FACTORS INFLUENCING THE THROUGH-PUT RATES OF MASTERS STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

by

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DECLARATION

I, Bopape Morongwa Annamarie, declare that this research project on factors influencing the through-put rates of masters' students at the University of Limpopo submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of Public Administration. I declare that this mini-dissertation is my own original work and has not previously been submitted by me for the degree or any other university.

January 2018

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Bopape M.A Date

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ABSTRACT

South African Universities are faced with the pandemic issues of student's through-put. The postgraduate intake at higher education doesn't correspond with the completion rate. South Africa is relatively the lowest in higher education success rate compared to other countries. This study aimed at investigating factors contributing to postgraduate students through-put at Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership (TGSL), in the University of Limpopo.

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design. Questionnaire were utilised to collect data from master's students and academic staff at TGSL. Data was gathered through structured questionnaire from 42 master's students. Semi-structured questionnaire were used to gather data from five experienced academic staff members. The study utilised simple random sampling and judgemental or purposive sampling. Descriptive analysis was used and data was analysed using Statistical package for social science (SPSS).

The findings reveal that the number of students graduating from the three programmes within TGSL is increasing from time to time suggesting a decline in supervision backlog. The study indicated that most master's students take more than maximum duration of three years to complete their study as these students have completed their modules (course work) and remain with research project. Despite these and other academic support provided by the university, masters students encounter certain challenges that influence their academic performance. The major factors influencing through-put include: Lack of commitment; personal issues such as workload; lack of support from spouse and family members and poor time management; lack of personal interest and hard work on the part of students; lack of focus; poor time management; inadequate writing skills; lack of time. Most students are working and may not have adequate time to consult their supervisors. This study has made recommendations to further improve master's students' through-put. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study it is recommended that students should be self-disciplined; committed to their studies. Students should put more effort on their mini-dissertation and attend the writing retreats organised by the university to improve their writing skills.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MDEV	Master of Development Studies
MPA	Master of Public Administration
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
TGSL	Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership
UNISA	University of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In Africa access to higher education is not without barriers. People from disadvantaged backgrounds in African countries encounter a range of obstacles and are less represented in higher education (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012). Before 1994, people from disadvantaged backgrounds encountered educational inequalities governed by Bantu Education (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012). In South Africa the question of access and success in higher education is a historic predicament specifically for black South Africans. Under the Bantu Education System, black people were discouraged from pursuing higher education (Netswera and Mathabe, 2006). During the apartheid era, racial discrimination was executed in South Africa; blacks had limited access to education in general and higher education. Access to higher education for blacks did not attribute as a policy option as compared to white students. The enrolments were low, in 2001 were 15%; increased to 17% by 2009 (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012). In the democratic era the National Plan for Higher education articulated the vision of promoting equity, access and fair chances of success to all.

Massification of higher education, increasing costs, and the pressure on institutions to retain all students to degree completion has been mounting (Crosling, Thomas, and Heagney, 2009). For example, at international level, the Unites States is falling behind other nations in terms of the percentage of the population who is educated (National Science Board, 2008). In South Africa obtaining a higher education degree has been linked to economic growth (Baum and Ma, 2007), which may be particularly poignant during the current recession. At an institutional level, the costs of not retaining students are substantial, both financially and in terms of prestige (Crosling, Thomas and Heagney, 2009).

Most South Africans intending to pursue their studies beyond Matric level find the higher education tuition expensive which creates a barrier. In 2009 the poverty level was at 56.8% which hinders students from pursuing their studies (Van der Bank and Nkadimeng, 2014). South African students initiated the protest of #Fees Must Fall

which demanded 0% increase in tuition fees. The focal point of the protest was on the increase on tuition fees and lack of funding for poor student to pursue their university studies (Davids and Waghid, 2016). The focus of this research work is to identify the factors that influence through-put among the research master's students in the University of Limpopo, specifically at the Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership (TGSL).

1.2. Background

In presenting an overview of through-put trends, it is important to establish the fact that there has been a growing concern all over the world about throughput situations in higher education. This growing concern has led to attempts being made to deal with such situations, and above all, lessons have been learned from such experiences. The discussions that follow would centre on these matters concerns to create awareness of the seriousness of the subject matter of throughput in higher education.

The focus of this study is on the postgraduate throughput. There is a concern worldwide about the length of time postgraduate student take to complete their studies, the high percentage of postgraduate students who drop-out and the success rate of postgraduate students (Amehoe, 2013). Several scholars (Beck, 2011; Ashby, 2004; Watson, 2008; Mutula, 2009) conveyed a concern about the predicament of postgraduate education, especially the time students take to complete their research.

The Department of Education`s Director on Higher Education and Planning reported that of the 120 000 students who enrolled in higher education in 2000, 36 000 (or 30%) dropped out during their first year of study. A further 24 000 (20%) dropped out during their second and third year of study. The remaining 60 000 (50%), fewer than half (22%) graduated with a generic bachelor's degree within the specified three-year period. Completion rates of postgraduate student have become a crucial concern to funding agencies and government as they rely on performance-driven model. (Letseka and Maile, 2008).

1.3. Problem statement

A scan of through-put trends for the past five years at TGSL suggests low graduation in comparison to annual registrations (TGSL, 2013). The challenges faced by the TGSL are not peculiar only to the University of Limpopo but it is a national problem. Letseka and Maile, (2008) found that the graduation of 15% in South Africa is the lowest in the world. Higher education also reflects broader inequalities; with the graduation for white students more than double that of black students (Letseka and Maile, 2008:1-2). The Department of Higher Education's 2015 report indicate that 47, 9% of the university students did not complete their degrees. Black students had the highest drop-out rate of 32, 1% leaving in the first year (Jeynes, 2016)

Given this, through-put need to be researched so that the university concerned can develop mechanism to retain their students and improve through-put even through some of the factors influencing through-put might be out of institutional control. Unfortunately, most institutions have not yet been able to translate what we know about the student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation (Simpson, 2004). This study is concerned with the factors that influence through-put among the master's students in the University of Limpopo, specifically at the TGSL.

1.4. Motivation of the study

This study was motivated by the fact that student through-put is a persistent problem throughout the South African higher education landscape. Although there are numerous studies already conducted in this area, each institution has its own culture, support systems and attracts student cohorts with peculiar cultures and interests. It is important to understand the factors that influence through-put at the University of Limpopo in particular TGSL. According to the researcher's observation there is currently limited existing literature on the University of Limpopo (TGSL) on master's levels. This research has the potential of making a positive contribution to tackling through-put challenges at the University of Limpopo.

1.5. Significance of the study

The study is significant as it will uncover the intervention strategies put in place by the TGSL to improve its through-put as well as the major factors influencing master's

students. The findings of this study could therefore be utilised for university in order to further develop strategic intervention strategies to address the backlog. Intervention strategies will uncover factors influencing through-put and assist the TGSL master's students with timely completion of their degrees. The school will benefit in terms of providing appropriate academic support for master's students in the Master of business Administration (MBA), Mater of Development (MDEV) and Master of Public Administration (MPA) programmes. Finally, the study adds new insight and knowledge on the factors that influence master's students' through-put.

1.5.1. Aim of the study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate factors that influence master's student's through-put in TGSL, University of Limpopo.

1.5.2. The objectives of the study

The objectives of this research are:

- To examine the status of master's students' through-put at TGSL.
- To identify factors that influence master's student's through-put at TGSL.
- To suggest strategic interventions to further improve master's student's through-put at TGSL.

1.5.3. Research questions

These are the questions that were addressed by the study:

- What the status of through-put of the Master's students at TGSL?
- What factors influence master's student through-put at TGSL?
- What should be done to further improve master's student's through-put at TGSL?

1.6. Definition of Concepts

Student Through-put. Ashby (2004) defines student through-put as a measure of the percentage of students who gain a course credit or an award based on the number of students who registered for the course.

Attrition. Tinto (1975) defined attrition as" a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the academic and social systems of the college during which a person`s experiences in those system, continually modify his goals and institutional commitments in ways which lead to persistence and/ or to varying forms of dropout" (Ascend Learning, 2012).

Drop out. Beck (2011) refers to students who started with their studies but then discontinued their studies in the period under review, dropouts. Example 2005 -2009 as a four-year degree and a student drops out earlier than the specified time.

Retention. The process of retaining students who enrol for a qualification and remain at a particular institution until they complete their studies for that qualification (Crosling, Thomas and Heagney, 2009).

Student preparedness. Glasser (1984) explains student preparedness as a list of knowledge, skills and attributes a student should possess to be able to succeed in their studies.

Student motivation. Refers to the interest, attention, optimism and passion that is shown by the student when learning or being taught. (Govender, 2012).

1.7. Outline of chapters

Chapter 1

Introduction

This is the initial and introductory chapter wherein the background of the study which will form the basis of the understanding of the research study is outlined. It outlines the statement of the problem, the research questions and the objective of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Chapter 2 forms the crux of this research report as it outlines the views of various theorists and authors.

Chapter 3

Research methods

This is where the techniques and the methodology of the study are explained as well as how the research is going to be conducted. This section reveals the nature of the population, the sampling methods, and how the data was collected.

Chapter 4

Research findings, Analysis and Interpretation

The findings are presented and analysed in this section

Chapter 5

Summary of results, conclusions and recommendations

This will be the last chapter of the study. It will give the main conclusions drawn from the study and the recommendations made pertaining to the critical issues raised. Critical issues of further research will also be identified.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter explained the orientation and background to the study. The chapter stated the research problem, questions, aims and objectives, discussed the research methodology, and the organization of the study. The researcher reviews related literature to situate the study in appropriate theoretical frame work and context in the next chapter

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will attempt to provide concise but in-depth information of the literature regarding student's through-put in higher education. Literature review enables the researcher to compare and contrast the present and past information and to provide solid background to back the researcher's investigation. The review plays an integral role in research as it acts as a stepping stone towards the accomplishment of the research objectives (Wanjohi, 2012).

The chapter discusses the through-put trends in higher education from the international to national perspective with particular reference to Australia, United Kingdom, America and African countries such as Ghana. South African through-put trends were also looked into in the chapter. The chapter concluded with an analysis of the factors influencing master's through-put trends and suggested retention strategies to manage through-put trends in higher education.

2.2. Conceptualising through-put

The concept through-put can be defined as total number of students enrolled for a specific qualification within a specific period. Amehoe (2013) defines through-put as the drop-out trends, completion trends as well as success trends in higher education. The term through-put is commonly utilised in an academic environment where it is referred to as students who manage to complete their academic programmes within the stipulated time frame (Botha, 2016). However, it has been concluded that higher education institutions cannot be regarded as factories due to divergent objectives.

According to Watson (2008) there is a common understanding in the concept of through-put however, there is absence of stability in the explanation utilised. There is absence of stability in explanation on how to measure through-put performance. Watson (2008) identified three elements associated with the term through-put. The first element is the "time-to-degree" which refers to the time spent by students to complete their study programme. The second element is "retention" students who return to the institution until they complete their own studies. Students might not

return to the institution and enrol at a different institution due to lack of retention strategies. Student drop-out is the third element pertinent to through-put. Student drop-out is referred to as number of students who did not complete their students or who have failed to return for re-registration the following year.

Amehoe (2013) explains through-put as a high-low situation, whereby if only few students managed to complete their study programmes with the set time frame it will be a low situation. If more students have completed their studies within the specified time frame it will be regarded as a high situation. Considering the above divergent explanations of through put it is clear that the authors perceive through-put in two different concepts, the first concept is the number of years students take to complete their studies second concept focus more on the number of students passed in a particular study programme. The students' academic progress in certain study programme or course can determine through-put in higher education.

In this study, through-put refers to the status of master's students at TGSL in relation to drop outs, deregistration, fail to complete (at risk) and successfully complete within stipulated time frame.

2.3. Postgraduate through-put from international perspective

2.3.1 *Postgraduate trend in United States of America*

The University system in America is decentralised where public universities are managed only by individual states. Universities and colleges in the United State differ with regard to goals ranging and universities are research-oriented which offers both undergraduate and graduate education (Amehoe, 2013). Factors that contribute to the student through-put and retention internationally are mostly attributed to student under-preparedness as well as academic challenges in the school system (Pretorious, Prinsloo and Uys, 2010). This stipulates that most students are not for the academic challenges in master's studies.

Lovitts in (Amehoe, 2013) indicates that it is vital to adhere to strict admission procedures; the procedures will eliminate the under-prepared students and grant promising students admission, students who fail to complete their studies within the stipulated time-frame will be a matter of choice. Most promising students are

selected into the programme and they should be able to complete their studies within the stipulated time-frame regardless of the institutional logistics, supervision and inadequacies. America's universities and colleges have a serious problem of student's drop-out, most students who register at universities and colleges fail to complete their studies (Carey, 2004). There are similarities between South Africa and United States with regarding challenges in higher education.

According Roose (2014) financial support is one of the most contributing factors to student's capability to complete their Master's and Doctoral degrees. In the United State, students who manage to complete their master's degrees have the ability to balance education, work and family responsibility simultaneously. The following reasons are most stated by students as their reasons for dropping out of higher education: family status, work, inadequate resources and programme dissatisfaction. The type of enrolment is likely to contribute to the through-put trends of master's degrees, full-time students are likely to complete their programmes, and part-time students tend to take long to complete their programmes.

2.3.2 *Australia and the United Kingdom*

The Australian method of higher education a person with three-year or four-year undergraduate degree may enrol for a one-year honours degree or Master's degree. The honours and research Master's Degree both incorporate course work, after completion the student can register for a four-year full-time PhD programme. In the United Kingdom and Australian system of master's programmes a student may be upgraded to PhD, after the completion of the Master's first-year depending on the performance (Amehoe, 2013).

The master's programmes in both Australia and the United Kingdom, research plays an important part and its completion is based on time frame. Universities should have policies and procedures that stipulate the start times, completion times and the research completion time. In the research findings of McCormack (2005) explains that "the average time to submit for PhD students was 52.6 months for science students to 56.8 months for arts, humanities and social science students; completion for science and engineering students were considerably higher than those for students from art, humanities and social sciences, an average of 77 % of male

students and 60 per cent of female students compared to an average of 48 per cent of male students and 4 per cent of female students". It is clear that the gender differences are not too high as compared to African countries where males are usually in favour.

2.4. African perspectives on through-put

The duration of master's qualification differs according institutions. A full time Master's Degree in the United Kingdom might take 9 to 12 months for students to complete and South Africa may take up to 24 months or more. Part time Master's Student might take up to 4 years to complete the degree and 6-8 years for a PhD due to inadequate resources, whereas the average duration is 4 years. In most African Universities Master's degree qualification are taught whereas PhD focuses mainly on research projects. In some of the disciplines the PhD programmes are taught (Amehoe, 2013 and Mutula, 2009). Research is properly coordinated in most African Universities (Mutula, 2009). The master's through-put challenges are not only faced by the developing countries. The challenges are also faced by the developed countries such as United Kingdom. Some developed countries such as Canada, New Zealand, Germany and United States have developed remedial actions to master's through-put trends (Mutula, 2009).

Amehoe (2013) stipulates that "*graduation and the drop-out in the African universities differs from countries with regard to the absence of a regional agency that is specifically responsible for gathering systematics data on university drop-out trends in Africa*" Amehoe further indicated that based on the student survey that as conducted the drop-out trends are deteriorating in mathematics, in Uganda the mathematics drop-out trends were estimated to 60 per cent, Nigeria 75 per cent, Madagascar 85 per cent and 95 per cent in the Central African Republic.

According to the Zimbabwe Council for Higher education the graduation are decreasing on yearly basis, in 2009 it was 86% decreased to 76% in 2010 in 2011 went down to 75% (Garwe and Maganga, 2015). At the Zimbabwe Open University, Davis and Venter (2011) strived to uncover the challenges affecting the progression of master's students.

Mutula (2009) discovered three challenges that affect research process in African universities, namely capacity, productivity and utility. Research capacity refers to

research facilities as well as the skilled human resources which have in-depth knowledge about research. Research productivity refers to the availability of resource that will intensify research. Research utility focuses on the research outcomes if they're pertinent to the national developmental priorities. Zakri further indicated that most universities that are with the developing countries don't have the necessary skills to resolve the development-related issues.

2.4.1. *Ghana*

The pandemic issue of masters through-put trends is not only experienced in Ghana, it is a worldwide challenge. Doctoral and Master's students take longer to complete their studies and some students tend to drop out of the university before the completion time of the study programme. Institutional and student factors are some of the factors that influence to drop out and to delay graduation in Ghana. (Botha, 2016).

Several scholars expressed revealed concern with regard to master's studies in particular to the problem of students taking longer to complete their studies (Amehoe 2013; Tinto, 1975 and Davis and Venter, 2011).

In Ghana the governments always had interest in investing in higher education because of the relationship between the research project and economic developments, that's the reason they fund master's programmes especially doctoral studies. The government's funds are usually awarded to the university in the form of grants. In Carada, Nordic and Australia there are various stakeholders therefore doctoral/PhD is free, whereas other countries such as Japan and Thailand offers study loans (Botha, 2016). However, stakeholders are anxious about the deteriorating master's through-put trends as well as attrition in higher education. Attrition and through-put trends have become the most concerned aspects in higher education. Master's and Doctoral programmes re often influenced by factors like the mode of attendance (part-time or full-time), field study, scholarship and technical challenges encountered by master's research students.

2.5. South African perspectives on through-put

The problem of student attrition is critical in South Africa (Van der bank and Nkadimeng, 2014). Letseka and Maile (2008) indicated that the graduation of 15% in

South Africa is among the lowest in the world. Furthermore, higher education in South Africa reflects broader inequalities with the graduation for white students more than double that of black students. In 2005 the Department of Education Director on Higher Education and Planning reported that of the 120 000 students who enrolled in higher education in the year 2000, 36 000 (30%) dropped out during their first year of study. A further 24 000 (20%) dropped out during their second and third year of study. Fewer than half (22%) graduated with a generic bachelor's degree within the specified three-year period (HSRC, 2008).

Research in the area of student dropout and retention in South Africa indicates that few 15% students graduate within the record time (Macgregor, 2007). The high of student dropout are largely amongst black student's poor school preparation, finance and inadequate teaching at higher education institution. Department of Education (1997) indicates that access to higher education institution for previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa has not been improved. Macgregor (2007) indicates that 40% of student dropout of universities in their first year.

2.5.1 *Student dropout in South Africa*

In South African's 23 public universities the graduation 15 % for undergraduate students. Doctoral studies the graduation is 12% and for Master's students its 20% (Letseka and Maile, 2008). Student dropout of an institution is no longer seen just as a pure academic failure on the part of the learners, Tinto's (1975). The author suggests that institutions should accept that they carry an equal responsibility when learners fail or dropout. Drop-out is viewed as an institutional failure. Successful retention programmes have become thus learner-centered and are proactive (Peelo & Wareham, 2002, Moxley, Najor-Durack and Dumbrigue, 2001). Dennis (1998), Moxley et.al. (2001), Felder, Felder and Dietz (2000) discussed various ideas as on the design of retention management system. Moxley et.al. (2001) epitomise the scope of retention as one which incorporates learner readiness and self-understanding, academic development (the most traditional retention programme), personal and social development and professional and career development.

A dropout therefore is a student who fits one or most of these criterions (Styger, van Vuuren and Heymans, 2015):

- Gone and the returning status is unknown;
- Moved to another district, other country, another institution without the knowledge of the previous institution of affiliation. It is therefore highly important to make a distinction between dropouts and student transfers;
- Has moved out of higher education into a non-academic institution which do not offer and equivalent higher academic programmes, for example, hospital instruction, residential special education, correctional institution, community or technical college where the program is classified as adult education, military and Job Corps, among others;
- Not within the schooling system but known to be ill or not verifiable; and
- Not in the schooling system for reasons like being suspended or expelled but may have options to return or not return.

High percentage of student dropout from Universities seems to be related with experience of the student that suggests student's negative experiences of Universities are the root causes of student dropout. According to Ramrathan (2013) drop out trends occur between registration and tuition, between registration to examination and writing of examination.

Financial challenges, negative experience with registration processes and negative lecture experience are some of the reasons why students drop out at this point of registration to examination writing. Research on master's students at universities states that while enrolments are steadily increasing, completing or graduation does not correlate with the enrolment. Kritzinger and Loock (2012) states that student drop out is national phenomenon and studies have been conducted on undergraduate students but few studies on master's students. According to Kritzinger and Loock (2012) students drop out trends in 2010 ranged from 30% 67% for master's degrees and for doctoral degrees it ranged from 50% to 68% for some academic colleges of the biggest institution in South Africa.

Subsidised research output units for Universities in South Africa, three units of research is provided by doctoral graduates (Ministry of Higher Education and Training, 2012) and if students drop out, these units will be completely lost, as well

as substantial funding in the form of vital research and government subsidies. The national strategy is to elevate master's qualification and to increase human capital development (Centre for Research on Science and Technology, 2009).
According to Academy of Science of South Africa (2010) Master's and doctoral students are taking longer than the stipulated time to complete their studies, in 2007 the average time for completion of a doctoral degree was 4.8 years, up from 4.6 in 2000. Sondlo (2013) stated that financial difficulties and less preparedness are the contributing factors of through-put in South Africa.

In the Department of Science and Technology's (DST) ten-years plan, the objective is to put South Africa among the bracket of wealthier countries by expanding knowledge output significantly (Department of Science and Technology, 2007).
This indicates that research master's and doctoral output must also enlarge in both quantity and quality, which demands a number of pivotal inputs including master's supervision of students (Styger, Vuuren and Heymans, 2015). ASSAF (2010) asserted that if master's students persist to drop out, large amount of funds invested in students are to be lost. South Africa produced about 23 to 27 doctoral per million residents in 2010 (ASSAF, 2010), Department of Science and Technology set a target to produce 6,000 PhDs in science, engineering and Technology by 2018 (Department of Science and Technology, 2007). For Department of Science and Technology accomplish this goal, higher education institution cannot persist in their current ways and amplifying PhD student intake will only partly solve the problem. To admit more students, the university requires more supervisors which are scares (Styger, Vuuren and Heymans, 2015).

According to ASSAF (2010) skilled and qualified academic workforce and especially doctoral supervisors are short in South Africa. To qualify to be Master's supervisor a PhD degree is the minimum requirement (Styger, Vuuren and Heymans, 2015). Approximately 13000 doctoral and 49000 master's students registered for at South African institution in 2011(Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). Aside from the fact that master's student dropout trends are high, master's students take longer to complete their studies. In 2005, 59% of doctoral and 37% of master's students in South Africa was outstanding students whereas the graduation remained

the same (Crest, 2009). South African higher education system has produced more master's students from the year 2000 but more graduates are needed.

Master's graduates elevated from 5,800 in 2000 to 9,700 in 2011, which is an increase of 67% Doctoral graduate also elevated from 822 to 1576, an increase of 91% during the same periods. The target that has been set by the Department of Science and Technology in 2007 is not met. (Styger, Vuuren and Heymans, 2015).

Styger, Vuuren and Heyman further asserted that South African universities must keep drop outs at minimum and enhance the success of current students by striving to meet the target set by Department of Science and Technology by 2018.

2.5.2 *Student Success in South Africa*

In South Africa student success is a strategic priority for higher education (Davis and Venter, 2011). The production of university master's students is a crucial component of the national system of revolution of modern industrial societies (Council on Higher education, 2009). Davis and Venter (2011) highlighted that student success do not only contribute to the reputation of the institution, government funding is also linked to institutional through-put trends. The importance of student success cannot be ignored any longer (Davis and Venter, 2011). University of South Africa is also faced with low success and high dropout (Davis and Venter, 2011).

There were about 54 494 students registered for master's qualification in South African universities for the first time in 2005. The registration growth is in relation to high demand for master's skills (Davis and Venter, 2011). According to Davis and Venter (2011) UNISA's master's completion portrays a forbidding picture. This stipulates that there is high failure in master's students which leads to low success. At UNISA, in strategic management course only 33 per cent of students passed the module and almost 36 per cent of students dropped out in 2009. Between 2001-2007, 37 per cent and 51 per cent of master's students entering UNISA for the first time dropped out during the second year of the study. The dropout ended up reaching up to 69 per cent (Davis and Venter, 2011)

Koen (2007) in South African higher education, he studied the dropout and retention of master's students over a period of six years, and Koen's study indicated factors that promotes dropout as well as factors contributing to student retention. In South African institutions student retention cannot be separated d from household factors, economic, student ability, student selection and adaptation challenges, Koen further

examined structural factors on student decisions. Davis and Venter (2011) argued that if student perform well in their studies then they are likely to complete their studies.

2.6. Factors that contribute to student's through-put

The conceptualisation provided above proves the magnitude of through-put trends in higher education. There are various reasons that regulate students' completion time in higher education. The elements contributing to completion and non- completion in master's studies are boundless (Botha, 2016).

2.6.1 *Student preparedness*

Key factors contributing to student attrition within the South African higher education system are under preparedness of school leavers and financial difficulty (Stryger, Vuuren and Heymans, 2015 and Van der Bank and Nkadimeng, 2014). It is important to explore student's preparedness, because Ofori and Charloton (2002) stated that previous university experiences influence attrition and through-put. According to Ofori and Charloton (2002) student preparedness refers to the students' preparations for master's studies as measured by activities prior to registrations. Entry qualifications have an effect on academic performance.

According to the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2010) Master's degree enrolment increased at an annual of 4.4% between 2000 and 2003, but decreased between 2003 and 2005. Council of Higher Education stated that students who are underprepared for higher education students find it difficult to complete their master's studies in the prescribed time (CHE 2010).

Crissman (2005) suggests that lecturers should acknowledge student's diverse backgrounds at higher education institutions particularly in their first year of master's degrees. Crissman further suggests that the stereotyping of the traditional student must be avoided as nowadays student are very different from the traditional student and diverse. Today's students may be of different race, group age, gender and may be working and having families to look after.

Academic preparedness, mental health, personal responsibilities are potential factors for students to dropout or to succeed. According to Ramrathan (2013) programme and subject choice has effect on student's dropout, students were not given in-depth information of the subject choice or they were given little choice in what subjects they could select. Access to student's choice of courses and programmes was reported more often as one of the reasons for dropping out of university.

2.6.2 *Financial and academic reasons*

Koen (2007) maintains that over the period 1993 to 1999, more than 7 600 students did not complete their qualifications at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) for financial and academic reasons. He says that over this period, exclusions of students on academic grounds accounted for about one third of forced exclusions, while exclusions of students who owed money accounted for two thirds of the student population. This is one of the most contributing factors of student dropout; students fail to complete their studies to due financial reasons.

According to Mdepa and Tshiwula (2012) South Africa is the only country faced with student financial constraints. One of the major problems faced by students in Africa is lack financial resources and the students living expenses. Majority of the African university students selected in the European University Study responded "yes" to a question whether financial constraints hinders access to higher education and leads to dropouts (European University Association, 2010). The annual cost increase of higher education is a major concern for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mdepa and Tshiwula (2012) stipulated that there is a direct relationship between access and funding higher education. National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) was established in 1991 by South African Government in trying to increase access in higher education. NSFAS is offered to cover student's tertiary expenses. Nevertheless, NSFAS doesn't cover students living expenses, students who stay out off campus find it laborious to travel. South African universities are situated far from where most students reside. Students who are residing off campus are required to use public transport which is often unsafe and expensive for students. Regardless of the tuition fees students still requires money for transport.

Based on Griffin (2007), study in East Africa, the greatest challenge for students to complete their studies is financial constraints. In South Africa, financial constraints accounted for 70% of university dropouts (Letseka and Maile, 2008) therefore few studies illustrated that financial assistance is positively correlate to completion of university education. Students depend on their parents for living expenses and to pay for their higher education fees (Singell, 2004).

> ***"****Many students are forced out of higher education as a result of financial barriers and that a high number of students from lower economic backgrounds fail to complete higher education after gaining access" (*Mdepa and Tshiwula (2012:26*).*

Students fail to achieve their academic goals due to learning styles, not being taught in mother tongue, behavioural styles and educators teaching styles in higher education (Wright and Maree, 2007). Students with positive behaviour tend to be committed, determined and it enables them to persist with their studies even when they encounter difficulties (Park, Perry & Edwards. 2011). Students have different learning styles. It is impossible for the educator to match his/her teaching style with each students learning style. Failure to adapt to the teaching style utilised might lead to delayed graduation or drop out.

According to McKendry, Wright and Stevenson (2014) students should ensure that they take the responsibility of adapting to the teaching styles used and to match it with their learning styles.

2.6.3 *Student housing*

Good students' housing is a big crisis throughout South African Universities. The drastic increment in student enrolments in the South African higher education system since 1994 has compounded this problem as the construction of student housing could not grow at the same level as enrolments (Department of Education, 2005). Historic studies in this area agree that student housing has a major impact on the academic performance of students (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012). Given the historical nature of South African residential patterns wherein the majority of blacks lived in the rural areas and higher education institutions concentrated in urban centres, efforts are still necessary to increase student bed numbers, since higher education enrolment means relocation to urban centres. At the moment the majority of black students are compelled to live in substandard housing in the townships, squatter

camps and back room properties. Not enough research has however been done in South Africa on the effect and implications of poor student housing and the effect it has on student living and academic experiences *(*Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012).

2.6.4 *Personal reasons*

Lintvelt (2008) found that participants carried a heavy load of responsibilities – caring for children and family members, and looking after the household. Participants experienced difficulties with time management, strained family relations, poverty, and a lack of safety.

Lawlor (2008) focused on the personal, work and learning contexts of participants. Within the personal context, she found that students generally received support from their families, that they still wished to grow on a personal and professional level, and that they expressed a need for computer literacy and counselling services to deal with their own issues.

Lintvelt (2008) states that most master's students have families which make it laborious to balance between academic and household duties, which influence their studies negatively. Delayed graduation is often informed by different personal reasons.

Garwe and Maganga (2015) asserted that it is vital to note that for students to dropout of university before completion of their studies has personal repercussions. Low personal worth and feelings of inadequacy cause students who dropped out of the universities to undergo emotional and psychological stress. Master's dropouts are associated with reduction of academic reputation and financial losses (Botha, 2016).

Some studies have alleged that students who are coming from less privileged backgrounds are likely to drop out of universities as compare to those from well-to-do families (Garwe and Maganga, 2015). Most studies indicate that forcing students to withdraw from university studies due to finance is one of the most powerful socio-economic determinants (Garwe and Maganga, 2015).

2.6.5 *Study motivation*

Students need to be self-motivated in order for them to perform well academically. Students need motivational programmes, techniques and tools to guide them to be responsible for their learning, to perform well academically and to successfully graduate. Less motivated students are likely to take longer period to complete their studies or dropout (Govender, 2012).

Bremmer (1980:23) informed educators that:
"Success is in the student not in the University; greatness is in the individuals, not in the library"

2.7 Factors influencing through-put within open and distance learning

The study Conducted by Ashby (2004) in the United Kingdom states that the most common reasons for dropouts amongst a group of 328 part-time students were the problem of workload, financial problems, employment, the needs of dependents organizational issues impacting on their studies. Yorke (2004) involved 1510 students who dropped out studies at United Kingdom Higher Institution. The most stated reasons for their early departure were personal problems, academic difficulties and wrong choice of course.

Botha (2010) identified four categories of persistence barriers

i. Situational barriers
   - Refers to student's circumstances, such as having a baby, changed marital status or change employment.

ii. Institutional barrier
   - Are challenges student experience with the institution, e.g. Course pacing, limited support service and admission requirement.

iii. Dispositional barrier
   - Refers to student's problems that affect student's persistence behaviour, such as motivation, confidence, learning styles and attitude.

iv. Epistemological barrier
   - Refer to obstructions caused by disciplinary or the relative perceived difficulty.

The above-mentioned categories are inter-related and interaction between factors that lead to the completion or non-completion of a course.

2.8 Master's Transition

According to Nash and Sacre (2009) academic transition is defined as the process of moving from a set of circumstances to the other. The degree of adjustment to the academic environment and academic roles are major predictors of students' completion or non-completion (Nash and Sacre 2009).

Earwaker (1992) terms this transition phases because it to strategies students utilize in coping with change like academic life. Academic transition is stressful at first and is best understood as the process of change (Brown and Holloway, 2008). Challenges tend to decline over time as master's students become familiar with academic demands and adapt to the situations (Brown and Holloway, 2008).

The different types of transitions are briefly explained below÷

1. *Personal-emotional transaction*
   - *Brown and Holloway (2008:233) states that is related to the student emotional well-being. It refers to depression, powerlessness, disorientation and depression of students encounter in response to academic stress (Poyrazli and Grahame 2007:30)*

2. *Social transition*
   - *It refers to lack of social support systems which should be made available for students. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007:30) suggest that students mentoring programmes should be made available and it would contribute towards better psychosocial adjustment and smoother academic transaction.*

3. *Academic transaction*
   - *For master's students it means that they need to readapt to academic when returning to master's studies after they have completed their undergraduate studies (Laboone, 2006: n.b.). Student's academic preparedness, their utilization of support systems and their motivation prior to enrolment were utilized to measure academic transition (Laboone 2006: n.b.)*

Most students enrol for master's studies soon after completing their undergraduate studies. Poyrazil and Grahame (2007) indicated that English language proficiency

plays an integral part as a predictor of success at English-medium universities. Language difficulties are of special importance for international students, English in most institutions is the medium of institution which contributes to the academic challenges that master's students encounter.

2.9. Student Retention

South Africa is not the only country that is faced with the problem of student's retention; it has become a domain concern for higher education institutions in the United States of America (Lau, 2003).

According to Styger, Vuuren and Heyman (2015) student returning for additional year to complete their studies results in financial loss for the University and ruins the image of the university. Student retention is one of the main concerns that need urgent attention. Lau, (2003) observed that universities with high retention trends for first-entering students are likely to have increased graduation.

Research has shown that most students drop out early during their first-year of study although reasons for students drop out differ from institution to institution (Lau, 2003). Koen (2007) found that lack of finances, ill-suited environments and personal reasons are some of the reasons that students don't return to college in the USA.

The key factor for students' retention is student life or experience (Koen, 2007). Students stay in school when their social and academic life meets their expectation. Student who feel happy about the environment of their institution tend to those institutions. Academic and career advice to students plays a vital role in retaining students at various institutions in the USA (Lau, 2003).

The use of multimedia technology through contact sessions with students provides an improved environment towards students (Lau, 2003). Lau further argued that practical experiences are more vital than theoretical knowledge in education.

Students themselves are the most vital factor in student retention because they are accountable for their motivation to stay academically active and for their academic results (Styger, Vuuren and Heymans, 2015).

Letseka, Cosser, Breir and Visser (2010) indicated that various concerns make graduation in South African Universities to be too low. The graduation is determined by the percentage of students who finish their studies within the prescribed period for the qualification.

The Department of Education reported that in South African institutions 30% of the 120 000 students that enrolled in higher education in 2000 discontinued their studies within their first year. Additional 20% discontinued their studies during their second and third year of the study (Letseka, Cosser, Breir and Visser, 2010), so 50% of all new students won't make it to graduation.

The study that details financial losses from student dropout trends many motivated institutions to closely examine student retention (Koen, 2007). Koen further asserted that R1.3bn in public funding is lost per annum due to student dropout.

Universities that are financially stable tend not to pay attention to student dropout trends and if they do, they pay attention to master's level. Institutions that pay attention to master's student dropout are because the return investment for master's and doctoral students is higher than undergraduate students (Styger, Vuuren and Heyman, 2015). International studies provide technical details on student retention than South African literature.

In South Africa there is lack of student retention research and more effort is required to reach higher targets for graduation (Koen, 2007). North-West University (NWU) observed the student dropout trends for master's student from 2008 to 2012 to influence patterns in historical dropouts and predict future dropouts (Styger, Vuuren and Heyman, 2015).

Martinez (2001) maintains that in order to increase the value and effectiveness of the student retention improvement plan, certain areas can be improved such as new learning and teaching skills, student motivation, institution related issues, advice and guidance. In this regard tutoring and mentoring becomes vital hence the majority of the institutions of higher learning have developed such programmes. The aim of tutoring and mentoring programmes is to assist students with their academic work, specific subjects and also to guide them on how to manage their time. These programmes also assist in balancing academic activities with social or any other activities during their stay in the institution (Du Plessis, Prinsloo and Muller, 2005). Some of the students are from disadvantaged background and struggle with English, the newly found learning and teaching style, academic processes, different lecturer's styles of teaching and assessing, therefore mentoring and tutoring is important. If the students are getting enough support therefore they remain within the institution throughout the duration of the course. Counselling also is an important service in retention since students have different challenges that they encounter on daily basis

during their time in the institution, therefore the institution has to provide support services which will ensure the welfare of students. Sometimes, they experience peer pressure, academic pressure, or even personal challenges and cannot deal with it, so counselling services should be made available to students in order to guide, advise them on how to deal effectively with those challenges. Remember, if such challenges are not well taken care of, this might lead to poor performance by students, which ultimately lead to drop-out. In this way the institution would have failed the retention process for these students, because the failure to provide these support programmes would have led to drop-out of students.

Du Plessis, Prinsloo and Muller (2005) when studying risk factors in elementary accounting studies *inter alia* found that students need to know what is expected of them and should be made aware of the risk factors that could lead them not persisting with their studies. Career Guidance and Career Choice has been one contributing factor to how students perform. Majority of Black students come from disadvantaged public schools where there is no proper career guidance hence these students are likely to struggle with their studies and to drop-out. On the other hand, students who had good career guidance are more likely to perform very well in their studies. These students have internal motivation and self-drive because they are clear on what to expect during and after the completion of the degree (Martinez, 2001). They have explored the qualities, skills, knowledge, personal and character attributes they possess and also the high school subject choice in order to take-on that specific field. Therefore, institutions have to ensure that career guidance is done for students when accessing the institution and throughout their study period.

This has to be done to ensure that students do not drop-out because of lack of good career guidance, but are supported from the beginning until the completion of the studies/degree. Therefore, this will contribute greatly to the student retention and through-put of the institution of higher learning. These findings were confirmed by Sadler and Erasmus (2005) who studied the success and failure of Black Chattered Accountant graduates. Du Plessis et al (2005) further found that motivation; time management, age, and performance in a first year Accounting module predicted whether or not accounting students would be successful. A study by Du Plessis et al (2005) confirmed that age was a predictor of success in professional management

accounting examinations. Du Plessis also surveyed national and international literature on whether gender impacted on success in Accounting and concluded that no conclusive evidence emerged as the literature on the impact of gender provided conflicting findings.

Koen (2007) that reasons for leaving institution before completion are very complex. There is enough evidence that reasons for leaving and retention differ according to the subject studied. It may be because of different styles of teaching, demands of different programmes or the demands by certain subject areas (Koen, 2007:11). Matured students tend to leave Universities before completion of qualification due to external factors such as family responsibilities while younger students leave because of wrong choice of course (Prinsloo, 2009). Students who dropout at early stage are influenced by social integration, later dropouts might be influenced by the course style and content as well as the ability of students to cope with it. In the study Hall (2001) published by Scottish council for research in Higher Education found that:

- Data on master's student retention is of poor quality, misleading and may be inaccurate.
- Retention trends vary by age of students; level of course, socio-economic group and institution.
- Reasons for master's students' dropout operate at individual-student, institutional and supra- institutional level

Hall's study (2001:31) further indicated that "*widening access is likely to results it in increasing levels of student's dropout*".

Tinto (2006:38) "*most institutions have not yet been able to translate what we know about student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation*"

Woodley (2004) found that Open University (OU) of the United Kingdom follows a flexible approach in their institution, which is outlined below:

- Students can take as many years off as they wish
- Students can transfer to other institutions to finish their studies

- Dropout may be extended to consider students who have completed one module but who doesn't continue to study
- Students no longer enrol for a certain qualification or programme, so it is impossible to calculate graduation
- Students can leave with interlude qualification such as diplomas, certificates or just course credits and be successful

2.9.1 *Student retention strategies*

Student retention strategies were developed and implemented by universities in order to retain students. Selection criteria, Academic support and financial assistance are some of the factors that are incorporated in the retention strategies (Roose, 2014). South African universities value the selection criteria more as compared to other retention factors.

Universities should develop their admission requirements for each academic programme. This will enable the university to select the suitable and best candidate for the programme to ensure successful graduation, regardless of the open access to higher education. Most universities expand their section to the extent of interviews, aptitude tests, personality profile and evaluation of admission point score. Students who meet the requirements set by the university will then be granted admission (Newton and Moore, 2009).

According to University of Limpopo (TGSL) calendar (2016), Master's degree requires 60% average of the Honours degree. The requirements have been set to ensure positive graduation.

2.10 Summary of literature review

Through-put is defined as the completion trends, drop-out trends and the success trends in higher education (Amehoe, 2013). From the above literature it is apparent that most higher education institutions are faced with the predicament postgraduate student's through-put.

From the international perspective, the factors that influence postgraduate students through-put is student under-preparedness and the academic challenges with regard

to the institution system. Financial support has been identified as one of the most contributing factor to students capability to complete their Masters and Doctoral studies within the stipulated time frame. The type of students enrolment has an effect on through-put trends on master's students, part-time student tend to take long to complete their programmes and full-time students are likely to complete their programmes.

The literature indicates that South Africa's graduation rate of 15% is among the lowest in the world. Personal reasons are more likely to influence the through-put trends in South Africa; most postgraduate students have families which makes it difficult to strike a balance between academic workload and household workload. Delayed graduation mostly encountered by part-time postgraduate students because of various reasons such as failure to balance family responsibilities, work and their studies. Motivation has a major contribution to the students' progress. Students who are less motivated tend to drop-out or to take long to complete their studies.

The above literature has indicated that the reasons for students to leave drop-out and to delay in graduation are very complex.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the connotation of through-put trends in higher education internationally and nationally and the factors contributing to master's through-put trends, success and student retention. The above literature have brought a distinct outline that postgraduate through-put is a pandemic issue. It is apparent that most universities are faced with the problem of low graduation rate.

The above provided literature also discussed the factors influencing through-put within the open and distance learning. The literature has also provided the researcher with background information to decide on the research design and methodology of the research. The information emanated from the literature has been utilised in the development of the structured questionnaires and the semi-structured questionnaires. The development of the questionnaire was informed by the literature.

In the next chapter, the processes to be followed to collect data needed to answer the research questions are discussed in detail. The chapter provides a detailed information on the procedure that was adhered to, with regard to the collection of information required to answer the researcher questions stated in chapter one.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two the phenomenon of master's through-put from internationally to National perspective was discussed. The study of the existing literature also discussed factors influencing master's through-put were discussed. Therefore, this chapter provides a discussion on the research methods employed in the process of data collection and analysis, by unfolding, research design; sampling techniques; data collection procedures, data analysis, as well as issues of validity and reliability. Research methodology is a logical approach of methods employed in a field of study (Polit and Beck, 2012). Van Wyk (undated) stipulates that research methodology emphasises research process and the instruments to be used. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) describe "research methodology as a study of procedure used in research to create new knowledge."

3.2 Research design

Research design is a roadmap that guides the researcher how the study should be conducted with regard to the data collection, interpretation and analysis of the data (Van Wyk, undated). According Yin (2003) research design is "is an action plan for getting from here to there, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and 'there' is some set of (conclusions) answers. Research design can be regarded as a systematic process which provides direction and procedures on the validation of data. Research design focuses on the end-product and research procedure to achieve the outcomes.

There are three categories of research design namely; qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research design. Quantitative research is a way of gathering data from numerical values whereas qualitative research focuses on facts, perceptions and beliefs. Quantitative research method was initially commenced in the social sciences to assist researchers to investigate culture and social occurrence. It is usually utilised to develop knowledge. Quantitative research gathers data in the form of data and utilises statistical data analysis (Terre Blanche, Durreheim and Painter, 2006). Qualitative research method aims to investigate and to uncover issues about the current problem. Qualitative research helps the researcher to interpret social,

people and cultural context. Qualitative researchers gather data in the form spoken or written language and interpret the data by themes (Terre Blanche, Durreheim and Painter, 2006).

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) mixed method focuses on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a series of studies or single study. He further indicated that mixed method provides a better understanding of the research problems. Mixed methods originates from human and social science however, it has been expanded to health fields such as mental health, nursing, family medicine, pharmacy, etc (Creswell, 2003).

Mixed research method is employed to utilise the quantitative and qualitative research to collect and analyse data. It also helps the researcher to certify that there is no information gap. Mixed research methods play a vital role in explaining ague terms than when one research method is used (Bulsara, undated). This study used mixed method research design because this study emphasizes on description of the status of through-put and factors influencing through-put at TGSL using structured and semi-structured interviews.

3.3 The Study Area

The study area is the TGSL of the University of Limpopo. TGSL is located at Edupark Campus in the suburb of Fauna Park opposite Peter Mokaba Stadium in the city of Polokwane in the Limpopo Province. TGSL offers programmes such as MPA, MDEV and MBA programmes. TGSL enrol 60 postgraduate students each year; 20 MPA, 20 MBA and 20 MDEV. The programmes are offered in a “block release” methodology allowing student to spend a week at the most at a given duration in Polokwane and at TGSL.

The vision Statement of TGSL is to become an African Leadership School of excellence management and leadership education; “Servicing the needs of government, corporate and civil society” sectors and the mission to produce high quality competitive graduates; and to produce relevant and quality research outputs and outcomes The TGSL programmes are targeted at middle and senior managers in the various sectors.

3.4 Population

Terre Blanche, Durreheim and Painter (2006) define population as a huge pool of individuals where sample is drawn. Population is defined as a range of elements with similar characteristics ranged by the sampling criteria formed by the researcher (Polit and Beck, 2012). Target population for this study consisted of 298 master's students enrolled in between 2013-2016 at TGSL in University of Limpopo. A total number of 13 full time academic staff at TGSL were also part of the target population.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is described as elements or units included in the study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Polit and Beck (2012) defines sample as a smaller collection of elements from the population utilised to gather information. The study utilised simple random sampling and purposive or judgemental sampling. The researcher obtained a list of 298 master's students enrolled in between 2013-2016 from the TGSL principal admin office. Each student in the list was assigned a sequential number. The researcher administered questionnaires to 60 randomly selected master's students from the total of 298 students. Purposive or judgemental sampling was used to select more experienced academic staff. Accordingly, six representative academic staff, who have adequate supervisory experiences with TGSL students, were purposively selected for the study to obtain additional information. Those without supervisory experience were not included in the study.

3.6 Data collection.

Data collection is a systematic process of collecting and measuring information from various sources (Terre Blanche, Durreheim and Painter, 2006). Accordingly, the researcher used a structured and semi-structured questionnaire.

3.6.1 *A structured questionnaire.*

A self-administered questionnaire refers to a questionnaire that has been designed specifically to be completed by the respondents without the researcher's intervention (Balter and Balter 2005). A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher which included close-ended questions. The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the participants and also used contacts details from

obtained from the university database. From the total of 60 structured questionnaires distributed for master's students 42 (70%) were received back from the respondents. The structured questionnaire for masters' students was comprised of three sections namely: biographic profile of respondents; aspects of through-put; and factors influencing through-put.

3.6.2 *Semi-structured interview*

The semi-structured interview was designed and used to collect additional data to augment the findings from questionnaire. The researcher personally delivered semi-structured questionnaires to the academic staff at TGSL. Six (6) semi-structured interview schedule were used to gather date from TGSL academic staff.

3.7 Data analysis

Descriptive data analysis technique was used to analyse the quantitative data. This type of analysis provides simple summaries about the sample and the measures by simply describing what the data shows (Grove, Burns and Gray, 2013). The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was utilised to analyse the data. The finding was presented in the form of tables, graphs and text. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity means that the research should measure what it intends to measure (Willson-Kristen, 2012). The questionnaire was pilot tested to ensure validity using 5 participants, the feedback from the participants was utilising to amend the questionnaire. The feedback obtained from the pilot study was utilised to determine the feasibility of the research and to validate the questionnaires before they were distributed. The study also utilised triangulation method to ensure validity. Data triangulation was employed for the study by making use of different data sources (students, academic staff and available documents) to gather adequate information about the factors influencing through-put of master's students. Additionally the researcher compared the findings with the literature. Triangulation refers to the use of different perspective to examine one's own position (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Reliability is when the same results or findings are obtained if repeated (Willson-Kristen, 2012). The researcher ensured reliability by checking the

filled in questionnaire to minimise the mistakes and to ensure that the questionnaires are correctly captured on the SPSS.

3.9. Ethical Consideration

According to De Vos (2005) ethics are sets of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group that are widely accepted and which offer rules and behaviours expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistances and students.

The researcher will consider the following issues when conducting the study:

1. **Confidentiality**: Their confidentiality and anonymity will be respected under all circumstances. The respondents' privacy, autonomy, dignity and basic human rights as individuals will be respected (Brynard and Hanekom. 1997). The respondents' names, photos and video cameras will not be used in the study. Furthermore, in this study the respondents will be assured that collected data will only be used for the academic purpose and that no other person will have access to data.
2. **Anonymity:** The respondents' names and addresses will not be disclosed (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2004). The researcher will inform the respondents that their names will not be disclosed in the research report instead the researcher will use code or label in any written documents.
3. **Voluntary participation**: The respondents should be aware that their participation is voluntary and that they will be free to withdraw without any penalty. They will also be informed about the purpose of the research and the way the information will be used (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Hence, participation in this study will be voluntary.
4. **Informed consent:** the researcher will make use of consent form to get participants consent to be involved in the study. Respondents will be asked to sign the consent form. The informal consent was gained from participants by sending them consent forms prior to the interviews and the distribution of questionnaires. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and they were also informed about free participation. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the ethics committee at the University of Limpopo.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, theoretical framework for the study has been articulated as well as the research design. The sample group, procedures, data collection instruments were discussed in detail in this chapter. The discussion included the location of the sample group at the TGSL as well the number of participants of the study. The data collection instruments were discussed in details as well as the data analysis. The chapter ends with measures put in place to ensure that the results of the study are valid, reliable, and based on contemporary scientific ways of conducting research

In chapter 4 the data collected for the study was analysed, interpreted and discussed to draw findings from the research.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed about the research design, sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis methods used in this study. The current chapter focused on the analysis of data and presentation of findings of this study. This study is quantitative and utilised both structured and semi-structured questionnaire administered to the participants of this research. The purpose of the study was to investigate factors that influence master's student's through-put in TGSL, University of Limpopo.

The objectives of this research were:

- To examine the status of master's students' through-put at TGSL.
- To identify factors that influence master's student's through-put at TGSL.
- To suggest strategic interventions to further improve master's student's through-put at TGSL.

The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the participants and also used contacts details from obtained from the school database. From the total of 60 structured questionnaires distributed for master's students 42 (70%) were received back from the respondents. The structured questionnaire for master students was comprised of three sections namely: biographic profile of respondents; aspects of through-put; and factors influencing through-put. Furthermore, six (6) semi-structured interview were used to collect qualitative data from TGSL academic staff

Descriptive analysis method was used to analyse the data. The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to determine the frequencies and percentages. The finding was presented in the form of tables, graphs and text. In this chapter data analysis results are well described and presented. The chapter is organised into two main sections such as presentation of findings from the structured questionnaires and presentation of findings from semi-structured interview.

4.2 Presentation of finding from structured questionnaire.

4.2.1 *Biographic profile of respondents*

This part of the questionnaire covered the respondent's biographic data. The demographic details of the participants consisted of:

- Gender of respondents
- Age of respondents
- Marital status of respondents
- Ethnic group of respondents
- Highest qualification
- Employment status

*** Gender of respondents**

Figure 4.1 Gender

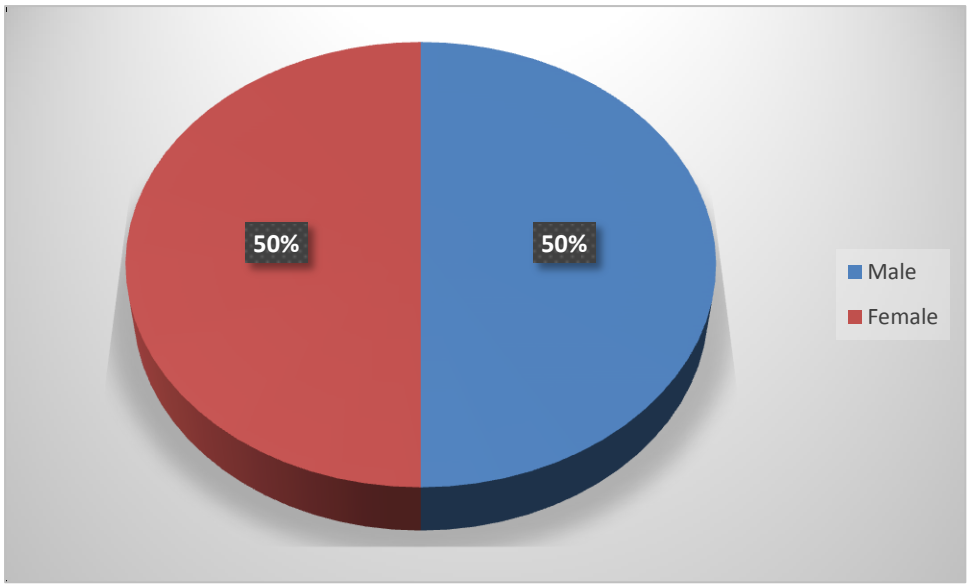

Figure 4.1 shows that 50% of the respondents were males and 50% were females. The response shows that there was gender balance and mix in terms of the number of participants. According to McCormack (2005) it is vital to understand the respondent's demographic characteristics because the demographic characteristics might influence academic progress.

*** Age of respondents**

Figure 4.2 Age of respondents

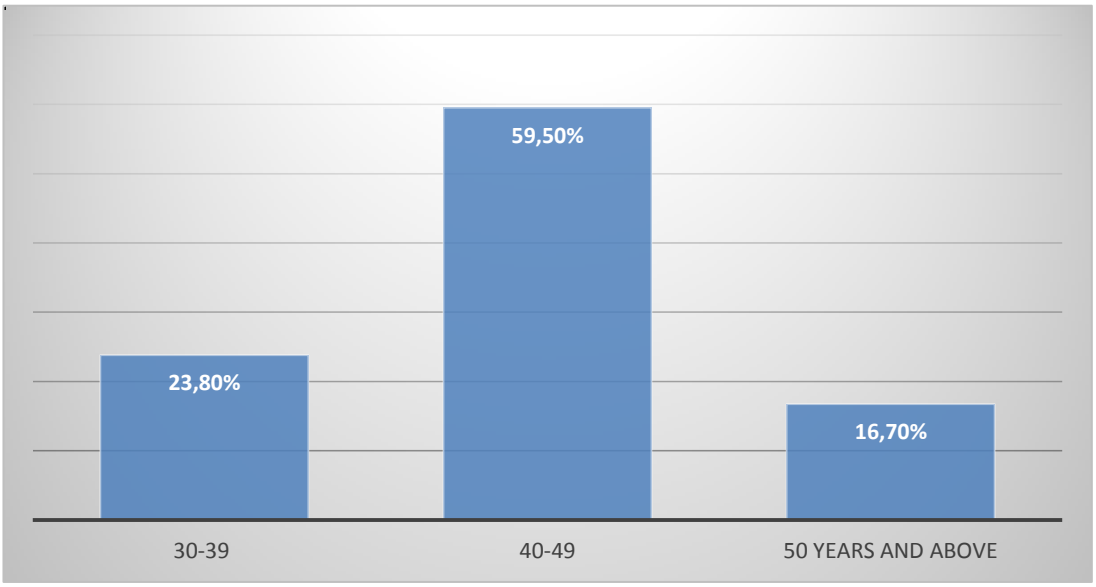

Figure 4.2 shows the age range of the respondents. As outlined in figure 4.2, 59.5% of the respondents were between the age of 40-49 years; 23.8% were between the age of 30-39 years and 16.7% were 50 years and above. This indicates that most of the respondents were middle-aged students.

*** Marital status of respondents**

Table 4.1 Marital status

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Married	26	61.9
	Single	10	23.8
	Divorced	4	9.5
	Widow	1	2.4
	Total	41	97.6
Missing	0	1	2.4
Total		42	100.0

Table 4.1 depicts that majority of the respondents (61.9%) were married; 23.8% of the respondents were single; 9.5% of the respondents were divorced and 2.4% of the respondents were widows. The analysis of the response indicates that most of

the master's students are married. Linvelt (2008) lamented that most master's student's academic progress is often hindered by the inability to balance family responsibilities with academic work.

*** Ethnic group**

All the respondents (100%) were black. The response from the respondents proves that University of Limpopo is a black university which widens access to tertiary education and to redress the priority of the old apartheid system. The literature supports the finding by stating that widen access to higher education in South Africa made positive implications in increasing the number black graduates (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012)

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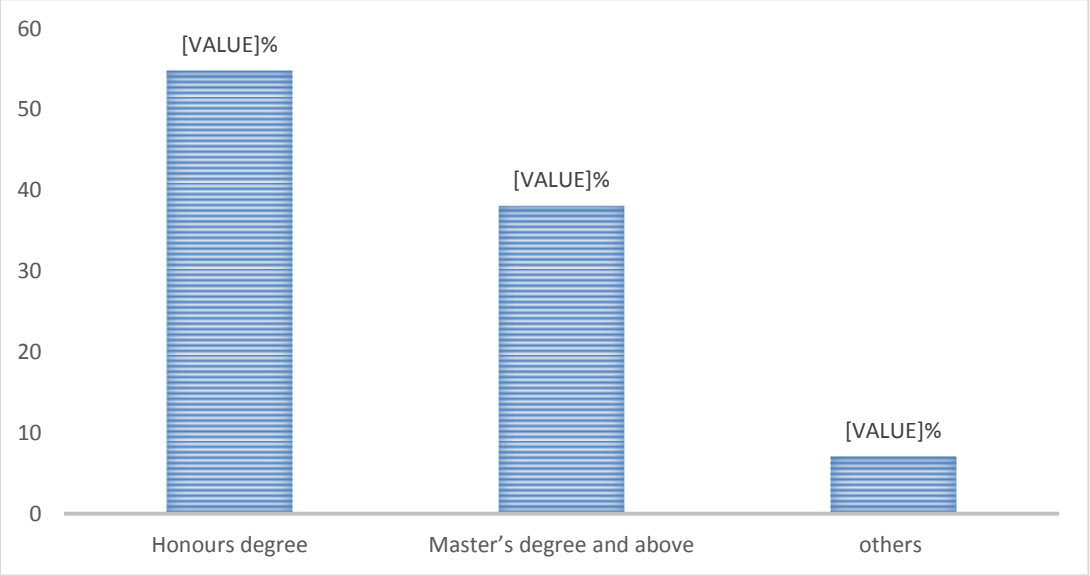
*** The respondent's highest qualifications**

Figure 4.3 Highest qualification



According to figure 4.3, 54.8% of the respondent's highest qualification was honours degree; 38.1% of the respondent's qualification was Master's degree and above. The response indicates that TGSL adhere to the requirement set for master's programme. The master's admission requirements at TGSL are as follows:

Application for admission to the MPA Programme is subject to strict evaluation and selection is based on the candidate's academic achievement, experience, attitude and motivation for further study. At least a Bachelor Honours Degree or equivalent in the programme the student intends to study or related field.

*** Employment status of respondents**

Figure 4.4 Employment status

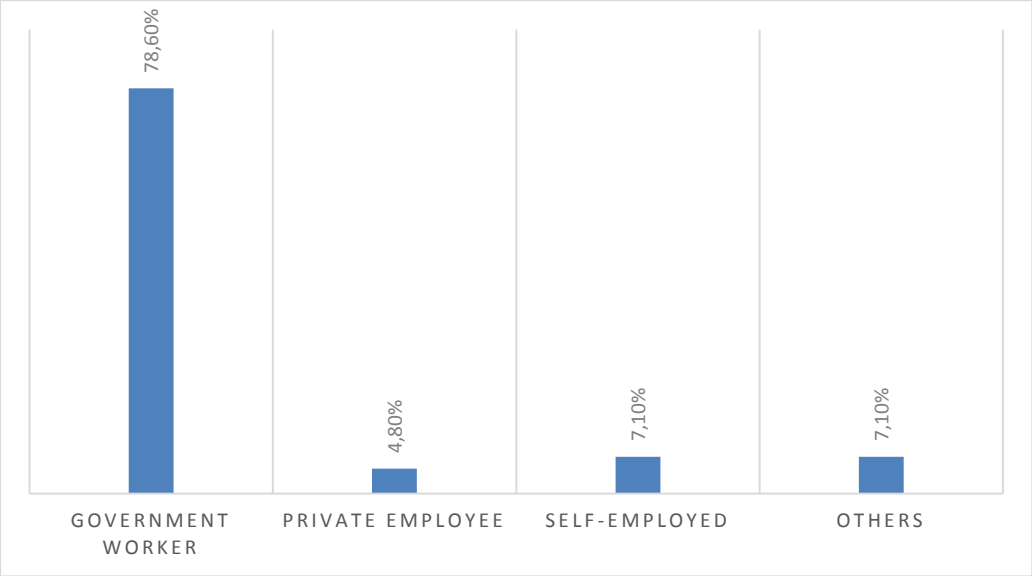
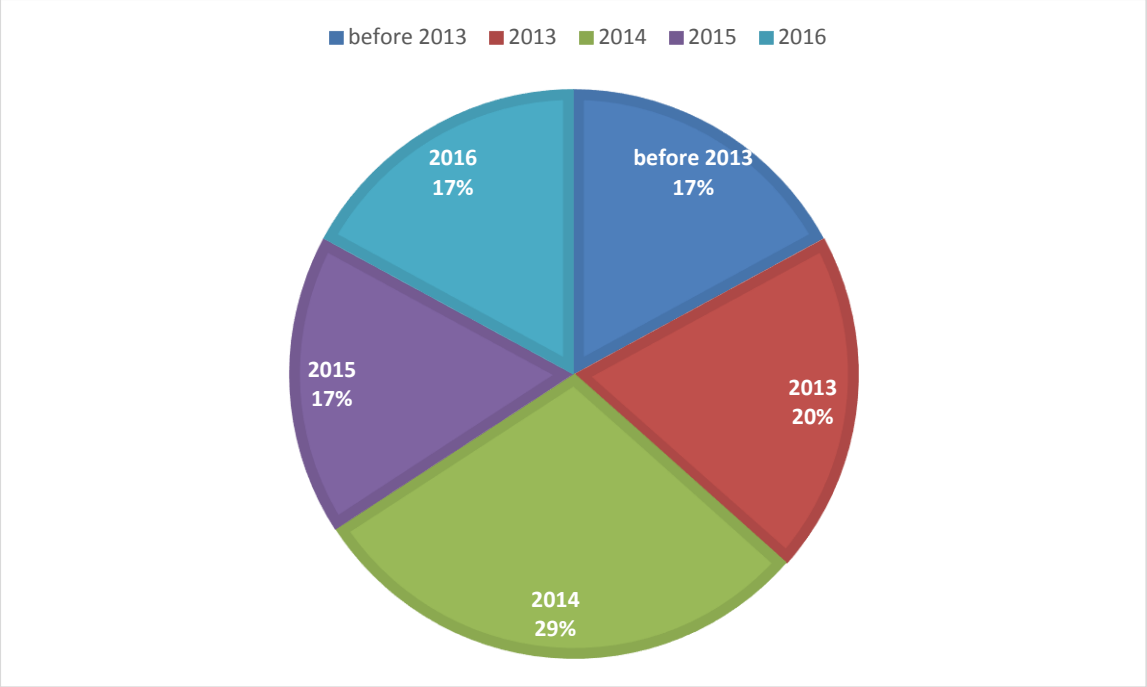


Figure 4.4 depicts that majority of the respondents (78.6%) were government workers; 4.8% of respondents were private employees; 7.1% of the respondents were self-employed and 7.1% of the respondents stated others. The response from the respondents shows that most of the master's students at TGSL come from different departments of government. Only a few number of people come from private and civil society.

4.2.2. Aspects of through-put and factors that affect master's through-put

*** Year of registration**

Figure 4.5 Year of registration



According to figure 4.5, majority of 28.6% of the respondents first registered in 2014; 19.0% first registered in 2013; 16.7% of respondents first registered in 2015; 16.7% of the respondents first registered in 2016; 16.7% of respondents first registered before the year of 2013 and only 1 respondent 2.4% did no answer the question. The analysis of the response stipulates that participants were drawn from various years of first registration.

*** Current registration status**

Figure 4.6 Current registration status

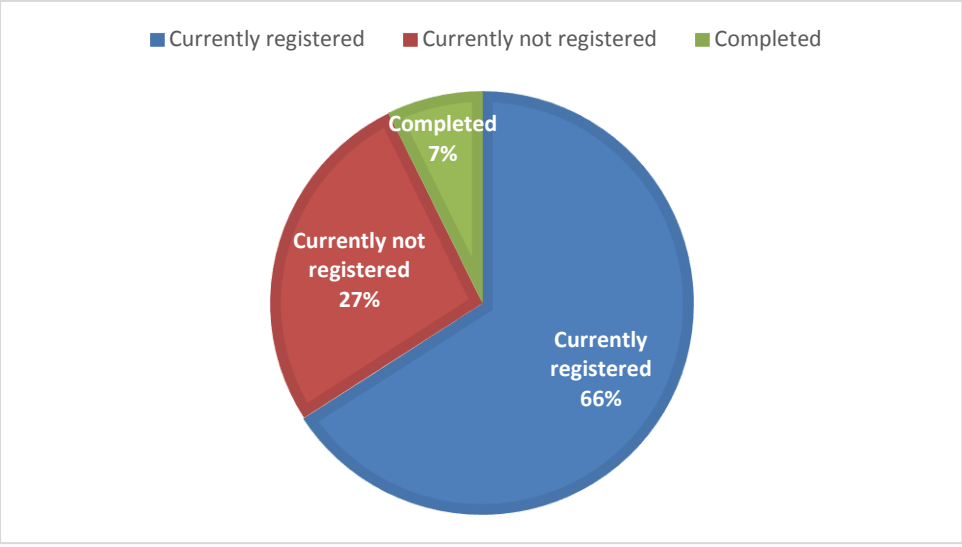
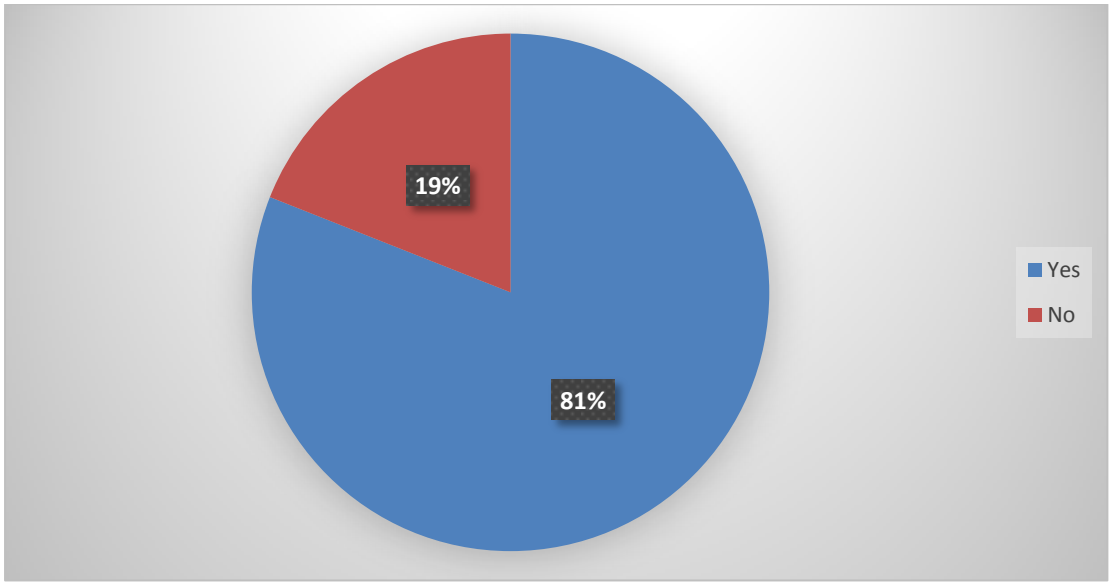


Figure 4.6 shows that the majority of 64.3% of the respondents were currently registered master's students at TGSL; 26.2% of the respondents were not registered students and the minority of 7.1% were completed maters students and only 1 respondent 2.4% did not answer question. The finding shows that participants of this study include registered current and former students whose contact details were accessed from the university database to obtain diversified views.

*** Completion of all the modules**

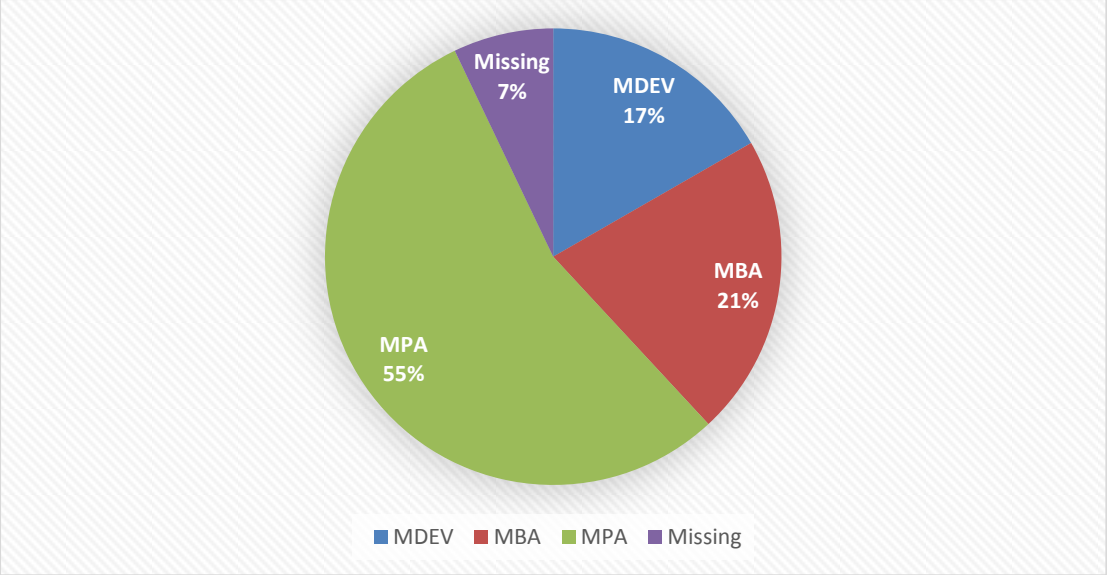
Figure 4.7 Completion of all the modules



According to Figure 4.7, respondents were asked whether they have completed their courses. 81% of the respondents indicated that they've completed all their modules. 19% of the respondents stated that they were not done with the modules. The analysis of response from the respondents shows that most master's students complete all the modules and remain with their mini-dissertation.

*** Registered degree**

Figure 4.8 Registered degree



The figure 4.8 shows that the majority of 54.8% master's students were registered for MPA; 21.4% of the respondents were registered for the programme of MBA; 16.7% were registered for the programme of MDEV. The findings reveal that participants for the study were drawn from all the three master's programmes. The highest proportion from MPA also highlights that there is poor through-put at MPA programme compared to other programmes within TGSL.

*** Status of mini-dissertation**

Figure 4.9 Status of mini-dissertation

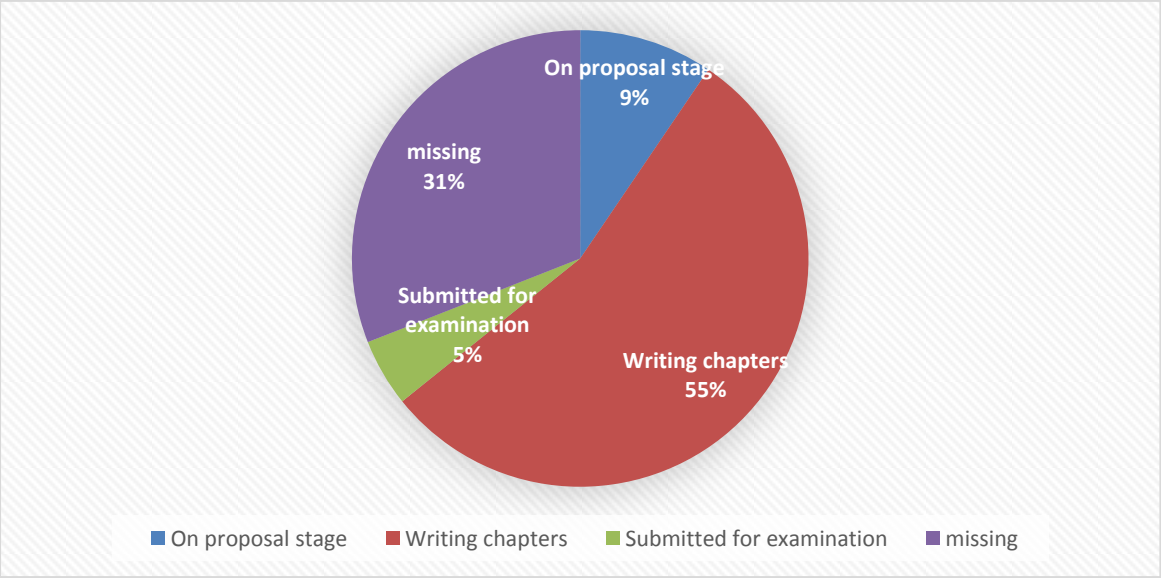
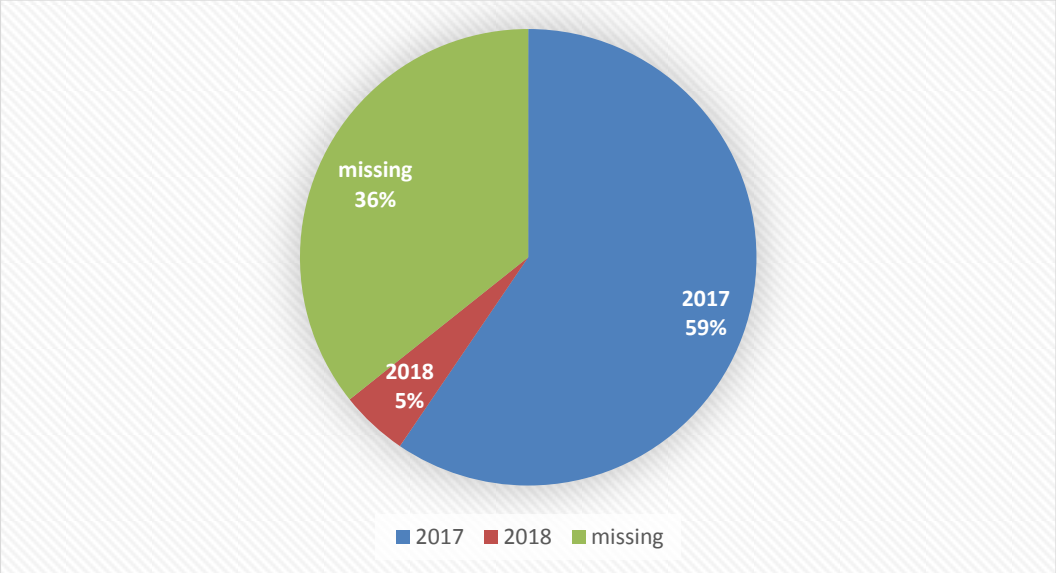


Figure 4.9 shows that the majority of 54.8% of the respondents were still busy with chapter writing; 9.5% of the respondents were on proposal stage and 4.8% of the respondents submitted their dissertation for examination. The majority of the respondents were on chapter writing stage. On the other hand, 31% of the students did not answer the question (3% already graduated and 28% did not want to disclose their status with mini-dissertation). The findings reveal that students will soon progress towards submitting their work for examination which suggests improvements in through-put.

*** Expected date of completion**

Figure 4.10 Expected date of completion



Respondents were asked to state the expected date of completion. The Figure 4.10 above indicates that 59.5% of the respondents expected to complete their master's degree in 2017 while 4.8% expected to complete in 2018. From the response significant proportion 36% of respondents didn't respond to the question (3% already graduated and 33% did not want to disclose their expectations). The findings further highlight that the majority of the respondents are expecting to graduate in 2017 and 2018 academic year which will also contributes to improve through put.

*** Have considered dropping out of the programme**

Table 4.2 Have considered dropping out of the programme

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	31	73.8
	Disagree	8	19.0
	Uncertain	1	2.4
	strongly agree	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

Respondents were asked whether they considered dropping out of the master's programme. According to the response from respondents, 73.8% of respondents strongly disagreed that they never considered dropping out of the programme; 19% of the respondents disagree; 4.8% stated that they strongly agreed that they considered dropping out of the programme whereas 2.4% of the respondents were uncertain. This shows that most students did not consider dropping out of the programme but stay in the system even though they take longer period of time to complete.

*** Found registrations not difficult every year for my study**

Table 4.3 Found registrations not difficult every year for my study.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	11	26.2
	Disagree	7	16.7
	Uncertain	1	2.4
	Agree	9	21.4
	strongly agree	14	33.3
	Total	42	100.0

According to table 4.3, the majority of 33.3% respondents strongly agreed that they found the TGSL registration not difficult every year for their studies. 26.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they found registration difficult every year of their study; 21.4% of the respondents disagreed; 16.7% of the respondents disagreed whereas 2.4% of the respondents were uncertain whether they found

registration not difficult every year for my study. The response reveals that the registration processes at TGSL is user-friendly for the master's students.

*** It takes longer time to complete my study than the expected maximum (3 years) duration.**

Table 4.4 It takes longer time to complete my study than the expected maximum (3 years) duration.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	13	31.0
	Disagree	10	23.8
	Uncertain	3	7.1
	Agree	6	14.3
	strongly agree	10	23.8
	Total	42	100.0

Table 4.4 shows that 31% of the respondents strongly disagreed that it takes longer to complete their studies than the expected maximum (3 years) duration; 23.8% of the respondents remarked that it doesn't takes longer to complete their studies than the expected maximum (3 years) duration; 23.8% of the respondents strongly agree that it takes longer to complete their studies than the expected maximum (3 years) duration; 14.3% of the respondents agreed whereas 14.3% of the respondents were uncertain. The majority of the respondents remarked that it doesn't take longer than the maximum duration to complete their study.

*** Allowed to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration.**

Table 4.5 Allowed to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	7.1
	Disagree	5	11.9
	Uncertain	13	31.0
	Agree	5	11.9

	strongly agree	12	28.6
	Total	38	90.5
Missing		4	9.5
Total		42	100.0

According to the table, 31% of the respondents were uncertain if TGSL allows master's students to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration. 28.6% of the respondents remarked that TGSL allows master's students to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration. 11.9% of the respondents stated that TGSL doesn't allow master's students to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration. 11.9% participants disagree; 7.1% strongly disagreed that TGSL to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration. According to the response from participants it is evident that majority of students are unsure if TGSL allows concession period for students who took longer to complete or graduate.

*** The workload at workplace affects my academic progress**

Table 4.6 The workload at workplace affects my academic progress.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	16	38.1
	Disagree	4	9.5
	Uncertain	1	2.4
	Agree	9	21.4
	strongly agree	12	28.6
	Total	42	100.0

Table 4.6 depicts that the majority of 16 (38.1%) respondents strongly disagreed that the workload at workplace affects their academic progress followed by 12 (21.4%) respondents remarked that they strongly agree that the workload at workplace stall their academic progress. 21.4% of the respondents agreed; 9.5% of respondents' disagreed and 1 respondents state that she/he's uncertain whether the workload at workplace affects my academic progress. The analysis of the response from the

table depicts that master's students at TGSL are able to balance between academic workload and workplace workload however the literature states that the delay in graduation is often influenced by the different workloads students have at their workplace (Lintvelt, 2008-111).

*** Marital difficulties affect my academic progress.**

Table 4.7 Marital difficulties affect my academic progress.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	21	50.0
	Disagree	11	26.2
	Uncertain	1	2.4
	Agree	3	7.1
	strongly agree	4	9.5
	Total	40	95.2
Missing		2	4.8
Total		42	100.0

As depicted in table 4.7, 50% of the respondents strongly disagreed the marital difficulties affect their academic progress; 26.2% disagreed; 9.5% strongly agree; 7.1 agree and 2.4% of respondents were uncertain. The above findings indicate that master's' students at TGSL are able to focus on their studies regardless of marital difficulties. The finding contradicts with Lintvelt's (2008) findings which stipulate that students who take longer to complete their studies are strained by family relations.

*** Lack of technological literacy significantly affects my academic progress.**

Table 4.8 Lack of technological literacy significantly affects my academic progress.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	18	42.9
	Disagree	9	21.4
	Uncertain	3	7.1
	Agree	7	16.7

	strongly agree	3	7.1
	Total	40	95.2
Missing		2	4.8
Total		42	100.0

According to table 4.8, 42.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that lack of technological literacy significantly affects their academic progress. 9 (21.4%) respondents indicated that lack of technological literacy doesn't affect their academic progress. 16.7% participants agreed that lack of technological literacy stall their academic progress. From the respondents 7.1% of the participants were uncertain whether hat Lack of technological literacy significantly affects their academic progress whereas 7.1% strongly agreed that lack of technological literacy affects their academic progress. From the response provided by respondents it shows that master's students at TGSL are not encountering difficulties with regard to technological literacy. Kamler and Thompson (2009) states that some students might struggle with the new technological changes, such as accessing books online and e-journals.

*** Frequent change of supervisors affects my academic progress.**

Table 4.9 Frequent change of supervisors affects my academic progress.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	15	35.7
	Disagree	7	16.7
	Uncertain	1	2.4
	Agree	6	14.3
	strongly agree	13	31.0
	Total	42	100.0

According to table 4.9, the majority of 35.7% of the respondents strongly disagree that frequent changes of supervisor doesn't affect their academic progress. 31.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that frequent changes of supervisor affect their academic progress. 16.7% of the respondents disagreed that frequent change of supervisors doesn't affect their academic progress. 14.3% of the respondents agreed that frequent changes of supervisors affect their academic progress whereas 2.4% of the respondents were uncertain whether frequent change of supervisors affects their academic progress. From the response provided it evident that the TGSL master's student's academic progress is not affect by the frequent change of supervisors.

*** Delays in the proposal approval process affect my academic progress.**

Table 4.10 Delays in the proposal approval process affect my academic progress.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	13	31.0
	Disagree	9	21.4
	Uncertain	1	2.4
	Agree	7	16.7
	strongly agree	12	28.6
	Total	42	100.0

Table 4.10 depicts that the majority of 31% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the delays in the proposal approval process affects their academic progress; 28.6 % respondents strongly agreed that the delays in proposal approval process affect their academic progress; 21.4% of the respondents disagreed; 16.7% of the respondents felt that the delays in proposal approval process affect their academic progress whereas one (2.4%) respondents indicated uncertainty whether delays in proposal approval process affects his/her academic progress. based on the above mentioned findings it is apparent that TGSL proposal approval process doesn't affect the students' academic progress.

*** Lack of financial support affects my academic progress**

Table 4.11 Lack of financial support affects my academic progress

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	42.9
	Disagree	9	21.4
	Uncertain	2	4.8
	Agree	4	9.5
	Strongly agree	9	21.4
	Total	42	100.0

The findings show that 42.9% of the respondents strongly disagree that lack of financial support affects their academic progress; 21.4% of the respondents disagree. 09 (21.4%) respondents strongly agreed feel that lack of financial support affects their academic progress; 9.5 respondents agreed whereas 4.8% respondents were uncertain if their academic progress I affected by lack of financial support The response depicts that lack of financial support is not one the factors that influence through-put of master's students at TGSL. Although the literature states that lack of financial recourse is one the major problem faced by students which hiders their academic progress (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012).

*** Staying far from the university affects my academic progress**

Table 4.12 Staying far from the university affects my academic progress

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	17	40.5
	Disagree	7	16.7
	Uncertain	2	4.8
	Agree	7	16.7
	strongly agree	9	21.4
	Total	42	100.0

According to Table 4.12, majority respondents of 40.5% feel that staying far from the university does not stall their academic progress whereas 21.4% of the respondents indicated that staying far from the university stall their academic progress. The

analysis of the response from respondents shows that staying far from the university is not one of the factors that influence master's through-put at TGSL. Mdepa and Tshiwula (2012) state that student housing has a major impact on the academic progress of students.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE.

4.3.1. Profile of academic staff

*** Gender of respondents**

Table 4.13 shows that 80% of the respondents were males, and 20 % were females. The above response indicates that the majority representation of TGSL academic staff participate for this study were males.

*** Current academic post**

As depicted in table 4.24, 60% of the respondents were senior lecturers: 20% associate professor and 20% full professor. The analysis of the responses given depicts that TGSL is equipped with well-educated and informed academic staff.

*** Number of years in higher education institutions**

The majority of 80% respondents have been in higher education institutions for more than 10 years followed by 20% of the respondents between 6-9 year experiences in higher education. According to the response provided by the respondents it is evident that TGSL is equipped with skilful and knowledgeable academic staff.

*** Whether currently supervising master's students**

All the respondents 100% indicated that they were supervising master's students at TGSL. The analysis of response from the respondents indicated that academic staff has been actively engaged in supervision of TGSL master's students.

*** Whether currently teaching master's students**

All the respondents 100% were currently teaching master's students at TGSL. The analysis of response from the respondents indicated that the academic staff has been teaching since the master programmes are structured or course work master's degree.

*** The Programmes academic staff is attached to**

Majority of the respondents 60% were attached to MBA programme; 20% were in MDEV programme and 20% of respondents were attached to MPA programme. This shows that this study academic staff participated from all the three programmes within TGSL, University of Limpopo.

4.3.2. Aspects of through-put and factors that affect master's through-put

The following results and reasons were obtained.

***Perceptions about the level of graduation**

The finding reveals that the majority of 80% of the respondents indicated that the number of master's students graduating from their programme is increasing. The response indicates that the graduation at TGSL is improving or increasing. The statements below are direct support statements from respondents. A respondent stressed on the fact that the decline with supervision backlog has contributed towards improving the graduation. Respondent No.1 indicated that:

> *"The numbers of students graduating from TGSL are improving significantly. since 2016 more master's students are successfully completing their studies.This suggests significant improvement in graduation and decline in the supervision backlog."*

Another respondent described that the recruitment of more lecturers by the university has contributed to ensuring that the number of master's students graduating is increasing. Respondent No.3 stated that:

> *'In the past very few students would graduate with MBA; since 2013, things have changed because the university has hired more lecturers in the MBA programme, and that has increased supervision capacity. The initiative taken by the school has also yielded positive results in the MPA and MDEV programmes. More supervisors are roped in to assist students. Furthermore, the writing retreats are compelling students to complete their work."*

***Satisfaction with the level of graduation.**

Table 4.13. Graduation satisfaction

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	highly satisfactory	1	20.0
	Satisfactory	2	40.0
	Unsatisfactory	1	20.0
	Total	4	80.0
Missing	0	1	20.0
Total		5	100.0

According to the Table 4.13, the majority of (40%) of the respondents indicated that the current number of master's students graduating from TGSL is satisfactory whereas 20% indicated the current number of master's students graduating from TGSL is highly satisfactory. This reflects positivity as it indicates that the majority of respondents have indicated their satisfaction with the graduation of master's programme at TGSL.

Respondent No.3 remarked that the current number of master's students graduating from TGSL depend on the master's programme.

"*It depends on the programme; I would say graduation is progressive"*

However, only one respondent felt that the number of master's students is highly unsatisfactory. Respondent No.5 lamented that:

"*Students take long time to complete their dissertation"*

***Whether there were students who took longer period of time to graduate.**

Respondents were asked whether some of the master's students they had supervised took longer period of time to graduate than the expected duration (3 years). According to the response from the participants, 80% respondents remarked they supervised students who took longer time to graduate than the expected time.

It was apparent from the analysis of the response that the majority of the master's students who took longer to complete were adopted from other supervisors who resigned from the University or from supervisors outside the TGSL.

The following statements are direct quotation of support students from respondents No 1:

'Among those students that I adopted due to change of supervisors who had been longer on the system, five of them were deregistered because of lack of progress. These students were registered for five years (2010-2016) passes all course work and granted special concession by the university for 2016, but due to lack of progress they were deregistered."

Lack of hard work and low level of interest by students was also stated by respondent No.2 as one of the reasons why master's students take longer to complete their studies:

"*Lack of interest and hard work on the part of students despite availability of supervisors."*

***Whether there were students who dropped out from the programme.**

Respondents were asked whether any master's students that they had supervised dropped out of the programme.

Accordingly, 60% of the respondents indicated that none of their students dropped out of the programme; whereas 40% stated that some of the students dropped out of the programme.

For instance, respondent No.3 mentioned about master's students who dropped out of the programme under his/her supervision as follows:

"I had three students who dropped out; 2 from MDEV and 1 MPA"

Respondent No.4 mentioned difficulty with research work as one of the reasons for drop out, that they:

"Are not able to complete the dissertation."

***Whether there were students who deregistered**

Respondents were asked whether any master's students they had supervised were deregistered by the university. The findings sows that 80% of respondents stipulated that they never supervised master's students who were deregistered by the university; whereas 20% said they had supervised master's students who were

deregistered by the university. Respondent No.1 indicated that few students were deregistered by the university due to slow progress with their studies.

> ***"****Among those students that I adopted due to change of supervisors who had been longer on the system, a few of them were deregistered because of lack of progress. These students were registered for the last five years (2010-2016) passes all course work and granted a special concession by the university for 2016, but due to lack of progress they were deregistered."*

***Challenges that prevent master's students from making progress.**

Respondents were asked about the challenges that their students are facing in relation to academic progress. Accordingly, 80% of respondents remarked that there are challenges that prevent master's students from making progress with their study. These challenges as identified by the respondents themselves include:

- *Lack of commitment;*
- *Inadequate computer literacy;*
- *Personal issues such as workload, lack of support from spouse and family members and poor time management*
- *Lack of personal interest and hard work on the part of students*
- *Lack of focus*
- *Poor time management*
- *Inadequate writing skills*
- *Lack of time- most students are working*
- *Not taking time to consult their supervisors*

***Existing opportunities for master's students to make academic progress**

Respondents were asked about the availability of opportunities for master's students to complete their study with the University of Limpopo. Accordingly, 100% of respondents stated that opportunities are available for master's students to complete their study at TGSL. Respondents indicated existence of the following opportunities:

- *Master's students writing retreats to assist with writing their chapters of their mini-dissertations and progressive supervision support.*
- *A lot of incentives, workshops, scholarships and conferences to support students.*
- *TGSL always organise writing retreats. Research office always assists master's students.*

***Suggestions for further improvement of master's students support at TGSL.**

On the question of improvements strategies that can assist to improve master's students' academic support TGSL, the following improvement suggestions were provided by the respondents.

- *More supervision support needed;*
- *Special computer literacy class for those who are struggling;*
- *Establish mini-library or resource centre at TGSL;*
- *More focus and dedication from master's students;*
- *Appointment of students' research assistances;*
- *Establish the research centre for master's;*
- *Organise more research seminars that will empower students on how to write dissertation and publications.*

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Objective #1: To examine the status of through-put of the master's students at TGSL

4.4.1 Status of registration

The finding shows that majority 28% of respondents of this study were first registered in 2014. This highlights that the majority of respondents have not completed within recorded time.

4.4.2 Completion of all the required modules for the programme

The finding reveals that 81% of the respondents of this study have completed all their modules (course work). This implies that most of the master's students complete their modules and remain with their mini-dissertation.

4.4.3 Programme registered

The finding highlights that the majority 55% of respondents of this study were registered for MPA programme. This means there were many students still busy with their research in the MPA compared to other programmes.

4.4.4 Status with mini-dissertation

The finding indicates that 60% of respondents of this study were busy with chapter writing. It entails that these students will soon progress towards submitting their work for examination.

4.4.5 Expected date of completion

The finding shows that the majority 60% of the respondents of this study are expecting to complete their study by the end of 2017. This will have significant impact on the graduation in 2018.

4.4.6 Students perception about dropping out of the programme

The finding indicates that 74% of the respondents did not consider dropping out of the programme. It entails that students chose to continue with their study than to drop out.

4.4.7 Students response about registration process

The finding shows that 55% respondents of this study strongly agreed or agreed that they find registration not difficult every year of their study. This implies that the registration process at TGSL can be regarded as user-friendly for students.

4.4.8 Students response on taking longer time to complete study

The finding shows that 55% of the respondents of this study strongly disagreed or disagreed that it takes longer to complete their studies within the maximum duration. Contradictory, significant proportion of the respondents either strongly agreed or

agreed with the utterance. This shows that the maters programme can be completed within the stipulated maximum duration (3 years).

4.4.9 Students response on renewal of registration after the recorded time elapsed.

The finding shows that 41% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the university allows students to renew their registration after the maximum duration has elapsed. On the other hand, a remarkable percentage of the respondents of this study were uncertain with the renewal of registration after record time elapsed. This implies that special concession is granted to student at risk.

4.4.10 Academic staff response on the perception about level of graduation

The finding reflects that 80% of the respondents of this study are well pleased with the level of graduation. This entails that the graduation level at TGSL is improving.

4.4.11 Academic staff level of satisfaction with graduation

The finding shows that the majority of 60% of the respondents of this study are satisfied or highly satisfied with the level of graduation. This reflects positivity with the level of graduation at TGSL.

4.4.12 Academic staff response on whether students take longer time to complete.

The finding shows that he majority of 80% of the respondents of this study indicated that they supervised students who took longer time to graduate. This supports the finding in 5.3.1, that student take longer time to complete their master's programme.

4.4.13 Academic staff response on whether students drop out

The finding reflects that 60% of the respondents of this study indicated that they did not supervise students who dropped out of the programme. This supports the finding on 5.3.6, it apparent that students choose to stay system rather than dropping out of the programme.

4.4.14 Academic staff response on whether students were deregistered

80% of the respondents of this study they didn't supervise students who were deregistered by the university. This implies that students are progressing with their master's programme.

Objective #2: To identify factors that influence master's student's through-put at TGSL.

4.4.15 Whether work load at work place affects academic progress

The finding shows that 50% of respondents of this study either agreed or strongly agreed that the work load at workplace affects academic progress. On the other hand, significant proportion of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the stamen. This shows that it is not clear whether work load at work place affects academic progress.

4.4.16 Whether marital difficulties affect academic progress

The finding indicates that majority 76.2% of respondents of this study either disagreed or strongly disagreed that marital status affects academic progress. This shows that marital status does not have influence on students' academic progress.

4.4.17 Whether lack of technological literacy affects academic progress

The findings reveal that majority 64.3% of respondents of this study either strongly disagreed or disagreed that lack of technological literacy affects academic progress. This evince that lack of technological literacy does not have influence on student's academic progress.

4.4.18 Whether frequent change of supervisor affects academic progress

The finding indicates that 52.4% of respondents of this study either strongly disagreed or disagreed that frequent change of supervisors affect academic progress. This shows that frequent change of supervisor does not influence student's academic progress.

4.4.19 Whether staying far from the university affects academic progress

The finding indicates that the majority of 57.2% of respondents of this study either strongly disagreed or disagreed that staying far from the university affect academic progress. This shows that staying far from the university does not influence academic progress.

4.4.20 Academic staff response on challenges that prevent students from making academic progress

The finding reveals that 80% of respondents of this study remarked that there are several challenges that prevent students from making academic progress. This evince that there are challenges that prevent students from making academic progress.

4.4.21 Academic staff response on existing opportunities for students to make academic progress

The finding reveals that 100% of the respondents of this study remarked that there are existing opportunities for students to make academic progress. This shows that the university has existing opportunities that enables students to make academic progress.

4.5. Conclusion

The chapter presented the research findings and interpretation of the findings from respondents. The findings were emerged from master's students and academic staff at TGSL. It is evident from the findings indicated in this research study that factors affecting master's through-put at TSGL are different from the one identified in the literature review. It is apparent that factors that influence master's through put differ from institution to institution.

In the next chapter, a summary of the main findings from the data analysed and discussed would be presented and appropriate recommendations would be provided. The implications of the research findings for factors influencing through-put of master's students will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the analysis of data and the presentation of findings. The findings and interpretation of data was discussed in detail in the previous chapter which enabled the research to draw conclusions and to make recommendations. The research objectives are to examine the status of through-put of master's students at TGSL and to identify factors that influence master's student's through-put at TGSL.

The current chapter focused on the conclusions drawn from the analysis of results from the structured and semi-structured questionnaire and to make recommendations for future investigation of the study. This chapter provides a synopsis of the main findings from the data analysed and discussed and appropriate recommendations would be made.

5.2 Overview of the chapters

Chapter one provided the introduction and the background to the research problem, motivation of the study and significance of the study. It outlined the primary aim of the study which is to investigate factors contributing to master's student's through-put in the University of Limpopo specifically at TGSL. The research objectives were: to examine the master's students through-put of the Master's students at TGSL and to identify factors that influence master's student's through-put at TGSL. The structure and the proposed research methods were provided in the chapter.

Chapter two stipulated the research literature review pertinent to the master's through-put as well as factors influencing the master's through-put. The conceptualised term through-put and Tinto's model of drop out were discussed in the chapter. The chapter also looked into master's trends from the international perspective considering America, Australia, The United Kingdom, Africa and Ghana. It also discussed master's trends in South Africa; student dropout in South Africa and students' success in South Africa. Factors that contributes student's through-put were also discussed. The chapter also discussed the student retention and aspects

of through-put such as number of year students take to complete their master's studies; student at risk and challenges encountered by master's students that hinders academic programme. The literature equipped the researcher with in-depth understating of master's through-put and a basis of developing research instrument.

Chapter three discussed and examined the research methods employed relating to data collection and analysis. Mixed method approach was employed to collect data to address the aims and objectives of the study. Structured questionnaire and semi-structured questionnaire were utilised as the data collection instruments. The Statistical Package for Social Science was utilised to analyse the quantitative data and content analysis for the qualitative data. The chapter also provided an expansion on the research design; sampling; validity and reliability

Chapter four focused on the research findings, presentation of findings from structured and semi-structured questionnaire. The interpretation of the results obtained from both the structured and semi-structured questionnaires analysed and presented in the chapter.

Chapter five recapitulated the key research findings, and conclusions, and recommendation for future purposes. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further study were also described in the chapter.

5.3 Conclusions

Objective #1: To examine the master's student through-put of the master's students at TGSL

The finding highlights that most master's students take more than maximum duration of three years to complete their study as these students have successfully completed their modules (course work) and remain with their research project. Academic staff indicated that they have supervised students who tool long period of time to complete. Most of the MPA students were still busy with their chapter writing compared to other master's programmes. Master's students indicated that the university gives students at risk with special concession period (1 year) after the expected maximum duration elapsed. Sadia, Aishah, Muhammad and Rafaqat (2014) remarked that students lack basic research skills and understanding on

research concepts. Adams and Holcomb (1986) stipulated that students perceive research as difficult and complicated to study.

The finding further reveals that the number of students graduating from the three programmes within TGSL is increasing from time to time suggests the decline in supervision backlog. Most students have never considered dropping out of the programme. The majority of academic staff highlighted that they did not supervised students who dropped out of the programme or deregistered suggests low drop rate at TGSL.

Objective#2: To identify factors that influence master's student's through-put at TGSL.

This study highlighted that students encounter certain challenges that influence academic performance of students such as lack of interest, lack of commitment; poor time management and personal issues. Garwe and Maganga (2015) indicated that master's students take longer to complete their studies dues to personal reasons.

Furthermore, workload at work place as well as frequent change of supervisor affects academic progress of master's students. Other challenges include:

- Lack of commitment;
- Inadequate computer literacy;
- Personal issues such as workload, lack of support from spouse and family members and poor time management
- Lack of personal interest and hard work on the part of students
- Lack of focus
- Poor time management
- Inadequate writing skills
- Lack of time- most students are working
- Not taking time to consult their supervisors

The university has provided of the following opportunities for master's students to make academic progress:

- Master's students writing retreats to assist with writing their chapters of their mini-dissertations and progressive supervision support.
- A lot of incentives, workshops, scholarships and conferences to support students.
- TGSL always organise writing retreats. Research office always assists master's students.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions stated above the following recommendations are made:

- The finding shows that current academic support is not adequate to assist master's students. It is recommended that more supervision support is needed hence the university should consider recruiting more supervisors to avoid frequent change of supervisors;
- It is recommended that a special computer literacy class should be organised for those master's students who have computer literacy challenges;
- As part of academic capacity building, it is recommended that the university should establish a resource centre at TGSL with adequate books;
- The finding highlighted that students have challenges in balancing their workload. It is recommended that more counselling support should be given to students in terms of time management;
- It is recommended that the university should further encourage writing retreat for students and organise more research seminars that will empower students on how to write dissertation and publications.
- It is recommended that students should be self-disciplined; committed to their studies. Students should put more effort on their mini-dissertation and attend the writing retreats organised by the university to improve their writing skills.

5.5. Final conclusion

The discussion focused on factors that influence master's student's through-put in TGSL, University of Limpopo. Conclusions were presented in this chapter in addition with research findings drawn from constructed data analysis and the literature study.

Like any other research study, this study also encountered some limitation during the process of the study. The study was limited only to TGSL in the University of Limpopo. Due to time and resource limitations, this study focused on limited number of participants. The researcher suggests that further research should be done in other schools and department in the University of Limpopo to make generalisations. The recommendations were made pertaining to the findings of the study.

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ANNEXURE A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MASTER'S STUDENTS AT TGSL

Dear UL Master's student

This research forms part of my master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) at the University of Limpopo. The research interest is with ascertaining factors that influence master students through-put.

The questionnaire asks questions regarding the through-put master's students only at the TGSL (TGSL). Your participation as a current or previous student of the TGSL will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely

Morongwa Bopape

Participation Consent

I hereby give my full consent to participate in this research on condition that I will remain anonymous and my names will not be linked to the information that I will have provided to this research. I retain the privilege to withdraw should I feel uncomfortable with the involved research process

Signed Date

....

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Please mark the applicable box with an X

1. Gender:

1	2
Male	Female

2. Age:

1	2	3	4
20-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50 years and above

3. Marital status:

1	2	3	4
Married	Single	Divorced	Widow

4. Ethnic group:

1	2	3	4	5
Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Other (Please specify)……

5. Highest qualification:

1	2	3	4	5
National Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Honours Degree	Master's Degree	Other (please specify)……..

6. Employment status:

1	2	3	4
Government employee	Private employee	Self employed	Other (please specify)……

SECTION B: ASPECTS OF THROUGH-PUT

7. Year of first registration:

1	2	3	4	5
Before 2013	2013	2014	2015	2016

8. Registration status:

1	2	3
Currently registered student	Currently not registered	Other (please specify)……....

9. Have you successfully completed all your modules?

1	2
Yes	No

10. Registered Degree:

1	2	3
MDEV	MBA	MPA

11. Status of your dissertation:

1	Still on proposal	
2	Still on chapters	
3	Submitted for external assessment	

12. Expected date of completion:

1	2	3
2017	2018	2019

Please indicate your view by selecting and putting a cross in one box

	Items	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
13	Have considered dropping out of the programme					
14	Found registration not difficult every year for my study.					
15	It takes longer time to complete my study than the expected maximum (3 years) duration.					
16	Allowed to renew registration even after failing to complete within the maximum (3 years) duration.					

SECTION C: FACTORS INFLUENCING THROUGH-PUT

Please indicate how each of the following factors influenced your studies, select one by putting a cross in one box.

	Items	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
17	**Personal responsibilities** The workload at workplace affects my academic progress.					
18	Marital difficulties affect my					

	academic progress.					
19	Lack of technological literacy significantly affects my academic progress.					
	Academic Support					
20	Frequent change of supervisors affects my academic progress.					
21	Delays in the proposal approval process affect my academic progress.					
	Financial difficulties					
22	Lack of financial support affects my academic progress.					
23	Staying far from the university affects my academic progress.					

Thank you for your participation

ANNEXURE B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TGSL ACADEMIC STAFF

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am conducting research on master's through-put at TGSL in the University of Limpopo for my Master's Mini-dissertation and would like to request your views on master's through-put at TGSL and factors contributing to timely, extended or non-completion and drop out among research master's students.

You have been selected as one of the experienced supervisors to share your thoughts on the subject as your contribution towards improving upon master's through-put at TGSL.

Your responses will be held in absolute confidence**.**

Sincerely

Morongwa Bopape

SECTION A- BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

Please mark the applicable box with an X

1. What is your gender?

1	2
Male	Female

2. What is your current academic post? 1.

1	2	3	4
Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Associate Professor	Full Professor

3. How long have you been working in higher education institutions?

1	2	3
0-5 years	6-9 years	10 years and above

4. Are you currently supervising master's students?

1	2
Yes	No

5. Are you currently teaching master's students?

1	2
Yes	No

6. The programme you are currently attached to?

1	2	3
MBA	MPA	MDEV

SECTION B- ASPECTS AND FACTORS THAT AFFECT MASTER'S THROUGH-PUT

7. Do you think the number of master's students graduating from your school (TGSL) are increasing?

1	2
Yes	No

If yes, please briefly explain:

_____

_____

_____

8. How do you the current number of master's students graduating from your school (TGSL)?

Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Uncertain	Unsatisfactory	Highly unsatisfactory

If unsatisfactory or highly unsatisfactory please briefly explain the reasons:

_____

_____

_____

9. Among the master's students you have supervised are there any students took longer of time to graduate than the expected duration (3 years)?

1	2
Yes	No

If yes, Please explain:

_____

_____

_____

10. Among the master's students you have supervised are there any students dropped out of the programme?

1	2

Yes	No

If yes, please briefly explain the reasons:

_____

_____

_____

11. Among the master's students you have supervised are there any students deregistered by the university?

1	2
Yes	No

If yes, please briefly explain:

_____

_____

_____

12. Are there any challenges that you feel prevent master's students from making progress with their study?

1	2
Yes	No

If yes, please briefly explain challenges:

_____

_____

_____

13. Are there opportunities for master's students to complete their study with the University of Limpopo?

1	2
Yes	No

If yes, please briefly explain:

_____

_____

_____

14. Do you have any suggestions for further improving master's students' academic support in your department?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation.

Annexure C- Permission letter from TREC

University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2212, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:noko.monene@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING:	03 March 2017
PROJECT NUMBER:	TREC/08/2017: PG
PROJECT:	
Title:	Factors influencing the throughput rates of Masters students at the University of Limpopo
Researchers:	Ms MA Bopape
Supervisor:	Dr AA Asha
Co-Supervisor:	N/A
School:	Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership
Degree:	Masters in Public Administration

PROF TAB MASHEGO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

Note:
i) **Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.**
ii) **The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.**
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Finding solutions for Africa

Annexure D- Permission from TGSL

L

Lethoko, Mankolo
to me, Kanjere, Milondzo, Zwan...
30/03/2017 View details

Dear Ms. Bopape,

This email serves to confirm that your request to conduct your study with TGSL students is approved by the Executive committee of the school.

We wish you luck with your studies.

Thank you,

Prof. Mankolo Lethoko
Associate Professor
Acting Director of the Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership
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Annexure E-Confirmation letter from Language Editor

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Rammalaj@ul.ac.za

Dr J R Rammala
440B Mankweng
Box 4019
Sovenga
0727

To whom it may concern

7 August 2017

Confirmation letter: Bopape Morongwa Annamarie

Dear Sir/Madam

This memo serves to confirm that I edited a dissertation by the above-mentioned candidate entitled: **Factors influencing the throughput rates of Masters' students at the University of Limpopo.**

Editing was done on language, typesetting and technical appearance. There were not so many language errors. Technically the document was well written and not much was done is this area except rearranging headings and subheading in accordance with rules for the University of Limpopo Research Administration and Development.

I confirm that the document is now readable and clean with regard to language issues and recommend that it can be submitted for assessment.

Thanks

Signed: .....

Dr J R Rammala