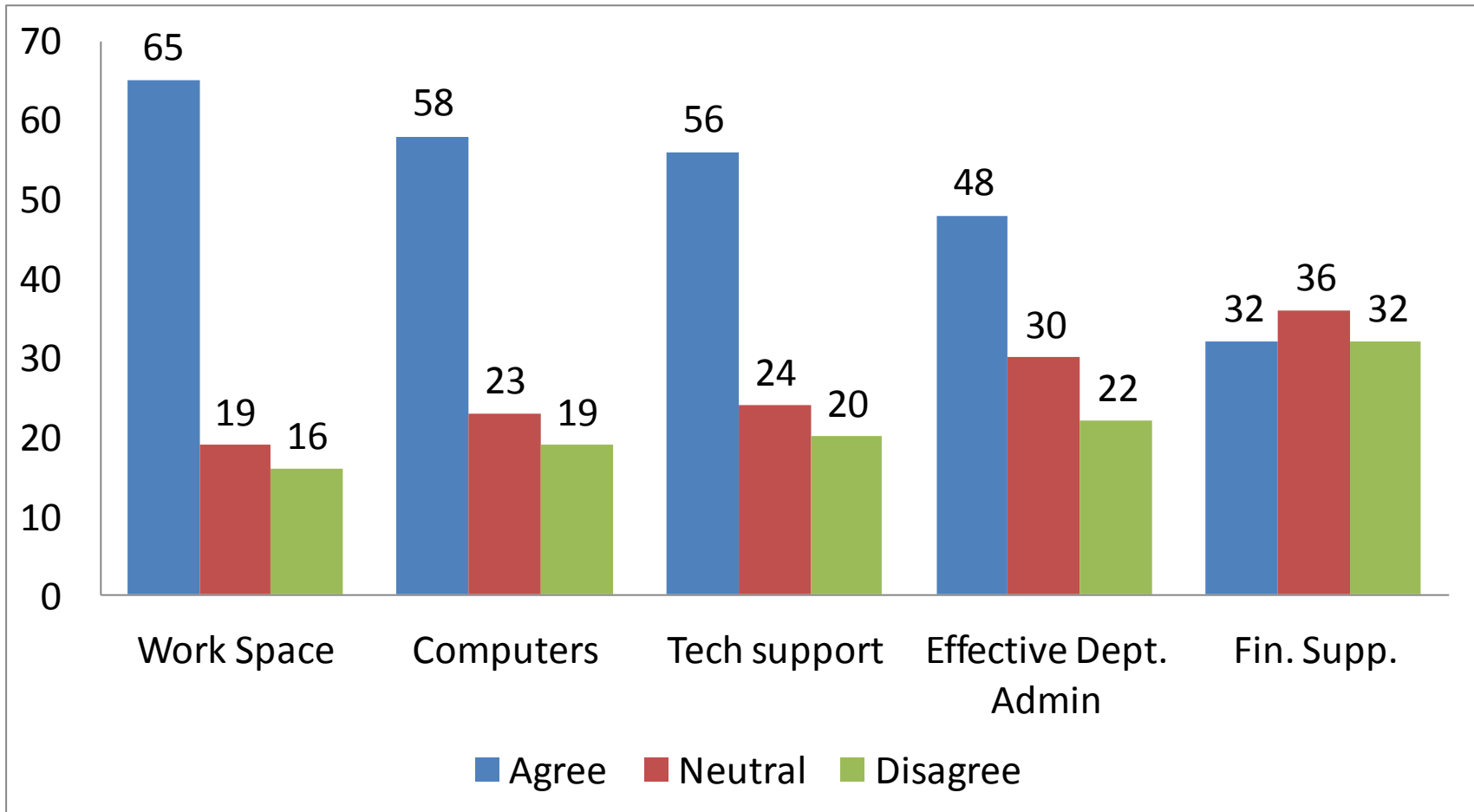
SUPERVISION



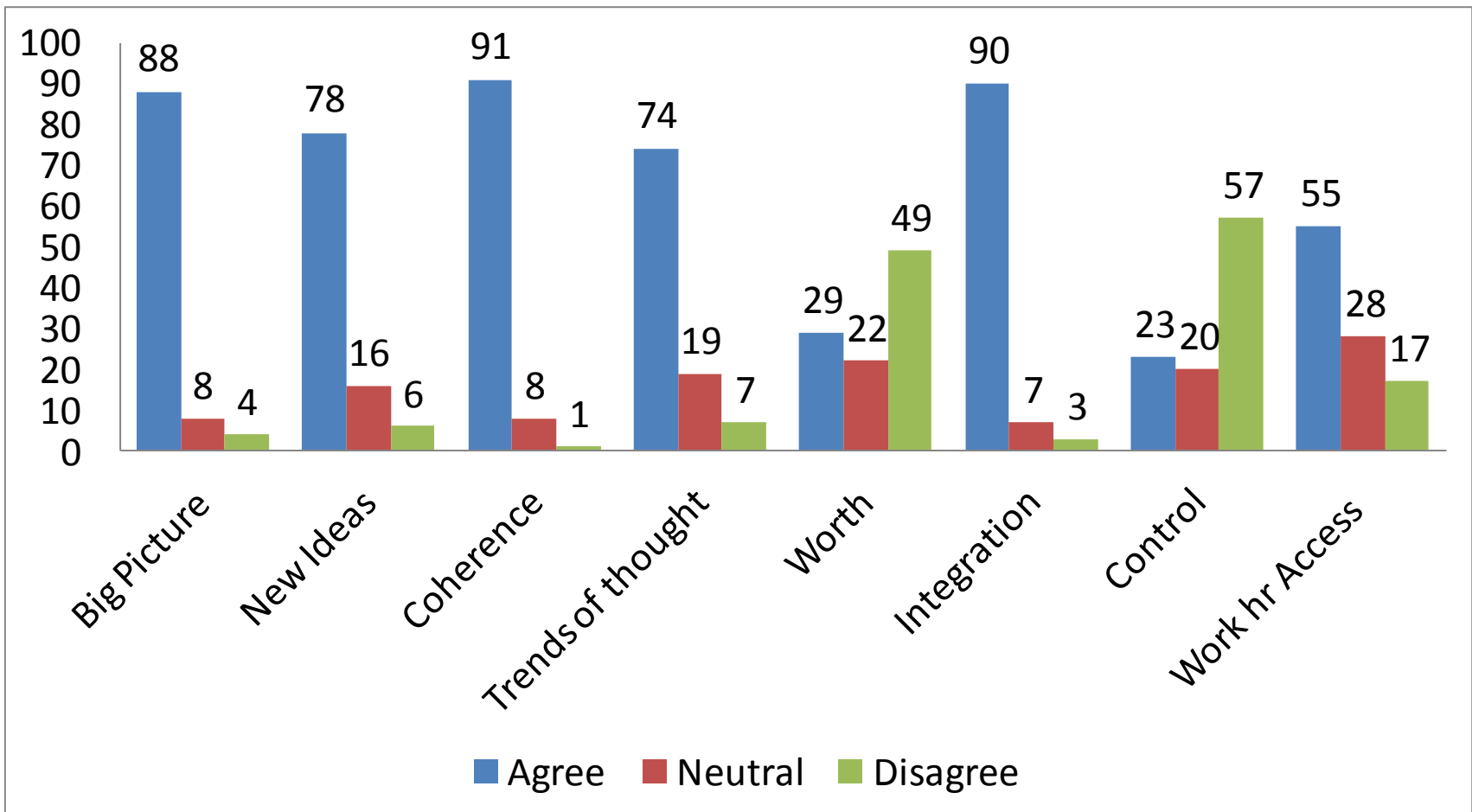
INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE



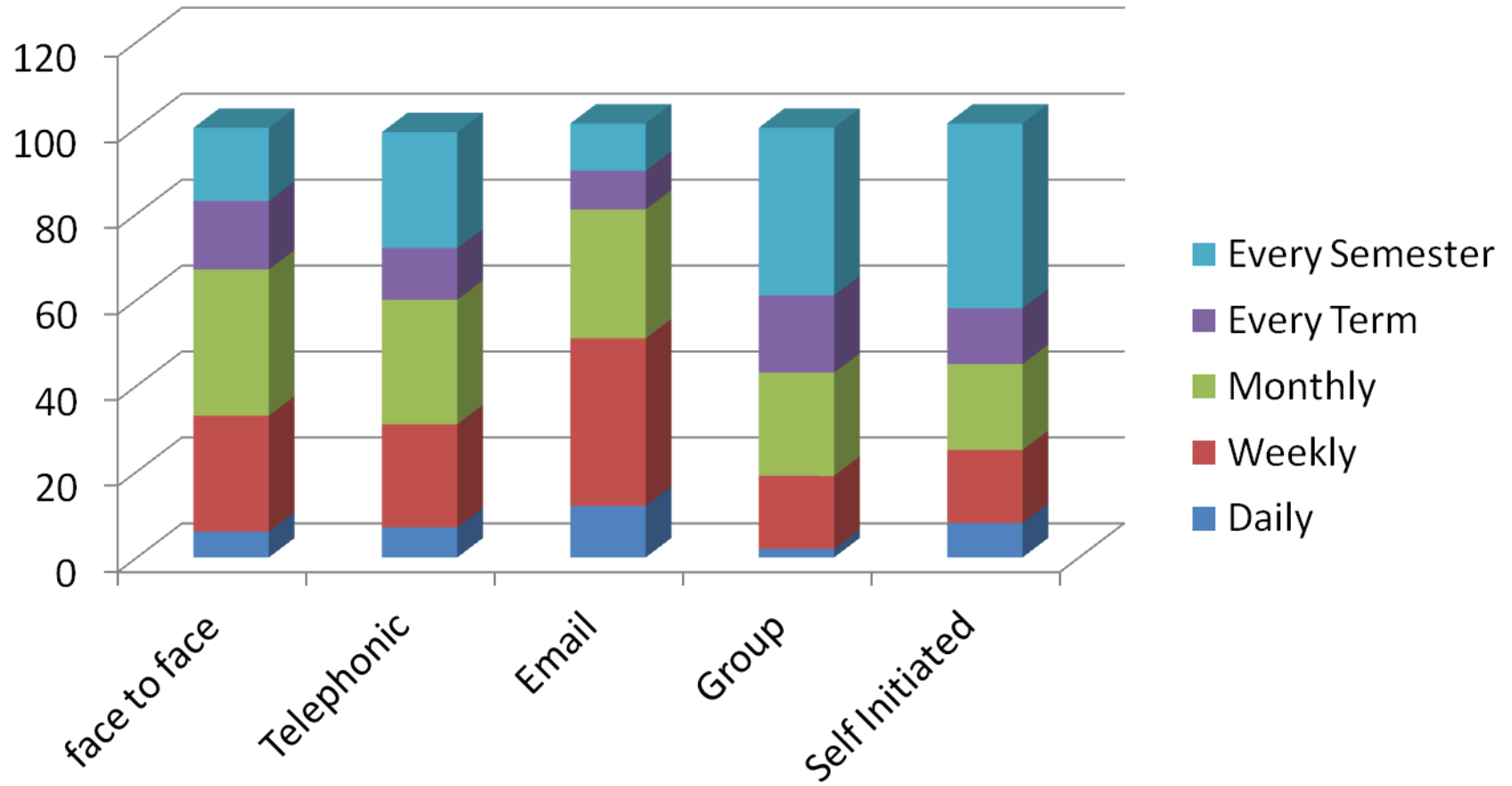
INFRASTRUCTURE



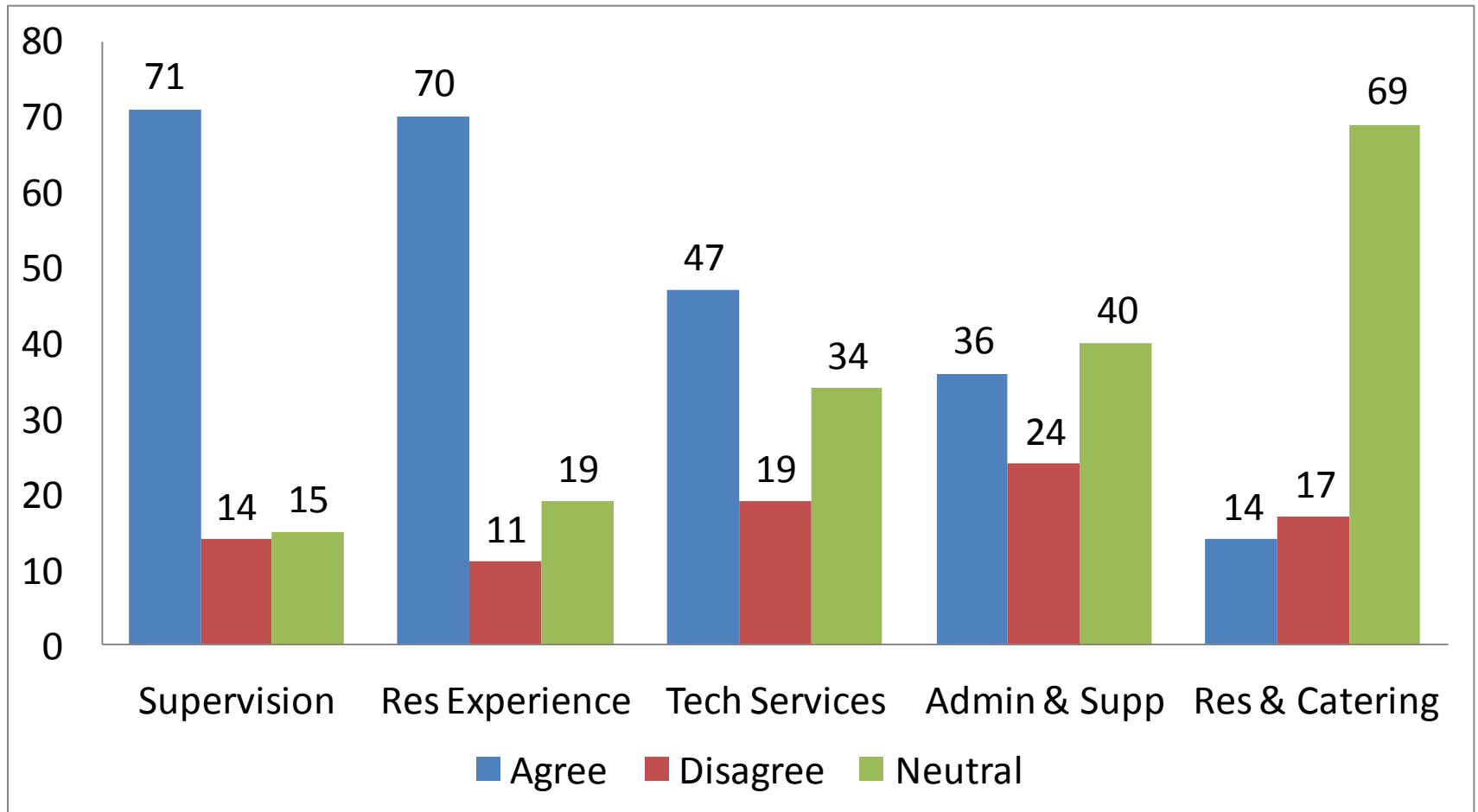
APPROACH TO RESEARCH



CONSULTATION



OVERALL SATISFACTION



CONSULTATIONS

- **Frequency of meetings:**
 - **Face to face :**
 - **weekly 27%; monthly 35%; Term 16%) Semester 17%;**
 - **Telephone :**
 - **Weekly 24%; monthly 29%; semester 27%)**
 - **Email :**
 - **weekly-39% monthly -30%)**
 - **Group meetings:**
 - **weekly 18%; Monthly 24%; Term 17%; Semester 39%**
 - **Self initiated meetings with fellow researchers :**
 - **weekly 17%; monthly 20%; Term 13%; Semester 43% ;**

CONCLUSIONS

- Supervision is generally satisfactory while some PDF have issues with quality of guidance, topic selection and refinement
- Academic and administrative support are areas of concern esp. financial and navigation through the maze of beaurocracy.
- Intellectual and institutional climate needs improvement esp. collaboration, interaction and arrangement of seminars

CONCLUSIONS

- Infrastructure for some is appropriate and supportive of their research
- Some complain about inadequate facilities and technical support
- Services –residential, catering and counseling attracted few positive responses due to the fact that a large proportion of PDF may not be using these services

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for practice:

- Supervision is generally viewed as a strength
- Need to intensify the PhD project for staff as colleges with staff that possess doctoral degrees have high ratings in relation to intellectual culture
- Need to improve administrative support esp. the beaurocracy and the distribution of research funds