

***A guideline to improve the success rate of current
M-Tech students in completing their studies: A case of
the Department of Tourism Management***

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<i>A guideline to improve the success rate of current M-Tech students in completing their studies: A case of the Department of Tourism Management</i>	62 + 5
<p>This case study developed guidelines to improve the success rate of current Magister Technologiae (M-Tech) students after exploring the challenges confronting students who are studying M-Tech: Tourism and Hospitality Management and M-Tech: Adventure Tourism Management. Each of these postgraduate degrees is a two-year qualification within a department of Tourism Management at a university of technology in South Africa. Using a qualitative approach, the study aimed to determine why the students took longer than two years to complete their National Accredited Technical Education Diploma qualifications. The research questions focused on the challenges faced by the university students in completing their magister degrees.</p> <p>The sample of the study comprised 17 students who had registered for the M-Tech qualifications. Both the M-Tech qualifications are being phased out since the university has now aligned their qualifications with the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework as required by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training. The instrument of the study was a semi-structured questionnaire. The qualitative data were analysed using a thematic analysis method through an exploratory research. Six dimensional challenges emerged as major themes: a) Mental and emotional challenges; b) Resources challenges; c) Supervisory challenges; d) Academic challenges; e) Support challenges; and f) Procedure/System challenges.</p> <p>These challenges were further categorised into sub-themes. The findings of the study showed that these challenges are related to performance. Recommendations will be forwarded to the relevant authorities for them to address these challenges and facilitate the students' completion of their phasing-out qualifications. The students themselves also presented suggestions that could assist the relevant authorities in managing master's students better in the new qualification structure.</p>	
Keywords	
master's, academic, support, supervisory, challenges, quality management system	

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Abbreviations

B-TECH	Baccalaureas Technologiae
CHE	Centre for Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
D-TECH	Doctor Technologiae
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework
MMSc	Master of Management Sciences
M-TECH	Magister Technologiae (Master of Technology)
NATED	National Accredited Technical Education Diploma
UoT	University of Technology
QMS	Quality Management Systems
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

As the world evolves, there has been a greater shift that contributes to life-long learning by economies of the world, constant need for innovative and new skills, availability of capital or funding and is pressure on higher education institutions to produce more postgraduate students (Massyn 2018). Due to lack of restrictions in the higher education sector, which have included a vacuum in experienced supervisors and a more diverse student population, these have led to apprehensions related to the full completion rates of research projects that contribute to funding a lack of answers to South African social, economic and environmental problems. Higher education literature identifies various strategies to address the challenges associated with the failure to complete postgraduate programmes on time. This has led many to argue that an integrated approach should be developed to reduce the completion times of dissertations. Other scholars have used the example that many MBA students pass the coursework but struggle to complete their mini-dissertations (compulsory research project).

Currently in South Africa, there are universities of technology (UoTs) and traditional universities. Last year (2020) saw the aligned programmes of the new education structure, the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF), being implemented for the first time. Within a UoT structure, a student would complete a Diploma, a Baccalaurean degree, a Magister Technologiae and a Doctor Technologiae while in the new structure, a student would complete a Diploma, an Advanced Diploma, a Postgraduate Diploma, a Magister Technologiae and a Doctor Technologiae.

Agreement regarding this new structure took many years and many consultations and currently enables students from a UoT to gain easier acceptance into a traditional university set up. In previous years, gaining acceptance would have required a bridging course. In addition, there had been talk amongst scholars that the Baccalaureas Technologiae (B-Tech) in the old structure did not sufficiently train a student who wished to articulate into a master's and doctorate, resulting in struggles when students were enrolled for master's and doctoral degrees. Consequently, the Postgraduate Diploma was introduced to develop the student who would like to articulate into a Master's and a Doctoral degree.

1.2 Problem statement

The aim of this study was to investigate the reasons for the current Magister Technologiae (old structure) students taking longer than required to complete their Master's degrees within a South African UoT, specifically within the Department of Tourism Management. The specific research questions that this study intended to answer are as follows: What are the challenges that have contributed to students staying in the system longer than required to complete their Master's degree? What support do these students require?

The minimum duration for the Master's degree is one year for full-time study and two years at most universities in South Africa and for most continuous part-time study. In many instances, candidate are not allowed to register for the Master's degree for a period longer than four years, except with special permission from the Senate after an applicant provides a motivation regarding reasons for his/her long term study period

1.3 Research aim and objectives

The aim of the research was to develop guidelines for improving the success rate of the M-Tech qualification that is being phased out and to improve the quality assurance of the qualification.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives were as follows:

Objective 1: To determine the challenges that cause master's students to stay in the system longer

Objective 2: To determine the solutions that will assist the students in exiting the system

Objective 3: To develop guidelines for the department to assist current M-Tech students and future students at the same level and above in completing their studies

1.3.2 Research questions

The following are the research questions of the current study:

- Why are the master's students challenged and struggling to complete their studies?
- How can the master's students be assisted in exiting the system?
- What guidelines could be developed to improve the success rate system?

1.4 Research methodology

A qualitative approach was found suitable for acquiring relevant information about the challenges faced by current Magister Technologiae students in completing their studies (Creswell et al. 2016; Smith 2005; Tessier 2012). Evidence also indicates that in research, anthropologists and sociologists have been adopting qualitative approaches (Decrop 1999; Esterberg 2000; Marshall & Rossman 2016; Roberts & Hall 2004; Smith 2005).

The qualitative approach was considered appropriate for the purpose of this study because it allows focusing on issues that involve all stakeholders. The subordinate and exploratory nature of qualitative research is explicitly recognised; qualitative techniques are often used to provide information for developing further quantitative research. Decrop (1999), Silverman (2010), Patton (2015) and Marshall and Rossman (2016) all observed that qualitative methods are often used elsewhere as a forerunner to quantitative research. According to Kumar (2005); Leedy and Ormrod (2005), the qualitative research approach aims to answer questions about the compounded nature of a phenomenon as it occurs in the actual world with the purpose of understanding it from the perspective of an individual.

1.5 Research design and method of data collection

A semi-structured questionnaire was used. As indicated by Qu and Dumay (2011) and Creswell et al. (2016), the semi-structured questionnaire involves prepared questions that are guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner. Thus, the focus is on incorporating a series of broad themes to assist in directing the responses towards the topics and issues about which the researcher wants to learn (Bock & Sergeant 2002; Dworkin 2012).

The study adopted a purposive sampling strategy for the intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept or phenomenon—in this case, students' difficulties in completing their Master Technologiae (M-Tech) Tourism and Hospitality Management.

The respondents for the study were current M-Tech Tourism and Hospitality Management students who did not do the Postgraduate Diploma (Department of Tourism Management). Due to the restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, one-on-one interviews were not possible. Data collection took place during the corresponding period of 2021. The questions were pre-tested to establish their appropriateness.

Upon completion of the data collection, the data underwent a thematic analysis carried out by a qualitative data analyst.

1.6 Scope

As stated above, the main purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges confronting current Magister Technologiae (M-Tech) students in completing their studies in order to develop guidelines that could be used by the university to improve the success rate of the postgraduate students both currently and in the future. The population or sample of the study comprised the current M-Tech students who are studying towards a qualification that is being phased out at the UoT. The study took a total of six months to complete and was dependent on the university's processes such as approval of the proposal, ethical clearance, data collection and interpretation of the results.

As a postgraduate study, a literature review on the challenges facing postgraduate students and the skills that one would acquire after completing such a qualification are presented. Quality management systems (QMSs) in higher education are briefly discussed as part of the theoretical framework due to the fact that quality management is part of the control measures that are put in place to regulate the postgraduate outputs.

The study focused on a South African UoT, which is explained further in Section 1.8.

1.7 Significance of the study

Through the development of guidelines that can be used by the department, faculty and the university at large, the success rate of the qualification that is being phased out can be improved (current students registered for the M-Tech qualifications). In addition, the guidelines can be used with the current MSc qualification in order for the students to exit the system quicker. The guidelines can also be used by the authorities in developing better success rate mechanisms for the new Master of Management Sciences (MSc) in Tourism Management, which is now HEQSF aligned and designed so that students should not experience the gridlock that occurred with the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) qualification.

1.8 Setting of the study

The study is based at a South African UoT. All the 26 public universities in South Africa are members of the organisation called Universities South Africa. These universities are scattered within all nine provinces of South Africa with some other provinces such as Gauteng, Western and Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces hosting more than one

university than others. Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape provinces have each currently just acquired their own (one per province) institution during 2014/2015. Of the 26 universities in South Africa, only four are regarded as UoTs. Therefore, before the new alignment with the HEQSF, they all offered postgraduate qualifications that contained the word Tech (i.e. B-Tech: Baccalaureas Technologiae; M-Tech: Magister Technologiae; and D-Tech: Doctor Technologiae). *Magister* is the Latin word for Master. Several universities around the world prefer to use Latin terminology. In some professions, Latin terminology is used indistinctively and this is how the phasing out qualifications such as the M-Tech used to be referenced.

The M-Tech qualifications are the focus of the present study, and the challenges faced by the currently registered M-Tech students are analysed in order for them to complete their qualifications that are being phased out.

Because the university Research Ethics Committee who provided the ethical clearance for the study did not want the name of the university to be stated, the name has been omitted throughout the entire study. Figure 1 below is a map showing all the provinces in South African with their universities.

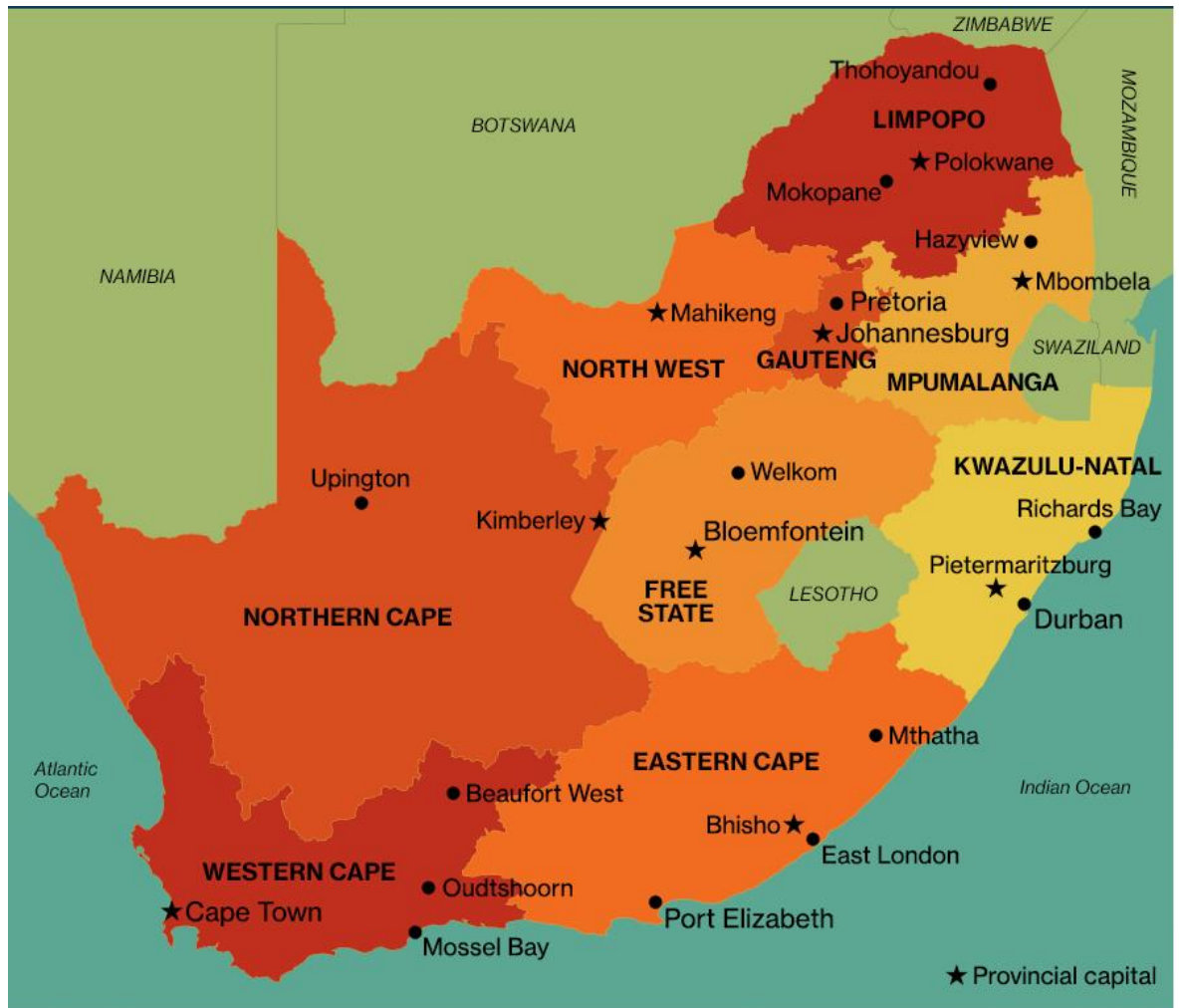


Figure 1.1: South African map of with capital cities (South Africa Gateway 2018)

1.9 Budget

There were no costs associated with the undertaking of the study. Other costs such as statistical consultation, language editing and publication fees were covered by the researcher.

1.10 Main contributions of the study

The study enabled an understanding of the challenges faced by current M-Tech students regarding completion of their studies within the Department of Tourism Management. The study aimed to contribute to the understanding of the challenges faced by the M-Tech students who were pursuing a NATED qualification after the university aligned their qualifications with the HEQSF. It is envisaged that the students' articulated challenges will aid the relevant authorities in assisting the students to complete the phasing-out qualifications. It is also anticipated that authorities will consider these challenges in the new HEQSF-aligned qualifications such as the MSc and DSc Tourism Management.

1.11 Publications

The results of this study will be published as an article in an accredited DHET journal and presented at a potential domestic or international conference once published:

- *The South African Journal of Higher Education*
- *The South African Education Research Association (SAERA Conference)*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is presented in this chapter with the emphasis on the challenges and skills that are required for postgraduate students to complete their studies. The literature study indicates that there are various reasons for the delayed completion or non-completion of Master's and Doctoral degrees (Evans and Stevenson, 2010). It is found that, one of the reasons could be the keenness of the adult learner to conduct research. Evans and Stevenson (2010) believe that, the readiness of the learner to engage in research within institutions of higher learning may meaningfully affect the completion time and the research quality of Meerah (2010) discovered one of main reasons many learners involved in research generally felt that they had yet to acquire the essential skills for seeking information for their research and that they were lacking in analytical skills. Supervision was also stated as another main reason with the nature, style and norms of interaction within the supervision relationship playing an important role at the master's and doctoral levels of research. Essa, (2011); Evans and Stevenson, (2010) also identified that, some students experience uneasiness in the beginning of their studies and alienation as well as confusion, due to a lack of clearness regarding the norms and expectations of the supervision relationship ().

There are three main challenges that affect the research process as asserted by Zakri (2006). These challenges are research capacity, research throughput and research utility. Research capacity relates to the accessibility of research facilities and the availability of trained human resources capable of conducting research in question. Research utility focuses on the importance of the research outcomes to national development agenda or priorities. Cross-disciplinary research whether national or international development should a try to involve researchers across different diciplines with failure to do so resulting in the outcome being of inadequate value. Research product refers to the optimisation of available resources to enhance the quality of the research. Zakri (2006) notes that in developing countries, universities are not fully geared towards resolving development-related problems.

In order to understand the basis of this study, literature relating to the postgraduate challenges confronting students, the skills to be acquired after studying a postgraduate qualification and QMSs in higher education are discussed.

2.2 Theoretical framework related to the study

As one of main things to be done when conducting research, the theoretical framework is the structure that holds or supports a theory by introducing and describing the research problem that exists. This section seeks to establish an understanding of theories and concepts applicable to the topic of the research and also provide the wider parts of knowledge under deliberation.

2.2.1 What is a quality management system?

According to (ASQ, 2021), QMS is defined as a formalized system that documents processes, procedures, and responsibilities for achieving quality policies and objectives. As part of assisting organisations, QMS coordinate and lead organisation's activities towards effectiveness and efficiency on a continuous basis as well as contributing towards customer and regulatory requirements (ASQ, 2021).

Quality management systems have been adopted by many private organisations throughout the world, harnessing the many benefits to improve the manner in which they run their operations. These amongst others comprise meeting customer requirements, which assist to instil assurance in the organisation, and in turn leads to more customers, more sales, and more repeat business. In addition, the QMS permits the organisation to ensure compliance with regulations and provision of products and services in the most cost- and resource-efficient manner, thus creating room for expansion, growth and profit whilst also reaching its operational requirements.

Institutions of higher education such as universities also seek excellence in teaching and learning. In order to ensure that relevant and useful graduates are produced, quality assurance of teaching and learning processes and procedures is paramount. Many other organisations outside the private sector such as NGOs have also begun to adopt the QMS practice. The section below assists in understanding QMS in higher education.

2.2.2 Quality management systems in higher education

The last decade has seen a rapid need for QMS implementation due to concerns raised after audits. Many universities operated without quality systems that govern issues such as postgraduate supervision and monitoring of curriculum development, thus falling behind the private sector in regard to the QMS (Sarrico, Rosa, Teixeira & Cardoso, 2010). Gulden, Saltanat, Raigul, Dauren and Assel (2020) concur and noted that the issue of quality and

quality assurance in higher education gathered momentum and interest not only from the business sector but also from accreditation bodies that demand higher academic quality. In light of the above interest to current globalisation and a knowledge-based economy, the quality of the graduates are the backbone of nation's economy and also regarded as main contributors to development whilst QMS has become an integral part of most higher education reforms.

The connection between the postgraduate student and the university is of intricate nature. Postgraduate students can be both co-producers and patrons at several points in time within the university context. The precise nature of this relationship must be considered and clarified if a QMS is followed to produce quality graduates who have mastered the concepts of the industry in their studies, in this case M-Tech within the university and the department under study.

There are many theories and frameworks applied to the work in higher education, and all of them revolve around management of the institution, teaching and learning, and scientific research. Although this is not a QMS and or a quality assurance study, it is important to comprehend quality assurance concepts in higher education as described by Barnett (1994) who restricted the comprehensions/conceptions of quality assurance in higher education to three concepts:

- *Objectivistic concept of quality*

Meaning that serving as a means of pursuing an aim or policy which could be also be termed as a instrumental measurement of quality. In this case, the means that, it is possible to identify and quantify several points of higher education. A common methodology to an entire higher education of a country is utilised and only focuses on results.

In South Africa, the Centre for Higher Education (CHE) is responsible for audits that are normally done in a three-year cycle. During these audits, universities are informed of how the process will unfold. The focus is normally on teaching and learning with technology. with research, innovation and community engagement receiving most of the attention. In conclusion, a recommendation is made regarding improvements or enforced sanctions that could result in a qualification being removed from the bouquet of the university.

- *Relativistic concept of quality*

In a country system, there is normally equality regarding institutions of higher learning, however, some of them are more equal than others. According to Barnett (1994), these means a differentiation of hierarchical form of 'fitness for purpose' (relationship between dissimilar higher education institutions – 'different and unequal') and the parallel form

Quality Management Systems in Higher Education of 'fitness for purpose' (association between various higher education institutions – 'dissimilar but equal').

In South Africa, there are Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, followed by private colleges, universities of technology and traditional universities. In this regard, different bodies are available that deal with the quality assurance for the different hierarchy.

- *Evolutionary concept of quality*

This is at the heart of the inner ethos of institutions whilst the evolutionary view, which is marginalised in the current discussions, represents the views of members of the academic community (personnel and students). All the external interests of employers or professional bodies are still considered but in this phase and it not mean that they wont be considered but the main emphasis is in self-evaluation. In the self-evaluation process, the institutions often ask external bodies for assistance. The process involves invitations from academic community both external and internal (advisers) members who want to improve the quality of their work. This view is intern to higher education quality and not at all imposed by the outside.

South African internal moderation in higher education includes co supervision and quality control communities within departments such as departmental committees on research and innovation, departmental committees on subject matters and departmental committees on proposal approvals. The same applies within the faculty and for the entire university, for example, the Senate Committee for Teaching and Learning and the Senate Committee for Research and Innovation.

Based on the discussion above, it is important to note that the university system or higher education system in South Africa has fully adopted the quality management or quality assurance system in order to be competent and credible and to advance the students who register for the qualifications offered. This is because when a good QMS is followed, many of the challenges are easier to overcome. However, at times, there could be more challenges to deal with in order to be successful.

There is a difference between quality assurance systems in theory and in reality where lower pass rates may result at undergraduate and postgraduate level due to the unprofessionalism of lecturers/facilitators, supervisors and administrators. It can be concluded that a proper QMS in place would be accompanied by a skilled workforce in order to achieve the goals or the success rate required in higher education. Below is an

examination of the challenges of postgraduate students in higher education in relation to the study.

2.3 Postgraduate challenges in focus

There are weak connections between those who produce knowledge and those who utilises it and between knowledge production and revolution. Postgraduate research processes and systems are undertaken to meet the requirements for an award of a qualification and normally encounter exceptional challenges. Results relating to the study on supervisor-supervisee relationship among postgraduate students carried out in East, Central and Southern Africa revealed the following according to Mutula (2009):

- feedback delays
- deficiencies in supervision guideline
- reduced supervision (i.e. lack of constant meeting with less records)
- lack of reimbursement mechanism for students (-40%)
- supervisors always pre-occupied with other duties including teaching load to meet with students
- lack of backing for students from non-LIS disciplinary backgrounds
- inadequate readiness for students to conduct postgraduate studies
- unnecessary administrative assignments
- admitted students not ready for post graduate studies
- delays in students' submissions and students not being able create to sense of balance for their jobs and studies.

Ismail, Majid and Ismail (2013) found that, a lack of positive communication and lack of the necessary expertise in supervision sometimes characterise the necessary support and power in a case where there are supervisors and co-supervisors conflicts. Many research students seem to expect a close relationship with supervisors expected to display a strong personal interest in the student (Motseke 2016; Sidhu, Kaur, Fook & Yunus 2013). However, the serious deficiency of senior lecturers who are qualified to supervise master's and doctoral students at many national and international universities make close associations between supervisors and students extremely complex. Supervisors may in addition have a significant number of students to supervise (Motseke 2016; Muhar, Visser & van Breda 2013) which normally result in overload and neglect of weaker students, and this could greatly disadvantage student who may need distinct attention.

The third reason could be what is referred to as problematic candidature (Cantwell, Scevak, Bourke & Holbrook 2012). This refers to the various deficiencies or weaknesses that are

within the student, and these may hinder progress and diminish the quality of the final product (Cantwell et al. 2012). In many instances, these students may lack the capability to engage with the difficulties in of conducting master's and doctoral study.

The issue of problematic candidature may be common among African students in master and doctoral student in South Africa due to the fact that most of them during the apartheid era attended township schools. The education in South African during the oppression error unacceptably neglected advancements in numeracy, literacy and information technology (Blignaut & Els 2010; Spaul 2013). These students are struggling in meeting high demands of university education, especially at master's and doctoral levels. Essa (2011) found that many students in South Africa in higher education system quit their postgraduate studies due to their inability to manage with the difficulties of the academic rigour.

Due to the fact that postgraduate studies in South Africa are exacts more subsidies than the successful completion of lower degrees, Universities in South Africa finds themselves under pressure to produce more master's and doctoral candidates due to funding benefits at that level. (Govender 2011). As part of claiming the completion grants from DHET, universities may be tempted to accept more students into the master's and doctoral programmes without proper selection mechanisms in order to ascertain their level of suitability for studying at such high levels. In some instances, the recruitment processes may be intentionally skewed to favour weaker or those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds as part of redressing the inequalities of the past.

Espenshade and Chung (2005) discovered that numerous leading universities apply certain recruitment criteria, known in South Africa as affirmative action, in order to advance the admission of certain types of students. In South Africa, the National Plan for Higher Education suggested that involvement rates at higher institutions could be supplemented by recruiting increasing numbers of 'non-traditional' students, including mature adults, women, workers and disabled people (Castle, Munro & Osman 2006). The social benefits for mechanisms such affirmative action to redress the past are vast. Long (2007) found that affirmative action policies such as class-based affirmative action and targeted recruiting among minority or marginalised groups have had a positive effect on the education levels of these groups.

Such students may be high-risk cases with greater chances of taking longer than required to complete the study programme or of quitting, however, universities should be applauded for recruiting among minority or marginalised groups, Therefore, a variety of support systems mechanisms should be in place to guarantee that such students successfully

complete the study programmes for which they enrolled. Essa (2011) discussed the reasons for the slow completion of Master's and Doctoral degrees by students and pointed that the majority of learners who leave their postgraduate in a South African universities are students who have complained about a lack of institutional and social support. Good institutional support may ameliorate the effects of ineffective social support and may help adult learners to pursue postgraduate studies successfully.

In view of the above-mentioned literature, the sub-themes regarding some of the challenges are presented below and subsequently discussed:

- supervision support
- skills required to complete a postgraduate qualification
- support required by students to complete a postgraduate qualification

2.3.1 Supervision support

Globally, postgraduate supervision has been a subject under scrutiny that demands transparency, uniformity and strictness (Sidhu et al. 2013). Various scholars have described the procedure of supervision in many forms. For instance, Pearson and Brew (2002) describe supervision in the academic context as a method that facilitates the candidate in becoming an independent professional researcher and scholar in their field and being capable of adapting to various research arenas whether university- or industry-based. Cryer and Mertens (2003) describe postgraduate supervision as a procedure that encompass intricate, academic and interpersonal skills that include guiding postgraduate students towards solid proposal preparation, making methodological choices, documenting and publishing their research, upholding both helpful and professional relationships and reflecting on the research process.

There are also studies that have been conducted to address the research gap regarding support with critical findings pertaining to how students' psychological capital can be of prominent significance for their postgraduate journey's well-being. Supervisor support can foster postgraduate students' academic psychological capital and thereupon their engagement and contributing to success rate (Ahmed, Umrani, Pahi, and Shah, 2017).

2.3.2 Important skills after completing a postgraduate qualification

Obtaining a master's degree can be a very demanding and arduous task but is considered one of the most rewarding goals of an individual's academic career. With a master's degree, your career path will be transformed, making you as successful as can be in your given career path. By having a master's degree, many opportunities becomes available in one's

professional career. Some of the most important skills according to the Magna Carta College (2020) that can be gained after acquiring a master's degree are discussed in the following sections. Other universities such as the University of Edinburgh (2021) use different terms for the same skills; these are indicated in the discussion below to strengthen the argument. Currently, the university (study setting or the department) does not have guidelines that indicate the skills that one could acquire after studying for a master's degree.

2.3.2.1 Specialised knowledge

As part of completing a master's and doctoral qualification, one of the most importance benefits is the advance specialised knowledge as a skill one acquires in order to advance in their field which is referred to as just knowledge by the University of Edinburgh (2021). With a constant evolution regarding the world of work and rising workforce, acquiring a post graduate degree could contribute to uniqueness when searching for employment. Hence, progressing in once academic career provides the opportunity to improve your knowledge and your expertise in the chosen industry. This could enable one to become more fruitful in your field and more competitive in a world where there could be a lot of people with same full capabilities and knowledge.

2.3.2.2 Better research skills

Attaining a Master's degree equals having to conduct a number of research projects during your programme, ranging from taking many other small projects to completing a dissertation or a thesis in order to complete your graduate degree. This allows once to move out of own's comfort zone when researching and to acquire and comprehend more advanced tools. Thus, a master's degree assists one to become a better researcher in their field. The University of Edinburgh (2021) refers to this as 'just skills' and includes many other technical areas that relate to employment such as dealing with complex issues within the workplace, language skills and self-motivation. It can also be noted that many other skills declared by the Magna Carta College (2020) such as critical thinking, career advancement and professional networking are presented by the University of Edinburgh under skills.

2.3.2.3 Lifelong learning

The benefits of acquiring a Master's degree includes more than career progression. Rather, they set one on a trajectory of lifetime learning, meaning a Master's degree can help you improve your researching technique and your writing skills, problem-solving skills and analysing skill set. As a effect, one can become a improved businessperson, a better problem-solver and easily tackle the various complex projects that unfold. Thus, by opting

for a graduate degree, you are choosing a life of continuous wealth of knowledge and lifelong learning. While the Magna Carta College (2020) refers to this as lifelong learning, the University of Edinburgh (2021) states that these experiences will enhance one's other skills in areas that will be of interest to employers such as team work, communication and leadership.

2.3.2.4 Critical thinking

A Master's degree enables one to end up as a better critical thinker after acquisition. It provides you the knowledge and education that you require to think clearly and rationally in order to comprehend the knowledge and logical connection between multiple ideas. Therefore, a graduate programme allows an individual to explore unusual and creative ideas that are not restricted by rules or norms and assist one to understand, determine and distinguish new and improved ideas and learning.

2.3.2.5 Career advancement

One of the main attributes when employers are in search of a candidate especially those to occupy vacant senior positions is a master's degree and therefore, a master's degree makes it easier for an individual to transition into a senior position. In several industries such as healthcare, education and law enforcement, a graduate degree offers the mandatory training and knowledge that one needs to pursue a certain career or a job promotion.

2.3.2.6 Professional networking

Individuals aim to build enhanced professional networks in order to become successful in their careers. A graduate degree helps one to build the professional network that is needed to become a top leader in a specific industry. A graduate degree also helps one to connect with a number of professionals, ranging from fellow classmates to faculty members and other experienced professionals with whom one becomes acquainted through practical experience. In addition, one studies with professors who are industry leaders and who provide real-world knowledge with valuable networks.

On further investigation, The University of Buckingham (2021) asserts that completing a postgraduate degree is no reason to follow an academic discipline for a lifetime since a career path may eventually be extremely different from what one chose in the initial stages where the main emphasis was on the subject of study. However, there are many skills that one learns and refines during the time of study, which are extremely useful for life and for almost any job. These skills include time management where one learns to organise his/her

own time efficiently, to produce work that meets expectations and to juggle tasks independently.

Furthermore, research enables original and systematic thinking and this can assist one in seeking solutions and showing initiative, which is always viewed positively. Moreover, comprehension is useful in a job that is completely different from the job that was envisaged; a postgraduate qualification such as a master's will have prepared one to learn new things quicker, allowing for adaptation into the new job in less time. Additionally, communication is extremely useful. During a postgraduate study, there are endless essays, discussions, seminars and presentations and unintentionally, one is thus moulded to be a master in communication. One learns how to write and talk with ease and to be able to 'walk the talk'. With the skills attained through a postgraduate qualification, one is able to convince others through good use of language and efficient flow of information.

Lastly, resourcefulness is a skill that can be attained through studying for a postgraduate qualification. Life is unpredictable and learning to ignore things that are not beneficial and seek those that are is in fact a skill through which one can benefit. In a postgraduate study one has to select the correct information among all the available primary and secondary sources and assist oneself when in a difficult situation in order for them to make the correct decision.

In view of the above information on important skills that one can acquire through completing a postgraduate qualification, it can be concluded that resourcefulness, research skills and knowledge are most prominent and can assist students in their career advancement within the world of work or within the academic environment.

2.4 Support required by students to complete a postgraduate qualification

Higher education is currently no longer a stable domain whilst the sole constant area in it is that of change. It is this change that higher institutions must be prepared to address in current times (Abiddin & Ismail 2014). The expectation of what the academics can contribute underpins the demands made on academics in present times (Abiddin & Ismail 2012). Students are the seeds of the future. They need change and improvement in their performance (Afferro & Abiddin 2009). It is vital to consider their demands in order to enhance human capital (Akinyemi & Abiddin 2013a; Akinyemi & Abiddin 2013b).

The most critical element in this aim is to create quality education. In terms of service and support to the students, their needs differ. However, as the provider, every report or

comment should be addressed. Students come from varied backgrounds. Generally, people aged 25 years and above enrol in postgraduate education after their bachelor degree. Thus, they are more particular regarding the services offered and tend to express their grievances. Thus, the services offered must be accessible and reliable all the time, especially the internet connection. In addition, foreign students often encounter substantial challenges in adapting to a new environment (Ismail & Abiddin 2009). The aim of this study is to address the challenges encountered by M-Tech students in completing their qualification and determine the support they require. The following chapter presents the methodology used to achieve the results.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research is the rigorous and focused search for an understanding of social or physical phenomena (Kumar 2005). Wahyumi (2012) describes “methodology as a way of conducting research within the context of a practical theory; the methodology incorporates sets of views that guide a researcher to choose certain research methods over others”. This chapter aims to describe the methodology that forms the basis of the study on the challenges faced by M-Tech students in a department of tourism management within a UoT in South Africa. In Chapter 3, for context, the research questions that guide the study are discussed and a background to the study area is given. The chapter also presents the methods used in the investigation of the research themes and covers aspects such as the research design, sampling design, data analysis, data collection method and the research planning..

3.2 Research design

Research design is defined as the plan of how the research will be conducted and outlines details on how the chosen methodology will link various components of the study together to formulate a valid and comprehensive answer to the research question (Akhtar 2016; Babbie 2014).

According to Pandey and Pandey (2015, 21), a good research design uses established scientific techniques to “minimise bias and maximise the reliability of the data collected”. This study employs a qualitative design that employs to answer the research question (Creswell 2008). A separate definition is given for qualitative survey design below.

3.2.1 Qualitative research

This study employed a qualitative research because it is concerned with the ‘why’ rather than the quantitative ‘what or how many’ (Daniel, 2016; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). For example, while quantitative data help researchers to determine *how many* people voted for a certain political party, qualitative data help researchers to understand *why* they voted for that party. Major features of the qualitative approach to scientific enquiry centre on the position of the human dimension of feelings and emotions as motivators for action, and these can take the form of open-ended questions (Yin 2014). These questions are often

asked to hear what Creswell (2008, 40) notes as the “silenced voices” that belong to people who are not ordinarily heard.

In order to achieve the results, a content analysis technique was used. According to Schreier (2012), “content analysis is a research tool that is used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within given qualitative data (i.e. text)”. In utilising content analysis, researchers can calculate and scrutinize the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words, themes or concepts. For example, researchers can evaluate the language utilised within a news article to search for prejudice. Researchers can thus make implications about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience and even the culture and time surrounding the text.

Bases of data can be interviews, open-ended questions, field research notes, conversations or any occurrence of communicative language such as books, essays and discussions). In a single study, various forms of text may be analysed. To analyse text using content analysis, the text must be coded or divided into practicable categories (i.e. ‘codes’). Once the text is coded into code categories, the codes can be further categorised into ‘sub-categories’ to summarise data even further.

Allen (2017) indicates the various uses of content analysis:

- notifies the intents, focus or communiqué trends of an group, institution and a person
- attitudinal and behavioural responses to communications are described
- the psychological or emotional state of persons or clusters are determined
- international adjustments in communication content are discovered
- patterns in communication content are discovered
- pre-tests and improves an intervention or survey prior to launch
- Scrutinises focus group interviews and open-ended questions to complement quantitative data

3.3 Participants

The targeted participants of a study is the specific group from which the study will attempt to provide conclusions based on their feedback or responses (Babbie 2014). Respondents for this study included all M-Tech students (M-Tech Tourism and Hospitality Management and M-Tech Adventure Tourism Management) within the Department of Tourism Management at a UoT in South Africa. Some of the students had just finished their qualification and were waiting for their results and some were still registered and continuing

with their studies. All the students were provided with the information to participate in the study.

3.3.1 Purposive sampling

Purposeful sampling involves recognising and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially well-informed about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011). It is a technique that is widely used in qualitative research for the selection of information-rich cases and demonstrates the most effective use of limited resources (Patton 2002). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an coherent, expressive and reflective manner. In contrast, probabilistic or random sampling is used to ensure the generalisability of findings by decreasing the potential for selection bias and to control the probable influence of known and unknown confounders.

The idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on individuals who will significantly contribute to the related research unlike random studies that embrace a cross section of ages, backgrounds and cultures (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016). Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's knowledge of the field and affiliation with the target population (Barratt, Feriss & Lenton 2015). The idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on certain people who have particular characteristics (Teddlie & Yu 2007; Etikan et al. 2016). According to Dolores and Tongco (2007), purposive sampling is utilised when information is kept held by only part of the community, as is the case in the present research.

3.4 Data collection

Kabir (2016) defines data collection as the procedure of capturing data on phenomena of interest. It is important that the collection of data is done systematically and with a high degree of relevance to the research question (Kabir 2016). Data for this study were collected in the form of a mail system where all respondents were sent the same e-mail requesting them to participate in the survey. Due to the restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, one-on-one interviews were not possible. A month was allocated to wait for responses. Two e-mails were sent to the 17 respondents (sample) in May 2021 to remind them about their participation.

Data collection was conducted to answer the research questions of the study:

- Why are the master's students challenged and struggling to complete their studies?
- How can the master's students be assisted in exiting the system?

- What guidelines could be developed to improve the success rate system?

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis is the process of working reflexively and methodically through raw data in order to obtain useful results (Attride-Stirling 2001). A thematic analysis based on the thematic qualitative data analysis process of Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules (2017) was used for the extraction of data from the questionnaires. This process highlights reflexivity and aims to build trustworthiness of the analysed data according to Lincoln and Guba (2005) notion of reliability and validity of qualitative data representation. This approach is deemed important in building a reliable and valid analysis of qualitative data (Nowell et al. 2017). In academic literature, qualitative data analysis is considered possibly the most complex component of a study, with no single 'correct' way to conduct the analysis (Creswell 2008).

The thematic data analysis ensured that all the qualitative responses were categorised according to the major recurrent themes in the study that were deemed by the researcher to have a possible influence on the research questions. After a thorough analysis, the responses were broken down into themes relating to the research questions in order to compartmentalise the themes and their linkages to the study as listed below:

- Challenges that the M-Tech students experienced or are experiencing
- The type of support the M-Tech students require/required to complete their studies.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

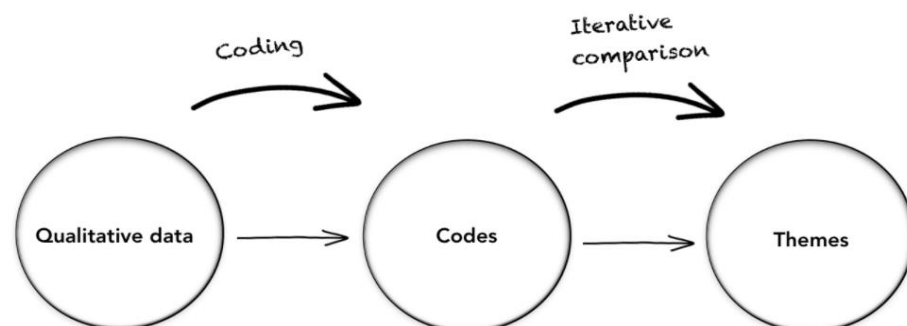


Figure 2.1 Thematic analysis (Rosala 2018)

According to Vaismoradi and Bondas (2013), the amount of energy and time the researcher spends on the process of data gathering and analysis determines the quality of the data and if the thematic and content analyses are sufficiently robust to be used for conducting an introductory study on a novel phenomenon.

Furthermore, there is a stereotype among qualitative researchers that portrays content analysis and thematic analysis as the easiest research approaches within qualitative methodologies. The authors (Vaismoradi and Bondas, 2013) consider these fundamental qualitative approaches as distinct, and both should be used by qualitative researchers at the beginning of their research careers. The approaches benefit from transparent structures that together with a defined sequence of analytical stages provide researchers with clear and user-friendly methods for analysing data. The two approaches were selected by the researcher because he is a novice in qualitative research and understands these approaches to be effective in achieving the objectives of this research.

3.5.1 Thematic analysis process followed for the research

For the purpose of this study, responses were received via mail by the researcher and saved in separate folders for each student. Reminders were sent to those who did not respond. After nine responses were received, the researcher began to analyse the data in detail by reading the answers for each question. Thereafter, the following ensued:

- Each response was analysed and main words (codes) were identified in order to develop themes.
- All responses were read separately; no comparisons were made between respondents.
- Once all of them were ready, the codes (main words) were developed into themes for each respondent.
- An examination of all responses of each respondent was to develop common themes.
- Eight (8) themes were discovered but these were reduced to six (6) due to similarities but differences in wording.
- The eight themes were confirmed after reading the submissions of each respondent three times in order to verify the themes and the presentation of the results.

3.6 Validity and reliability

3.6.1 Validity

Validity of a measurement instrument refers to whether the instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Pandey & Pandey 2015). Cohen et al. (2000) emphasise that richness

of data can address issues of validity in qualitative studies. In order to ensure valid measurement, variables need to be established (Babbie 2014). Mouton (1996) broadly describes *independent* variables as the cause and *dependent* variables as the effect. The current study attempted to analyse the challenges encountered by M-Tech students at a UoT within a department of tourism management.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability could be explained as the extent to which a research instrument consistently produces the same results (Pandey & Pandey 2015). A study is considered reliable if the same respondent supplies the same answer to the same question posed at a later date (Walliman 2011). During the data collection phase of the present study, reliability was realised by administering the same questionnaire to all respondents.

The results of this study would, therefore, not necessarily be the same if the study were conducted in a different country and in a different university with different rules, systems, procedures and academics. However, the results assist in the understanding of the general attitudes of master's students.

3.7 Pre-testing of the research schedule

A research schedule was developed in early 2020 but due to the coronavirus pandemic and the associated national lockdown, the pre-testing did not take place until September 2020. Another reason was the delay in the ethical clearance from the university's ethical committee since the research involved students as respondents. Pre-testing of a questionnaire is conducted to address issues of validity (Drost 2011). A pre-test also attempts to establish whether the intended respondents are likely to be able to respond to the questions.

Since the ethical clearance was delayed, the instrument was discussed with the colleagues in the department for their pre-approval and validation of its relevance to the study in February 2021 by the departmental research committee. After the discussions, three questions were reformulated according to the recommendations of colleagues and the ethics committee. Two of the questions were considered not well phrased and were thus corrected. Below is a presentation of the ethical clearance details achieved for the purpose of the study.

3.8 Ethics

According to Walliman (2011; 171) ethics in social research is fundamentally concerned with causing no harm to other people, particularly participants in a study. In addition, conduct should be honest and, wherever possible, beneficial (Babbie 2014). This study has attempted to achieve these guiding principles through actions outlined below.

The study was implemented according to ethical norms and standards, which included the following:

- The respondents provided informed consent by means of an informed consent form that outlined the purpose and the methodology of the study, thus introducing the study to the respondents prior to the questionnaire.
- The study was voluntary; respondents were not coerced to participate and were free to exit the questionnaire whenever they wished.
- To avoid psychological harm to the respondents, the investigator provided all the necessary information and rendered assistance where required. The investigator also provided clarity on questions and translated questions in cases where the respondent was not completely fluent in English.
- Completion of the questionnaire was undertaken using an online platform to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

The questionnaire included the contact details of the researcher should a respondent have need of them.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The survey was done through e-mails. Students were sent the consent form and the questionnaire to complete in their own time. The responses were returned to the researcher via e-mail. Seventeen (17) students were found to be active, and all received the request to participate in the survey. Nine (9) responses were received after two rounds of reminders.

Third reminders were not sent due to the time frame and because upon analysis of the nine responses that were received, similar themes were being discovered, thus reaching a saturation level of the data with slightly more than half of the respondents.

4.2 Results

Table 2 presents the demographic information of the nine respondents.

Table 2. Demographics of the respondents

SEX	
Male	Female
4	5
QUALIFICATION	
M-TECH: Tourism and Hospitality Management	M-TECH: Adventure Tourism Management
7	2

Six dimensional challenges emerged as major themes:

- Mental health
- Resources
- Supervisory
- Academic
- Support
- Procedure/system

The six dimensional challenges are explained in detail below.

4.2.1 Mental health

According to the University of Essex (2021), a full-time Master's degree can be extremely intensive. As one lecturer described it to me, a Master's is similar to a 100 m sprint taking place over a year. It is easy to wear out. Looking after your mental health can quickly become less of a priority when you are trying to deliver consistent work. At the time, it can seem an impossible task when your living room becomes the most exciting holiday destination possible. However, understanding and taking care of your mental health is more important now than ever before. The issue of mental health was quite prominent in the responses of the nine respondents who took part in the survey. The two respondents below sum up the feeling regarding the mental challenge when completing M-Tech studies:

Respondent 1 – “My journey towards completing my master's was a bit hectic and smooth at the same time”

Respondent 5 – “It has been 4 glorious years filled with a whole bunch of emotions triggering different feelings over and over. It's been both exciting and tedious, fulfilling and draining. I would sometimes find myself anxious, at other times at peace during the course of my studies towards my MTECH”

Respondent 6 – “The journey has been very difficult, frustrating and not easy”.

Respondent 7 – “Tumultuous. Stressful. Exhausting. Frustrating.”

As stated above in the opening statement of the results, when considering the responses, it is apparent that the students have been affected mentally. This was communicated through words such as hectic, emotions, frustrating, tedious, draining, anxious, very difficult, tumultuous, stressful, exhausting and frustrating. These words can be deemed a true reflection of how students are affected on their M-Tech journey, and this should be taken seriously by the authorities. In view of this finding, it can be concluded that students are affected mentally or are feeling the effects of their master's journey mentally. The mental health of a master's candidate is important since many of the students at this level are working-class students, sometimes married with children, and these elements matter during their studies. A good platform for them to strive for such a qualification should be the focus of the university, considering that a higher grant is offered by government when a student completes a master's and a doctoral qualification.

Authorities should provide support for students to fill the mental health void in order for the students to strive better mentally when studying towards these types of qualifications.

However, there was one respondent who stated that his/her journey was both hectic and smooth, which highlights the presence of a positive side of the journey.

The results above concur with the findings of the University of Sussex (2021) study that postgraduate students need to guard against the toll that studies can take both mentally and emotionally. Students' strong words such as exhausting, frustrating and draining are of major concern.

The quality of life in postgraduate studies is troubled with high levels of competition, uncertainty, stress and sometimes isolation. However, the decision to leave is also not without cost, which can include emotional, financial, professional and sometimes health costs. In addition, many graduate students have families and outside responsibilities that they must consider. Due to this finding, it is possible to state that the most successful graduate students learn how to maximise long-term productivity without sacrificing other aspects of their personal lives.

4.2.2 Resources

According to literature, the lack of resources such as funding is a reason for not completing a degree. Securing funding, devices or financial aid for graduate school is quite different from undergraduate school. As an undergraduate, financial aid is based on the financial need of the student. However, as stated by Jones (2002), funding for graduate school is awarded based on a variety of other mechanisms. The current research found similar trends as indicated in the responses below:

Respondent 1 – “Hectic in that I remember when I was writing my abstract, I had no resources (laptop, data), I had to go to one of the high schools back at home to connect to a WiFi using a borrowed mobile device in order to send my abstract to the department of Tourism at TUT.”

Respondent 7 – “Access to technology, resources such as a dedicated, Master's/Post-Grad Centre that students can have safe access to: WiFi/data for their research, After-hours/weekends, A printer to print their research publications and drafts”.

Respondent 8 – “I would have made sure I get funding quicker in order attend the research beginner's workshops before even attempting to write a proposal”.

Respondent 8 – “If I had funding I would go and see my supervisors once in 2 months, this would also depend on my leave days because I stay far from TUT.”

The responses above represent a serious concern for the M-Tech students as they stated they require funding (financial), gadgets such as laptops, Wi-Fi, cell phones and printers, working space and 24-hour library access. The resources mentioned above are of

paramount importance for any postgraduate student, and it is unclear why the university does not provide such resources in order to advance the progress of the students. This is an integral of the study that could be used as a recommendation to the authorities to advance the progress of the current M-Tech students.

It is common in many traditional universities around the world for postgraduates to have access to world-class facilities/resources. This includes leading libraries with expert librarians that provide access to study and research materials, digital services and state-of-the-art research facilities. Postgraduate students are also eligible to access professional and academic resources and the funding office that provides personalised guidance to students. These offices share information on training, workshops and extracurricular activities that aid students in their academic journey.

State-of-the-art technology research laboratories would allow master's students to work on challenging and novel projects in an array of fields while it could be expected that universities should provide postgraduate students with Wi-Fi on and off campus in order for students to have instant access to material/resources. Academic libraries are central in higher educational systems, assisting in the improvement of learning and the dissemination of knowledge.

The results presented above are consistent with other studies, which state that resources in all forms of postgraduate studies are important and require good management to advance the completion of students' studies.

The included budget for post graduate students includes tuition fees and a stipend for living expenses. In addition to living expenses and the financial cost of completing the programme, unforeseen expenses related to completing the project often cause candidates to leave programmes prematurely whilst also leading to unwanted debt. To offset some of the related expenses, students are forced to make problematic choices. As is common with most universities, students funded through university scholarships are only allowed to work minimal hours at university departments or outside, however, some recipients of these bursaries, scholarships, fellowships end up violating institutional regulations by taking outside jobs to supplement the fellowship stipends. In some instances, some students have to take time off their studies in to work regular jobs in between earning the degree, thus lengthening the time required to complete the degree, which in turn, increases the possibility of not finishing (Jones 2002).

4.2.3 Supervisory

The literature study demonstrated (Mutula, 2009; Ismail, Majid and Ismail, 2013; Motseke 2016; Muhar, Visser & van Breda 2013) that many issues exist with supervision during postgraduate studies, including master's studies. Below are the responses indicating the students' concerns regarding the supervisory challenges that have contributed to them remaining in the system and not completing on time:

Respondent 3 – “The main challenges I have faced regarding my Masters study is the guidance and support of the supervisors. I understand that supervisors may have a lot of other work or other students to assist, but it does end up delaying the feedback to students and it affects the quality of feedback received as comments made are quite vague.”

Respondent 4 – “But then the problem is not with us students, the problem is with our department and/ supervisors. They need some kind of push almost all the time for us to be able to move forward. Very draining. As much as we understand they have much to do, we are also students deserving the same moving progress day to day students have.”

Respondent 5 – “The issue is getting feedback on whatever that we submit. We are given chapters to work on and we put all the effort with hope that it will return soon to make corrections in order to move to the next chapter, but it just doesn't happen. One has to wait for almost a month or even more to get feedback on what they had submitted, like it's really discouraging.”

Respondent 6 – “The supervisor responding to corrections very late after I had submitted my work to hi[m] or her. The supervisor not able to stick to the timelines to return my correction.”

Respondent 8 – “My first main challenge was the fact that I stay in different province from where TUT is situated thus it was difficult for me to have physical contact meetings with my supervisors.”

The main issues indicated by respondents regarding supervisors ranged from late responses (timelines), lack of physical contact sessions between supervisor and candidate, delayed feedback from supervisor, non-adherence to timelines by supervisor, and lack of support (to be subsequently discussed). These issues are of a serious nature and affect how postgraduate students progress and relate to the supervisor of the study.

It is common knowledge that the supervisor, and when necessary the co-supervisor, guides the study of the student until graduation and thus, if any of the issues are apparent, students may not be able to progress further. As mentioned by the respondents above, supervisors should provide the required support for full progression of the students.

It can also be deduced from the responses above that none of the respondents stated lack of knowledge from the supervisor as a reason for the student not progressing and thus, the

department could be acknowledged that students do not fear that they are being guided by a supervisor without knowledge of the subject that is being investigated. This could be a sign for the department to concentrate on areas of supervision other than expertise, which has been an area of concern at other universities in South Africa.

The responses above are in line with other research such as the study carried out in East, Central and Southern Africa on the supervisor-supervisee relationship among postgraduate students (Mutula 2009). Issues noted were delays in receiving feedback and poor supervision such as the lack of a schedule for meetings, no records of discussions, and supervisors always being too busy to meet with students (Mutula 2009).

Kerlin (1998) identified six types of advisors based on their level of involvement and their ability to motivate students: (1) those who are not involved; (2) the hands-off advisors; (3) the envoy; (4) the active advisor; (5) the symbiotic advisory style; and (6) the advisor who authorises power individually. The author also suggests that the degree of backing, the confidence and the vulnerability of the student in the advisor/advisee relationship strongly influences the graduate school experience and the length of the time to complete the degree. In light of this analysis, the post graduate student's success is entirely based or dependent on the type of relationship built between their advisors and committee members (Azuma 1999).

4.2.4 Academic

Regarding the academic theme, sub-themes were discovered that ranged from proposal initialisation, length of the proposal, meetings to approve the proposal, data analysis processes, students not trained to carry out the proposal, and procedure and ethical clearance:

Respondent 1 – “Poor communication of the submission dates for documents related to master's study. Hence I had to register the fourth year just to submit my master's. Again, on the day I had to submit the 5 printed dissertations, I was returned back to reprint because the title was not according to the approved title of which the approved title I never saw until the day I was returned back to reprint.”

Respondent 3 – “The example needs to be provided by the supervisor because ultimately, we as M-Tech students are doing what the supervisor wants from us. Each supervisor has different formats and methods, so the supervisor needs to show their students examples of what is required.”

Respondent 4 – “The data collection stage took longer than anticipated because of the slow rate of questionnaire responses.”

Respondent 5 – “At first I did not really understand that the proposal was to be used as a compass for the entire study. Initially I was just dumping information in the proposal, without it being in sequence and sometimes even relating to the study.”

Respondent 6 – “No, research methodology course in my B-Tech was not sufficient. The methodology section of my proposal was rejected many times.”

Respondent 7 – “The University’s booklet is insufficient and leaves much to be desired when guiding a student in developing their proposal.”

Respondent 8 – “I was unable to attend the research workshops which were held at the university, mostly they would be teaching on writing a proposal and selecting the right methodology for your studies, these workshops are very much helpful and will assist when writing your proposal and moving forth.”

Respondent 8 – “And I struggled also because I never attended the proposal writing workshops offered by university, I received invitations but I did not have funds to attend.”

Respondent 9 – “My study instrument was approved few months later that led me to collecting data in late 2019. Post data collection in 2020 March I stated [*sic*] with data processing and analysis. Unfortunately, soon as I stated [*sic*] the country went into lockdown due to covid-19. My study statistician also went on maternity leave in April 2020, which led to a new appointed statistician for my study.”

Above, the respondents present academic matters that have contributed to students not completing their M-Tech in time. These academic matters are important because they form the basis of what a student requires in order to succeed and thus will be used in the following chapter as guidelines or suggestions to improve the success rate of postgraduate studies. As a student, one expects the academic area of a university to be well managed since it is the foundation of the university.

When examining the responses, the academic theme was the only one of the six themes that had more than seven responses (nine responses), with respondents indicating more than one academic area of concern. It can be concluded that this is the strongest theme, with solid academic matters being presented by the students. As a university in a developing country, the enrolment of students in a postgraduate qualification should be viewed seriously in order to advance the country with qualified people. Thus, working on the issues raised would advance the success rate of students at this level of education, hence contributing to the development of the country.

The results in this section may differ from literature findings in terms of the identified theme (academic) and may offer a different perspective. The study found problems regarding the booklet (guidelines for master and doctoral studies), the ability to attend academic workshops relating to master’s studies, data collection delays, proposal initialisation,

understanding, and poor communication. These are main areas of concern and in this study, are termed 'academic matters'. Yasmin, Saeed and Ahmad (2018) discussed the academic matters that they found in their study but they related to the factors that are crucial to the process of teaching and learning.

4.2.5 Support

According to Ismail, Majid and Ismail (2013) and Essa (2011), the lack of support when completing postgraduate studies is one of the main challenges experienced by students. This study revealed a similar finding, as demonstrated in the following responses:

Respondent 3 – “The main challenges I have faced regarding my Masters study is the guidance and support of the supervisors”.

Respondent 3 – “So when discussing what needs to be done in proposals and chapters, there should be clear guidance on what formats and what information to include.”

Respondent 4 – “Supervisors could help in showing, giving the effort to push us to get where we want. Instead of having to push them for communication regarding our progress.”

Respondent 6 – “Student progress been [sic] monitored more frequently and directly by the Head of Department. Allocation of co-supervisors for all students. Workshop on academic writing and online resources about academic writing and developing a proposal. Graduate students may be involved in research works by assisting their professors.”

Respondent 7 – “There is little to no flexibility from the University in considering an adult who completes a full day’s work, commutes home and has a family and many times work to complete at home.”

Respondent 8 – “For me personally I only need to sit down with my supervisors and discuss certain things on my dissertation. I believe because we have been working via e-mail and telephonically there were a lot of misunderstandings and a leave from work would help but I can’t go on leave because we are understaffed.”

Respondent 8 – “Apart from a study supervisor, students should be assisted by tutors and direct mentors and students should allowed to engage with study supervisor on a regular bases.”

When examining the responses, support as a theme had seven responses compared with the nine responses for the academic theme, placing it second in strength. Respondents indicated more than one support area of concern within theme.

In view of the results presented above for Theme 5 (support), guidance and support, personal motivation in order to push the students, consideration of personal circumstances, and constant meetings with supervisor/s are some of the issues raised. Regarding

postgraduate studies, support from the supervisor/s is paramount in order to guide the student to completion. Literature indicates that the supervisor of a student can adopt many roles depending on the approach taken (Imperial College London, 2014). These include emancipation, critical thinking, enculturation, development of relationships and functional roles. However, according to the results of the current study, students also require significant guidance and communication regarding clarity on their topics. Hence, this could be an area that the university could investigate for the advancement of students who need to complete a qualification that is being phased out.

This study also found that guidance in how to conduct a postgraduate study is important in many ways (see Respondent 3 above). Furthermore, the university may not be considering the challenges faced by working students. These challenges may not be experienced by students who continue on an academic trajectory, meaning those who finish their undergraduate qualifications and continue into their postgraduate studies without being involved in the world of employment because their circumstances are different (see Respondent 7 above).

It could be concluded that students in the M-Tech qualification that is being phased out are frustrated with the level of support they are receiving. Thus, attention must be directed towards this area, with supervisors providing feedback in time, allowing for more contact with their students and through their expertise, presenting clear guidelines on how they want the study (research project) to unfold.

4.2.6 Procedure/system

The way in which universities manage their systems/procedures in relation to their postgraduate students is crucial to students' completion of their studies. In this study, the issue of procedures was raised multiple times by the respondents:

Respondent 2 – “More departmental meetings, faculty meetings and ethical clearance meetings should be organised in order not to delay the students.”

Respondent 2 – “The process it takes to get ethical clearance took way too long as there is only one meeting in a month and thus meaning if you are not successful, you wait for a month and this took me the whole year together with other meetings detrimental to my study such as Departmental DCRI and Faculty FCPS”.

Respondent 3 – “I am upset that it has taken me this long and I feel that certain procedures need to be changed or customised, to ensure completion during the given time.”

Respondent 3 – “Another challenge for me was the waiting time for the meetings that are hosted to discuss or approve studies. For me, these meetings aren’t happening often enough. I had been held [back] a few times, which meant I needed to resubmit and wait a few weeks for feedback. The first time was for not including information that I was not told about by my supervisor, and the second was for minor inclusions like “has” or “the”. It became confusing because the first time my document [was] served, those minor inclusions were not mentioned at all.”

Respondent 6 – “The department and faulty [sic] changing template every time when we submit e.g. the proposal template, Information leaflet.”

Respondent 6 – “Yes, not certain which is the current template used for developing a proposal. Templates changing frequently and students not been update with current changes.”

Respondent 8 – “The registration process entailed the student running between the Post Grad office and the Department to get signatures and stamps and the staff involved with the registration process were seemingly unavailable.”

The results from the respondents clearly indicate a procedural/system flaw within the university and the department regarding how things are supposed to be done in order to assist the students to progress. Some of the main areas raised in this category include discrepancies between the department and the entire registration process for postgraduate students and the templates used for ethical clearance and questionnaires. When looking at the responses, this theme is the second most strong out of the six themes that has 7 responses compared to the previous one above (nine) with respondents answering with more than one procedural/system area of concern under supervision as a theme, and proposals, the turnaround time between departmental meetings and faculty meetings for approvals.

The frustration is evident in the responses that procedurally or systematically, the students have been let down in the process of completing their phasing out qualification. One can conclude that this theme should be strongly considered by the authorities in order to quicken the completion of postgraduate studies within the university, faculty and the department. It must certainly be frustrating when a student who is sure of a submission is told the following day that the wrong template was used or that there is a probable wait of more than a month to obtain clearance to conduct a survey since this poses issues with planning and execution of the study.

According to the findings above, it would be beneficial to have a systematic guide that assists graduate students in avoiding the common mistakes that are made by students in undergraduate school. The guide should address numerous issues such as how to schedule meetings with supervisors, how to apply for ethical clearance and what is to be expected, and how to prepare a final submission and when to submit. The guide could also

include instructions for addressing issues concerning identification of obstacles in the process, final reviews and signatures, final format processes, deposits and binding.

Lastly, when examining the responses, of the six themes, this theme is third in strength, with seven responses and is similar to academic and support presented above (nine responses), with respondents answering with more than one procedure/system area of concern under the theme.

4.3 Suggestions that emanated from the M-Tech students

The students were given the opportunity to suggest what could have assisted them in completing their M-Tech studies sooner. Some of the suggestions are presented below:

- “Where there is no understanding between students and the supervisors, I would propose that the students be quickly assigned to another supervisor for faster progress.”
- “I would propose having more research discussion sessions, where a number of industry related research topics are raised. This will help open our minds and broaden our thinking.”
- “Opening the floor to students to discuss their work environments and the challenges they face daily can produce good research studies; qualitative studies even.”
- “I would also suggest more involvement of students in various research studies.”
- “Better time management. Stronger motivation and commitment.”
- “On a more personal level, opt to work part-time while doing the MTECH.”
- “A structured masters should be developed with modules as not all students are researchers.”
- “Not to recommend and [any] student [to] the university for masters studies.”

The suggestions above were strongly presented and portray some of the frustrations experienced by the students. These responses must be taken seriously to improve the current system, which in turn will improve the success rate in the department.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

A breakdown and discussion of the research findings were presented in Chapter 4 according to the data that were collected from the semi-structured questionnaires. This closing chapter provides a summary of the study as a whole by drawing conclusions based on the findings from the survey. This study sought to analyse the challenges faced by M-Tech students in the Department of Tourism Management within a UoT and to propose a guideline that could be used to improve the success rate of master's students who are registered for the M-Tech qualification that is being phased out and students studying towards the current Master of Management Science. Possible gaps and limitations found in the study are identified, and recommendations for further investigations are outlined.

5.2 Conclusions

Despite differences in wording, this research found many similarities between the challenges encountered by postgraduate students in South Africa and the challenges encountered by postgraduate students in other parts of the world. The main challenges demonstrated in this study concerned the lack of support, including academic and supervisory support, in addition to mental health and procedure/system challenges. These challenges have been characterised as main hindrances towards completion. The challenges regarding support were forcefully indicated by the students while the finding regarding maintenance of mental health was very concerning since one is required to be mentally strong to complete such a qualification.

The procedures of universities must be reviewed in order to ensure that students do not miss deadlines. Furthermore, better communication will create a better level of uniformity in how things are done, while departmental mechanisms regarding supervisory progress must be improved. Although certain areas were found to be commendable, there were more areas of concern. These areas should be addressed by the relevant authorities if the university is to compete as a postgraduate institution in South Africa.

During the discovery process, it was noted that one M-Tech student would not recommend the department to students wanting to study further. This is a major area of concern that must be addressed by the authorities because as a developing country, South Africa needs postgraduate students who have completed their studies successfully.

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendations are presented according to the objectives of the study.

Objective 1: To determine the challenges that cause master's students to stay in the system longer

- The faculty and the department should focus on supporting the current M-Tech students in order for them to complete their studies (i.e. award bursaries).
- The supervisors and the students should sign a contract regarding a plan for study completion (inclusive of timelines) that will be monitored by the Head of Department and the Faculty Head of Research.
- All students who have experienced emotional or mental suffering should be referred for student development and support in order to support them while they complete their studies.
- The Head of Department should have fortnightly follow-up meetings with the supervisors of the M-Tech students to oversee the progress.

Objective 2: To determine the solutions that will assist the students in exiting the system

All current M-Tech students should be funded by the faculty or the university in order to complete their studies.

- All supervisors responsible for the M-Tech students should prioritise them and oversee their completion.

5.4 Further research areas

As stated in Chapter 4, the majority of the findings of this study concur with the findings of other studies mentioned in the literature. However, gaps regarding the role of supervisors exist in this and many other studies. The following are suggested areas for further research:

- Investigate the possible role of the supervisor in the delay of students completing their studies in order to ascertain both perspectives.
- Gain an understanding of the processes of the department and the faculty in addition to the university postgraduate office that govern the journey for the students studying towards the M-Tech qualifications.
- Analyse the current situation regarding the M-Tech qualification in the faculty (seven departments and all the faculties in the university).
- Determine whether master's students are offered sufficient support to complete their studies on time.

5.5 Limitations

The following were identified as limitations of the current study:

- The time frame allocated to complete the study was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Although the students signed a consent form with proper explanation, the researcher suspects that they could have held back on stating their real feelings about their supervisors due to fear of victimisation since the researcher is the current Head of Department. This was covered in the consent form, but it is human nature to be cautious in instances such as completing a study that is being phased-out while experiencing many hardships as a student.
- The initial plan was to include the supervisors as an additional study sample. However, due to the time frame, this plan was withdrawn. Such a plan could possibly have contributed in gaining the perspectives of both students and supervisors.
- The intention was to conduct one-on-one interviews with the students. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, contact with students was through e-mail, and this had an effect on the follow-through questions that were to be posed to the postgraduate students.
- The ethical clearance process at the university is cumbersome and prolonged. This affected the progress of the current study since the application involved students and was thus returned several times.
- The research rules of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences were unclear to the student, and this could be improved.
- More interviews could have been held with students in which follow-up questions may have generated more responses that could have guided other studies within other faculties and departments in the university for the same qualification (M-Tech).

5.6 Proposed guideline for monitoring of master's students

Based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations above, it was evident that a guideline that would assist the department and the faculty in supporting M-Tech students could be developed. In attempting to achieve this, the following themes emerged:

- Mental health
- Resources
- Supervisory
- Academic
- Support

- Procedure/system

In view of these themes, a schematic guideline was developed to assist with improving the success rate of the M-Tech students. An explanation is provided after Figure 5.1 below.

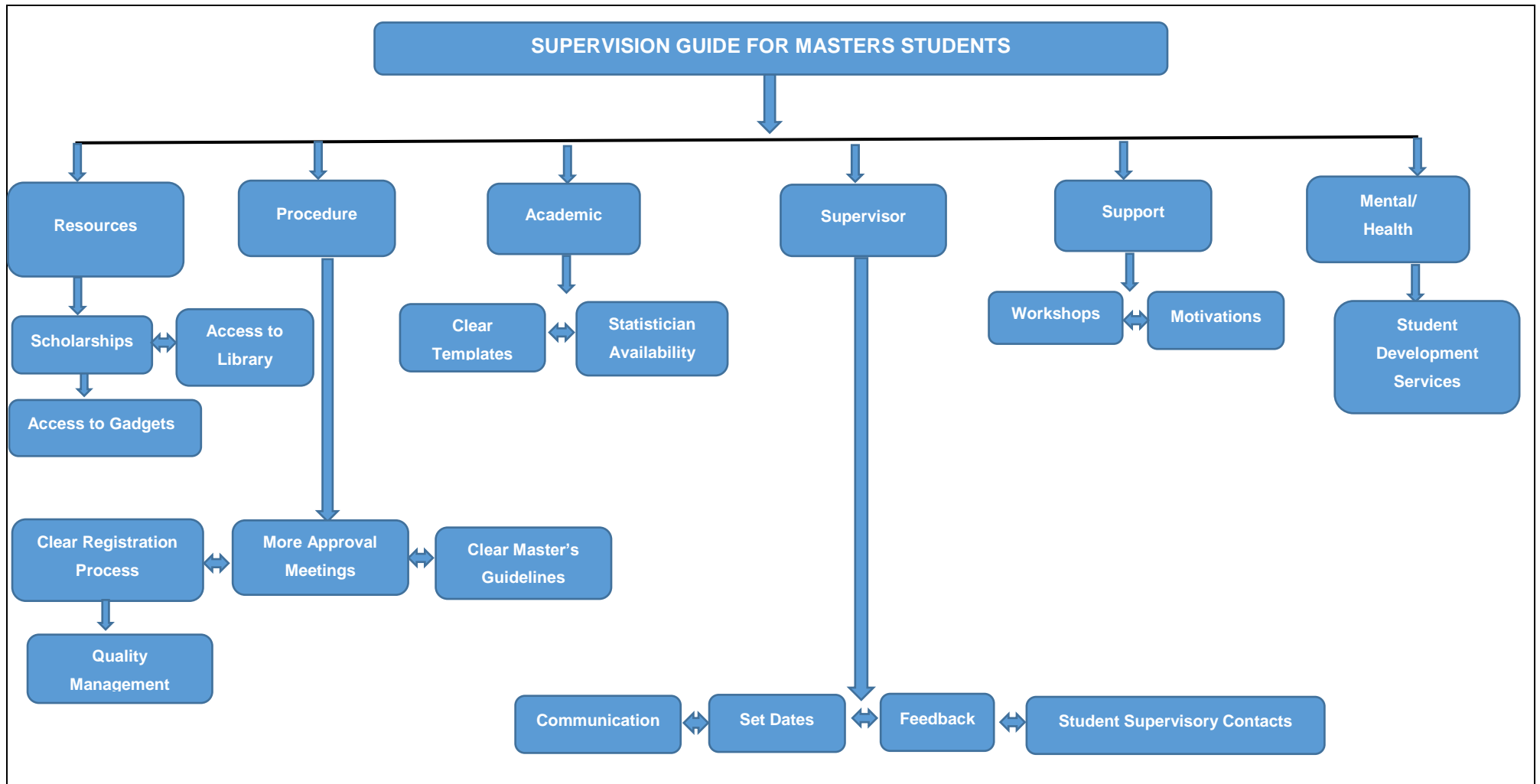


Figure 5.1: Guideline to assist in improving success rate for master's students

Figure 5.1 above presents the guideline based on the recommendations indicated in the responses of the M-Tech students (see Chapter 4). The figure illustrates the six themes that emerged in a hierarchical format. It can be concluded that master's students require the following in order to succeed with their studies:

- Resources: These include scholarships that cover tuition fees, all related electronic gadgets (laptops loaded with related research software and access to electronic material such as articles). This should be communicated to postgraduate students during the enquiry process so they know from the onset what the university can provide for them in terms of resources.
- Procedure/systems: Clear registration guidelines and procedures, clear master's guidelines and more approval meetings for proposals, questionnaires and ethical clearances are included under this theme. A booklet should be available that covers the entire system for a postgraduate student with all the yearly meetings and templates available online for the student to download. All procedures should follow a good quality management system within the university.
- Academic: Clear templates should be available for the entire dissertation, and the services of a statistician should be accessible for the analysis process. Each faculty or department should be allocated a statistician with a reasonable ratio of students in order to assist the student in progressing swiftly with the interpretation of the results.
- Supervisor: In order to advance the study, there should be set dates and proper communication between the supervisor and the student in addition to a feedback schedule that is signed by both parties. This schedule should be in the form of a contract, indicating short- and long-term goals regarding completion of the study. All contracts should be reviewed quarterly in order to monitor the progress, thus assisting in the detection of students who are struggling with supervisory relations and other obstacles during their studies.
- Support: Support includes workshops and motivation. As part of the guideline, a list of the workshops on matters such as academic writing, proposal writing, literature synthesis, article writing and publishing after completion for students in a developing country should be compiled and made available. This will assist students to plan and make themselves available for such workshops during the course of their studies. Regarding motivation, postgraduate students might need motivation from their peers. As such, peer motivation sessions could be arranged in which students brief each other on the challenges of their studies and their progress.
- Mental health: When required, students should be referred to Student Development Services (SDS) because supervisors are not trained to work with students at this

level. Details of this department should be available on the website and include all the services that can assist with mental health issues when undergoing a master's journey.

The guidelines presented highlight the most important factors that contribute to students' success rates. These guidelines can be developed through further research in other departments and faculties in order to improve the university's success rate at postgraduate level. In South Africa, universities with master's and doctoral graduates receive government subsidies since such graduates benefit the country; this presents an opportunity for the university to improve in this regard.

5.7 Proposed way forward regarding the guidelines

The proposed guidelines to improve the success rate of postgraduate students will initially be presented to the department in which the study is based and recommended for adoption. At this stage, the guidelines will be tested for effectiveness, with inputs from other supervisors within the department. Since this department is represented at faculty level, the guidelines may thereafter be presented to faculty, with the recommendation for them to be adopted at faculty level and used as a system for the entire university.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Ethical Clearance

Research Ethics Committee

The Research Ethics Committee is a registered Institutional Review Board (IRB 00005968) with the US Office for Human Research Protections (IORG# 0004997) (Expires 14 Jan 2023). Also, it has Federal Wide Assurance for the Protection of Human Subjects for International Institutions (FWA 00011501). In South Africa it is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (REC160509-21).

May 4, 2021

REC Ref #: REC/2021/03/009
Name: Tshipala N
Staff #: 613878
Faculty Ref#: FCRE2021/FR/01/002-MS

Dr N Tshipala

C/o Dr H Potinkara

Department of Tourism Management

Faculty of Management Sciences

Dear Dr Tshipala,

J Decision: Gatekeeper Permission - Approval with a strict proviso

Name: Tshipala N

Project title: *An analysis of the challenges faced by current M-Tech students regarding completion of their studies: A case of Department of Tourism Management*

Qualification: Education management programme for directors and supervisors

Supervisor: Dr H Potinkara



Thank you for submitting the revised project documents for review by the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). In reviewing the documents, the comments and notes below are tabled for your consideration, attention and/or notification:

Proposal

- Similarity index. The REC took note that the final mini dissertation will be put through turnitin again on submission in fulfilment of the Haaga Helia requirements. The REC request that the Final mini dissertation be submitted to REC with the turnitin report.

• Information Leaflet and Informed Consent

- The revised information leaflet and informed consent is in order and duly noted.

Interview Guide

The revised interview questions are in order and duly noted.

General Comments:

The REC recommends that Haaga-Helia information leaflet and informed consent template be used instead of Tshwane University of Technology template.

- The proposal indicates that the research is for non-degree purposes. If the research is for a masters at Haaga-Helia, it should reflect the degree for which the candidate is registered.

The chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee, Tshwane University of Technology, reviewed the revised project documents at its meeting on 4 May 2021. **Gatekeeper permission with a strict proviso** is granted to the project.

The proposed research project may now continue with the proviso that:

The researcher/s will conduct the study according to the procedures and methods indicated in the **approved proposal**, particularly in terms of any undertakings and/or assurances made regarding the confidentiality of the collected data.

- 1) The proposal will be submitted to the Committee for prospective ethical clearance if there are any substantial **deviations** and/or changes from the approved proposal.
- 2) The researcher/s will act within the parameters of any applicable **national legislation, professional codes of conduct**, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Strict adherence to the following South African legislation, where applicable, is especially important: Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 of 2013), Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) and the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003).
- 3) The researcher will inform the REC as soon as possible of any **adverse events** involving research participants that may have occurred during the course of the study. It includes the actions and/or processes that were implemented to mitigate and/or prevent any further injuries and/or adverse outcomes.
- 4) The researcher will inform the REC of any **new or unexpected ethical issues** that may have emerged during the course of the study, as well as how these ethical issues were addressed. The researcher must consult with the REC for advice and/or guidance in any such event.
- 5) The current ethics approval expiry date for this project is **May 3, 2023**. No research activities may continue after the ethics approval expiry date. An application for the extension of ethics approval must be submitted for projects that need to continue beyond the expiry date.

Note:

The reference number [top right corner of this communiqué] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants.

Yours sincerely,

Prof TS Ramukumba

Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee

[TUTRef#2021=03=009=TshipalaN]

Appendix 2. Informed Consent and Qualitative Instrument

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
MANAGEMENT

INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED CONSENT 2021

PROJECT TITLE: *An analysis of the challenges faced by current master's students regarding completion of their studies: A case of the Department of Tourism Management*

Primary investigator: Ndivhuwo Tshipala

Study leader: Heli Potinkara, PhD, Haaga-Helia School of Vocational Teacher Education

Dear potential research respondent,

You are invited to participate in a research study that forms part of my formal Master of Education Management. This information leaflet will help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part, you should fully understand what is involved. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely satisfied with all aspects of the study.

1. WHAT IS THE STUDY ALL ABOUT?

The aim of this study is to investigate reasons why the current Magister Technologiae (old structure) students are taking longer than required to complete their Master's degree within a University of Technology, specifically the Department of Tourism Management, in South Africa. The specific research questions that this study intends to answer are, "What are the challenges that have contributed to students staying in the system longer than required to complete their Master's? What support do they require? Are the current students who did the Postgraduate Diploma at an advantage and why?" At most universities in South Africa, the minimum duration for the Master's degree is two years for full time study and two years for continuous part-time study. No candidate can register for the Master's degree for a period longer than four years, except with special permission from the Senate.

2. WHICH RESEARCH INSTRUMENT WILL BE USED?

A semi-structured questionnaire that was designed by the researcher will be used.

3. WHAT ARE YOU REQUIRED TO DO IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be required to do the following:

- Sign this informed consent form.
- Complete the semi-structured questionnaire in your own time; it should not take more than 30 minutes to complete.

4. ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS THAT MAY EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE STUDY?

You will not be eligible to participate in this study if you are younger than 18 years old.

5. CAN ANY OF THE STUDY PROCEDURES RESULT IN PERSONAL RISK, DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE?

The study and procedures involve no foreseeable physical discomfort or inconvenience to you or your family.

6. WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT MAY COME FROM THE STUDY?

Your participation will contribute to an understanding of the challenges faced by current M-Tech students regarding completion of their studies within the Department of Tourism Management and of the progress made in order to ascertain the relevance of the ***Post Graduate Diploma*** in Tourism Management, which includes the preparation of a proposal.

The Tshwane University of Technology retains the right to patent the knowledge while ensuring that you will be informed and invited to participate in the proceedings.

7. WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY FINANCIAL COMPENSATION OR INCENTIVE FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?

Please note that you **will not** be paid to participate in the study.

8. WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty or any future disadvantage whatsoever. You can withdraw without providing reasons for your decision. Your withdrawal will in no way influence your continued care and relationship with the supervisory team. Note that you are not waiving any legal

claims, rights or remedies through your participation in this research study.

9. WILL CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BE ENSURED IN THE STUDY?

Only the researcher and the supervisors will have access to the completed questionnaires. Your answers will be entirely anonymous and your identity will not be revealed under any circumstances. Moreover, nobody outside the study panel and/or the Research Ethics Committee will be able to connect any answer to you in any recognisable way. The results of this study might be published in a scientific journal and/or presented at scientific meetings but again, without revealing the identity of any research respondent. The original questionnaires will be stored in a safe place for three years, after which they will be destroyed.

10. IS THE RESEARCHER QUALIFIED TO CARRY OUT THE STUDY?

The researcher is adequately trained and qualified in the study fields that are covered in this research project, specifically Education Management.

11. HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

Yes. The Faculty Committee for Postgraduate Studies and the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Technology (REC Reference Number: REC Ref #: REC/2021/03/009) have approved the formal study proposal. All parts of the study will be conducted according to internationally accepted ethical principles.

12. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY?

The researcher, Dr Ndivhuwo Tshipala, can be contacted during office hours at Tel: (012) 382-4665 or on his cellular phone at 082 559 5583. The study leader, Dr Heli Potinkara, can be contacted during office hours at Tel: +358 404487405. Should you have any questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee, Prof T Ramukumba during office hours at Tel. (012) 382-5107, E-mail ramukumbats@tut.ac.za. Alternatively, you can report any serious unethical behaviour on the university's Toll Free Hotline 0800 21 23 41.

13. DECLARATION: NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he is the current Head of Department of the concerned department (Tourism Management) and thus will conduct the research in a manner that does not jeopardise the progress of the students (sample) or any member of staff who could be

supervising them for fairness. The author declares that he will subject himself to scrutiny if any of the students cannot progress due to their participation in the study or the recommendations stipulated in the university guidelines.

14. DECLARATION FOR PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT

The author declares that he is the current Head of Department of the concerned department (Tourism Management). Refer to Section 13 of the leaflet regarding Declaration: Conflict of Interest.

15. FINAL WORD

Your co-operation and participation in the study will be greatly appreciated.

16. CONSENT

By completing the survey, I agree that I have read this **INFORMATION LEAFLET** and voluntarily agree to participate in the research study. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please ignore the survey.

or

If it is a **paper-based survey / face-to-face interview**, the following can be used.

Please sign the informed consent below if you agree to participate in the study. In such a case, you will receive a copy of the signed informed consent from the researcher.

I hereby confirm that I have been adequately informed by the researcher about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the study. I have also received, read and understood the written information above. I am aware that the results of the study will be anonymously processed into a research report. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may at any stage and without prejudice withdraw my consent to participate in the study. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and of my own free will, I declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

If it is an online/e-mail survey the following can be used:

By completing the survey I agree that I have read the **INFORMATION LEAFLET** and voluntarily agree to participate in the research study. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please ignore the survey.

Research participant's name: _____

_____ (Please print)

Research participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's name: _____

_____ (Please print)

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature/Name

An analysis of the challenges faced by current M-Tech students regarding completion of their studies: A case of the Department of Tourism Management

Indicate if you are (X)	Male		Female	
Indicate if you are studying (X)	M-Tech: Tourism and Hospitality Management		M-Tech: Adventure Tourism Management	

- 1) Describe your Master's (M-Tech: Tourism and Hospitality Management / M-Tech: Adventure Tourism Management) journey thus far.
- 2) What were your main challenges in completing your Master's?
- 3) Did you struggle with developing a proposal? Please indicate your main struggles.
- 4) Do you think if you had had preparation regarding proposal development in your undergraduate studies, you would have progressed quicker? Please provide a detailed answer.
- 5) Was the research methodology course in your Baccalaureas Technologiae (B-Tech) Tourism Management sufficient to prepare you for your Master's? Please share your thoughts.
- 6) Explain the type of support you would like to have in order to complete your Master's.
- 7) On a personal level, detail what you would have done differently to complete your Master's in less time.

Appendix 3. Gate Keepers Letter: Registrar

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGISTRAR

18 February 2021 The Research Ethics Committee, PRETORIA, 0001

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON STUDENTS

This letter serves to confirm that Dr NN Tshipala, has been granted permission to access and collect data at Tshwane University of Technology for post facto research on the:

Project title: An analysis of the challenges faced by current M-Tech students regarding completion of their studies: A case of the Department of Tourism Management
Faculty ∞ Management Science

Supervisor ∞ Dr Heli Potinkara

Programme ∞ Education Management Programme for directors and supervisors

The permission is granted on condition that the research is conducted and results published according to the procedures and methods as approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

Dr SP Poee
Deputy Registrar

Office of the Deputy Registrar, Private Bag PRETORIA 0001, Tel. 0861 102 422, (+27 12) 3824421/5130,



Appendix 4. Edit Certification

30 ACTON AVENUE
HELENA HEIGHTS
SOMERSET WEST
7130
CELL: 082 8183277
searle.edit@gmail.com

14 June 2021

To whom it may concern:

This certifies that I, Lydia Searle, performed the copy edit for the thesis titled, “An analysis of the challenges faced by current M-Tech students regarding completion of their studies: A case of the Department of Tourism Management” by Dr Ndivhuwo Tshipala for submission to Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Citation format and language, grammar, punctuation and layout issues were addressed according to the guidelines of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences using MSWord Review (Track Changes) function.

The reference list was not edited as requested by the author.

I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to my edit.

Yours faithfully,

Lydia Searle

Member: Professional Editors’ Guild RSA (PEG)

Member: Academic and Non-Fiction Authors’ Association of South Africa (ANFASA)