

Factors that affect the persistence of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University.

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Master of Occupational Therapy at Stellenbosch University



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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The retention and throughput rates of postgraduate students are a national and an international concern. There is a tendency for postgraduate students, irrespective of which Master of Occupational Therapy programme they are registered for, to have difficulty in completing the thesis or research assignment, resulting in delayed throughput or non-completion. This study aimed to understand and describe from the postgraduate student's perspective, what factors facilitated or hindered the completion of the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes. Qualitative research using a phenomenological design was used in order to obtain a rich description of the students' lived experiences in the M-programmes so as to gain insight into their experiences. Purposive sampling was used and data was generated by means of in-depth, one-to-one interviews. The findings have shown that numerous factors in various combinations at different points in time during the study period shaped the experience of the mature, female, part-time postgraduate student. Participants were intrinsically motivated to engage in studies as they desired the growth in their professional knowledge and skills. The experience of supervision varied depending on how the student and supervisor were matched and on the student's expectations and needs of the relationship. The development of critical thinking and writing skills required effort and time, which influenced the postgraduate student's motivation, retention and throughput rate. Within the work environment very little negotiation for study opportunity was possible. Although this negotiation was far more likely within the home and with family, household and family responsibilities persisted over the long study period of two or more years. This study has shown that the main hindrances to the completion of studies are the lack of time and the demands of the multiple roles that the mature, female part-time postgraduate student has to contend with.

OPSOMMING

Die volharding en deurvloeikoers van nagraadse studente is nasionaal sowel as internasionaal 'n bekommernis. Daar is 'n tendens vir nagraadse studente om te sukkel met die voltooiing van die tesis of navorsingsopdrag, afgesien van die Meester in Arbeidsterapie program waarvoor hulle gerigestreer is. Die doel van hierdie studie was om vanuit die nagraadse student se perspektief, die faktore wat die voltooiing van die Meester van Arbeidsterapie programme fasiliteer of verhoed te verstaan en beskryf. Kwalitatiewe navorsing met 'n fenomenologiese navorsingsontwerp is gebruik om 'n ryk verduideliking van die student se ervaringe van die M-programme te bekom om sodoende insig in hul ervarings te kry. Daar is van 'n doelgerigte steekproef gebruik gemaak en data is gegeneer deur middel van in-diepte een-tot-een onderhoud. Die bevindinge het getoon dat verskeie faktore in verskillende kombinasies op verskillende tye gedurende die studieperiode die ervaring van die deelnemers as volwasse, vroulike, deeltydse nagraadse studente bepaal het. Nagraadse studente was intrinsiek gemotiveer om te studeer omdat hulle wou groei ten opsigte van hul professionele kennis en vaardighede. Hul ervaring van studieleiding is bepaal deur hoe gepas die studieleier vir die betrokke student was en ook van die student se verwagtinge en behoeftes van die studieleier-student verhouding. Die ontwikkeling van kritiese denke en skryfvaardighede het inspanning en tyd vereis, wat die nagraadse student se motivering, volharding en deurvloeikoers beïnvloed het. Min onderhandelings vir studie-geleenthede was moontlik binne die werksomgewing. Alhoewel hierdie onderhandelings meer moontlik binne die huis- en familie omgewing was, het huishoudelike en familie verantwoordelikhede steeds voortgegaan oor die lang studie tydperk van twee of meer jare. Hierdie studie het bevind dat die grootste hindernisse vir die voltooiing van studies die tekort aan tyd en die eise van die meervoudige rolle waarmee die volwasse, vroulike deeltydse student worstel is.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

For the development of our profession, occupational therapists in South Africa and worldwide have realised the need for research and publication thereof. Knowledge generation has been and is deemed the mark of a profession. There is a great need for a strong research base to be established in occupational therapy and this is emphasized in the literature (1-4). Brown, Greenwood and Lysyk (5) as well as Du Toit and Wilkinson (3) point out that research is also a means of justifying clinical practice and that it is crucial that research is published so that it can be applied.

The Master of Occupational Therapy programmes of the various institutions of higher education (HE) afford occupational therapists the opportunity to engage in research for the purpose of generating knowledge and evaluating clinical practice (1). Not only do postgraduate programmes generally aim to develop learning that is research-based but it also offers the student the opportunity for personal growth and development (6,7). Becker (6) lists various qualities that spring forth as a result of having engaged in postgraduate studies, such as “the will to succeed...the ability to cope with change ...analytical proficiency... expressing yourself thoughtfully” to name just a few. These are qualities that appeal to employers. However, for South African occupational therapists and more so for those who are in government employment, a postgraduate qualification does not make him/her more employable, it does not mean a promotion or a salary increase. What it does hold for most postgraduate occupational therapy students is the benefit of having gained new knowledge and skills that impact positively on practice and the satisfaction of having contributed to the body of knowledge. It also increases professional credibility in terms of recognition from peers.

At Stellenbosch University the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes have been offered on a part-time basis since January 1995 and the basic residency period is at least one academic year for the Master of Occupational Therapy by Thesis programme and at least two academic years for the Structured Master of Occupational Therapy programme. The prevalent tendency is that students registered for the Structured Master of Occupational Therapy programme manage to complete the assignments required for each module, yet most of these students and those registered for the Master of Occupational Therapy by Thesis programme, appear to have difficulties with the completion of the research assignment or thesis (respectively), thus exceeding the basic period of residence or resulting

in non-completion. This has been commonly experienced at other higher education institutions in South Africa (8,9).

Stellenbosch University strongly subscribes to and prides itself on teaching excellence (10). This makes teaching excellence a priority for the researcher-as-member-of-staff to contribute to the upholding of this principle within her division while at the same time the researcher-as-postgraduate-student further develops her professional and personal knowledge and skills which will enhance practice.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Division of Occupational Therapy's records indicate that since the implementation of the Master Programme (M-programme) in January 1995 until Dec 2007, which is a period of 13 years, only 11 students had been registered. None of the postgraduate students had completed their studies within the residency period. For the Master of Occupational Therapy by Thesis programme one of the students had exceeded the basic period of residence by seven years and three students exceeded residency by four years. For the Structured Master of Occupational Therapy programme two students had exceeded residency by four years, one student exceeded residency by three years and another student exceeded residency by one year. Three students had failed to complete their respective programmes. The result was that only six students had graduated within the 13 year period which was an unsatisfactory throughput rate.

With few and infrequent applications to the M-programmes in occupational therapy at Stellenbosch University, the needs of prospective students were informally assessed by the senior lecturer who co-ordinated the M-programmes at that time and the desire for specialisation within the field of occupational therapy was strongly expressed. The structured M-programme was revised and implemented in 2008. This brought with it the introduction of specialization areas of paediatrics, vocational rehabilitation, hand therapy and psychiatry within the structured M-programmes. Since then there had been an increase in the number of new registrations for 2008, and within the Division of Occupational therapy, it was an unprecedented number of 17. Three of these students (17.6%) managed successful completion within the residency period, five students (29.4%) left with non-completion and for the remaining seven students (41%) completion was achieved over 4 and more years.

Research output, publications and postgraduate programmes are considered to be a measure of success and worth at institutions of higher education (11,12). For the Division of

Occupational Therapy the small number of postgraduate students and even fewer actual graduates over a period of 13 years, is a matter of grave concern.

Research by Watson (13) regarding postgraduate student through-put indicates that numerous HE institutions in South Africa are grappling with this problem. In addition government indicates its awareness of student attrition rates and the strong need to improve postgraduate throughput in both the Education White Paper 6 (14) and the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (15). The high attrition rate of postgraduate students is clearly a national concern.

Students selected for the Master in Occupational Therapy programmes have been screened on the basis of their graduate academic results. By implication, these students have the intellectual ability to achieve the master degree within the basic period of residence. Yet, as Sikhwari (16) points out that although intelligence is essential, academic success is influenced by other factors as well.

At the core of all M-programmes are the individuals who take up the challenge of participating in this higher degree of study – the postgraduate student, who contributes to the value of their discipline. Although research about M-programmes is fairly commonplace at HE institutions, most often the voice of the postgraduate student does not resonate in the literature (2). The Division of Occupational Therapy is keen to gain insight into their students' perspectives of their experiences of engaging in the M-programmes as this influences their persistence in or departure from the programmes. This is in keeping with Tinto (17) who emphasises that in order to best understand student attrition the research needs to be specific to that institution. To investigate this, the following research question is posed.

1.3 Research Question

What factors from the postgraduate student's perspective facilitate or hinder the completion of the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes at Stellenbosch University?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research study will be of benefit to the Division of Occupational Therapy as it may lead to a better understanding of the student's experience of the M-programmes so as to inform a better teaching and supervision process that may increase the throughput rate. The enhancement of the quality of the M-programmes may enable future postgraduate students to complete their studies within the residency period of two years. In turn, this may serve as

an attraction to other occupational therapists who may be considering engaging in postgraduate studies.

As it is incumbent on the postgraduate students to publish their research in an accredited journal, the publication rate of the Division of Occupational Therapy can increase. An additional benefit from this would be the improvement of the division's academic status within the university. At the same time this could have a domino effect on the Department of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences', the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences' and Stellenbosch University's, success and publication rates. The greater postgraduate success and increased publication rate may also positively impact on the recruitment and marketing success of both students and staff as research and publication adds to the reputation of HE institutions (11,18).

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research study is to investigate what factors facilitate or hinder completion of the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes at Stellenbosch University from the student's perspective so as to develop relevant initiatives that would inform the teaching and supervision process and improve the division's postgraduate success rates.

The objectives are:

- to determine the students' reasons for enrolling for postgraduate studies,
- to determine how prepared students were for postgraduate studies,
- to understand the students' actual experiences of the M-programmes
- to make recommendations to the Occupational Therapy Postgraduate Programme Committee which may contribute to future postgraduate students' success within the residency period.

1.6 Research Design and Method

For this study qualitative research using a phenomenological design was selected in order to obtain a rich description of the students' experiences in the M-programmes (structured and thesis Masters) so as to gain insight into their experiences. Purposive sampling was used with the aim of obtaining "information-rich cases" (19). Data was generated by means of in-depth, one-to-one interviews. A detailed discussion of the research design and method follows later (see 3.1 – 3.6).

1.7 Terminology / Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Basic period of residency – duration of the study programme

1.7.2 Throughput rate – the output rate (of graduates or postgraduates) over a period of time

1.7.3 Student attrition – the gradual reduction of students

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature indicates that numerous studies have been undertaken to gain insight into the postgraduate study experience. This chapter will focus on the aspects related to postgraduate student success as they emerged from the literature that was reviewed. These are as follows: the concern with regard to postgraduate student retention and throughput rates, the study process with particular reference to academic reading and writing, the significance of research and knowledge generation, the importance of supervision in the study process, the impact of motivation, the multiple life roles of the postgraduate student and the influence of the abovementioned on the optimal performance of postgraduate students.

2.1 Student Retention and Throughput

The desire to increase the number of students engaging in postgraduate studies and successfully completing their studies, thus reducing student attrition, is not unique to the Division of Occupational Therapy.

High student attrition rates appear to be an affliction of higher education institutions not only in South Africa but internationally as well (9,20-23). South Africa has a higher education graduation rate of 15% – one of the lowest rates in the world (24). According to Rochford (9) the throughput rate of Master students (by thesis/dissertation) worldwide is anticipated to be a dismal one quarter of those who register.

Government voiced concern about low enrolments, delayed rates of completion, non-completion and the subsequent small number of graduates of master and doctoral programmes (15). The Council of Higher Education (CHE) reports that producing postgraduates continues to be a concern that needs to be urgently addressed (25). The CHE report indicates that 37% of students continue to engage in postgraduate studies beyond the residency period and constitute 20% of the graduates of the total number of registered students in a year (25). This causes what is referred to as a “pile-up” in the postgraduate system, rendering it less productive. The report also indicates that there has been a greater increase in the number of females (9%) compared to males(6%), who extend their study period as well as a greater decrease in the number of females (13%) compared to males(8%) from this group, who graduate in a year (25).

In an attempt to improve student retention and throughput rates government policies have tied the success thereof to funding (15,23,26,27). One of the strategies in the National Plan

for Higher Education (15) to increase the participation rate and graduate outputs is: “Linking the funding of student places and FTE (fulltime equivalent) enrolments of institutions to the number of graduates produced” (15). It would seem that HE institutions’ traditional role of knowledge generation through student retention and throughput is evolving into “business undertakings that ‘peddle knowledge’ as profitably as possible” (21). This is supported by Singh (28) who describes the manner in which South African HE institutions vie for top students and researchers as a “*fish-market bargaining scenario*” coupled with the fact that the hub of knowledge production is related to funding. This view is shared by Osman and Castle (29) in that despite HE institutions’ recent emphasis on retention and throughput, financial implications are of greater concern as opposed to the development of students.

The National Plan for Higher Education (15) also called for access to HE institutions to be extended not only to those who had previously been excluded but also to adults and in doing so, participation rates are increased. Osman and Castle (29) note that regrettably the National Plan has very limited suggestions of how to go about achieving this and that mature students’ needs are not addressed. Postgraduate students are selected, according to criteria set by respective programmes or departments, to participate in M-programmes. By implication they are a group of qualified individuals so why is the rate of completion slow? Traditionally HE institutions mostly enrolled young undergraduate students hence their needs and context have strongly shaped HE institutions’ plans in general. This makes it imperative that the postgraduate not be viewed using an undergraduate lens as postgraduate students have different needs that have to be met in order to facilitate their success (29).

The HE institution’s environment does not allow the adult student to thrive and succeed. Mouton (30) voices surprise at the informal feedback that concurs with this. For HE institutions to remain financially sustainable in the transforming South African landscape, support for the retention and timely throughput of postgraduate students has to be addressed (26).

Scott and Smart cited in Scott (31) found that in New Zealand fulltime students had more than twice the probability to complete their studies than part-time students. This is supported by Kember and Leung (32) who found the same to be true for part-time students at a HE institution in Hong Kong. Crawford, Seagram, Gould, and Pyke (33) investigated variables that affected completion of doctoral studies and the evidence revealed that it took part-time students considerably longer to complete their studies.

On the contrary, Scott (31) cautions that when comparisons of the performance of HE institutions are made it is important that dissimilar aspects not be compared so as to be able to draw more accurate conclusions of performance rates. In this study the completion rates in HE in New Zealand was investigated. It was found that once part-time and fulltime rates were separated as well as other study-related differences (such as students changing course and then completing the new course) were adjusted for, the completion rates presented differently. Initially New Zealand had a collective (fulltime and part-time together) rate of completion of 58% which placed the country as fourth lowest according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report. This was as a result of the lower completion rate of part-time students. Once part-time and fulltime were separated the results improved to full-time completion being 73%.

From the literature above it is apparent that the retention and throughput of part-time students needs to be further explored. Tinto is a prominent researcher in the field of student persistence research. His model of student integration asserts that for a student to persist he / she needs to be integrated into the formal and the informal academic systems as well as the formal and informal social systems of the HE institution (17). Tinto's research was however based on undergraduate, fulltime students who were resident on the campus. As part-time students the postgraduates' contact time on campus is limited to mostly during lecture weeks and they reside off-campus, usually at their homes. In this way the postgraduate students' integration into the academic and social systems of the HE institution is restricted which may have implications for persistence with their studies.

Research has found that travelling (commuting) to and from the education institution makes it more difficult for students to be integrated into the social system (34,35). Part-time postgraduates are resident off-campus and have to commute to attend classes, thus it can be inferred that they experience less integration into the HE institution's society which may result in a smaller number of these students developing a sense of belonging (36,37).

Kember, Lee and Li's study (36) investigated the sense of belonging in part-time students from various universities in Hong Kong. Eighteen postgraduates and 35 first year students participated in the study. The findings revealed that students' sense of belonging related to their class or peer group, the lecturers, the department in which the programme was offered and their HE institution.

The strongest sense of belonging was in relation to the class or peer group. Students expressed very positive feelings and recognised that the course was structured to promote collaboration between students. The authors identify working in groups, where learning is

facilitated by students learning from each other, as an influential way in which to encourage learning. Postgraduate students who were working on their research did not have a class to affiliate to and interacted with their supervisors (36). The literature confirms that academic and social support is fostered in belonging to a postgraduate group or class (18,38).

The lecturer followed very closely behind as the second group with whom a sense of belonging was fostered (36). Here it was found that the programme the student followed was not a factor, rather it was the qualities of the lecturer as a person that mattered. After the lecturer initiates the relationship, (which seems to stem from the conventional student-teacher relationship evident in the Hong Kong school system) there was a great possibility of the interaction between them to expand. The evidence reveals that lecturers who had adequate interpersonal skills and treated students as adults supported the development of relationships with students. This had a positive effect on class attendance and cohesion which in turn promoted a sense of belonging (36). Osman and Castle (29) found that the involvement of the Academic Coordinator with individual students who were not managing the academic demands played a role in these students' sense of belonging which contributed to their success.

In Kember, Lee and Li's study (36) there were virtually an equal number of students who felt a strong sense of belonging, some sense of belonging and no sense of belonging with regards to affiliation with the department. It was found that having a positive or negative affiliation was based on the student's collective experience with the staff of the department. To improve the sense of belonging in the department the authors suggest that registration takes place in the department as opposed to the more common large HE institution's administration department.

Very few of the students developed a sense of belonging to their HE institution (36). The evidence indicates that a sense of belonging stems from the relationship that students develop with fellow students and a few lecturers or staff. Once the student has repeated positive experiences within the course, only then may a sense of belonging to the university possibly develop (36). Chikoko (37) reported that part-time postgraduate students who had to commute to the HE institution made very little use of the library because of the time and cost implications travelling held for them. This reduced both the contact they had with the institution and their sense of belonging to the institution. Chikoko (37) suggests that to promote the postgraduate student's integration with the institution the working hours of administrative staff working with postgraduate students need to be changed to better match the time when these students are around. From the literature it can be seen that HE institutions and academics have a pivotal role to play in promoting the development of a

sense of belonging in part-time students, which in turn is very important for retention and throughput (36,37).

Student retention and through-put is undeniably complex. It is an amalgam of numerous factors that need to be investigated from various perspectives and contexts, both separately as well as collectively – namely: from the individual student, the supervisor/s and the HE institution. However this would imply an investigation beyond the scope of this study. The focus of this research study is only on the perspective and context of the postgraduate student. Each of the aspects that follow contributes to student retention, throughput and attrition.

2.2 The Study Process

To embark on this journey of investigating what factors facilitate or hinder postgraduate success, it is necessary to reflect on the study process itself. The postgraduate study process generally comprises of several phases, namely: planning, the research process, the writing process and the assessment. Each of these phases require specific skills and knowledge and a lack of any of these can result in student attrition.

Planning is crucial “in a good research project and a good research degree” (7). Becker (6) and Cryer (39) view planning as the responsibility of the postgraduate student, though it can be guided by the supervisor and should be done for the duration of the study process. These plans need to be flexible so that they can be revised and amended throughout the study process (6,39). This will accommodate the reality of the research world where changes in the direction of the research may occur or as a result of other circumstances such as work or family responsibilities that may need to take priority at that time.

It is apparent that the postgraduate study process, however exciting and gratifying, is a long undertaking that demands extensive time. Often it initially appears to the postgraduate student that there is more than enough time to do that which is required, but time passes all too quickly giving rise to feeling “overwhelmed” and “pressurized” and this makes planning along a projected time line crucial (6,7).

The research process focuses on how the postgraduate student will carry out the research. This involves reading widely and extensively on the research area of choice. The reading of academic literature involves analysis and interpretation of the information, thus it is complex. Since reading is a prominent and important part of postgraduate studies it should be done productively. To be able to write well the student first needs to read well (40). Research in doctoral learning proposes that both the supervisor and the student are conscious of how

reading sets the foundation for writing (41,42). In much the same way the Master student uses the reading of academic texts to develop academic writing.

The writing process is ongoing. With specific reference to the thesis or research project numerous authors (6,39,40,42,43) emphasize that writing is re-cursive as drafts are continuously written, revised, edited, changed, re-edited and re-written until the final product is a piece of work that has the potential to be published.

At HE institutions academic writing is typically the measure of a student's learning and academic skills and abilities (44-46). This is supported by Makoni cited in Wright (45) "In higher education, acceptance into a particular 'academic discourse community' is dependent on one's ability to think and write analytically in that discipline". The task of academic writing though, is often a daunting one. Through writing a student puts him/herself on paper and this can make a student feel vulnerable.

"... a first piece of research is a major personal and learning achievement and for many the dissertation is *the key* moment when they begin to appreciate the stages, problems and potentially successful practices of research"(47).

When English is a second language, but is the language of choice for academic writing, writing difficulties are experienced (48,49). Wright's study (45) of applying the process writing approach to science students at The Cape Peninsula University of Technology, with the aim of improving their scientific writing ability, found that English language proficiency (the language required in that study) plays a crucial role in what the student understands and how this learning is expressed in written form. The problem is compounded when English is a second, third or fourth language. She also noted that marking was a "highly subjective enterprise" and that there may also be some other influences on the results such as the lecturer's response, the level of the student's motivation and how the student responded to assignments (45). Chapman (8) investigated the unsatisfactory throughput of M-students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His review of the Master's degree dissertations/theses of various disciplines in the library suggested that English language proficiency was a dilemma. He also takes cognisance of the fact that with widened access to previously excluded groups, in South Africa education is neither equal for all nor is English the home language of many students. Research confirms that in the South African context English language proficiency is needed for postgraduate success (44,50), "Language proficiency, on the other hand has been accepted as a variable in determining throughput success" (50). In addition, in countries where English is not the dialect, this lack of English language proficiency was seen as the main reason for postgraduate students' difficulties with academic writing (44).

On the contrary Boughey (51) contends that the difficulties that are experienced as a result of a lack of language proficiency relates not only to limited experience with academic literacy but also to the student's ability to understand and articulate thoughts logically. Only then will writing ability advance. This is further supported by Henning, Mamaiane and PHEME (52) who recognise that the complexity of writing extends beyond mere language proficiency or writing ability.

The literature indicates that internationally academics are faced with the reality of students not being prepared (academically equipped) for postgraduate studies and this in turn impacts on the low retention and through-put rates (9,21). In South Africa widened access has also brought with it more under-prepared postgraduate students who come from the Apartheid era's inferior education system for people of colour (21,50). Rochford (9) reported that over the last two decades the University of Cape Town has been drawing more and more under-prepared students to the M-programmes, and in particular to the structured M-programmes. However, these students are representative of all language and population groups. They are also hesitant research students who are supervisor-dependant. This is supported by Ngcongco (53) who found that Master students at the University of Zululand were under-prepared and apprehensive about research despite the fact that seven of the fourteen participants had completed their undergraduate degree at former white HE institutions. In addition many students come from a background of teaching and learning practice that is more "paternalistic" whereby the teacher is active in decision-making whilst the students remain passive (38). In this way postgraduate students may be held back in critically engaging in the research process.

The development of critical thinking skills is undeniably a requirement for postgraduate study. Hutchings' research (54) which focused on teaching postgraduate students critical thinking also confirms this. She acknowledged that it was difficult to shift the students' thinking and writing style from being 'context embedded' which she explains as a regular manner, to being 'context reduced' which is intellectually demanding and scholarly. She found that the participants had very little experience in critical thinking and did not believe that they were in a position to voice their own opinions, particularly in English. Drawing on the work of Entwistle, Hutchings (54) realises it was a reflection of their former education where learning is 'teacher-focused' and 'content-orientated'. This teaching practice style does not promote the student to reflect and debate and in so doing create their own learning, which is required in HE and more so in postgraduate programmes (54). Thorpe (55) describes learners as either being *non-reflectors* who are dependent on and accept information presented or summarised, thus learning did not occur, *reflectors* who illustrate

some engagement with concepts and ideas which are stepping stones to deeper reflections, and *critical reflectors* who apply greater intellectual skills, evaluate their own assumptions and ideas which may change their perceptions – an indication that learning has taken place (55).

This makes it necessary to question how HE institutions prepare students to develop critical thinking skills which are required for academic writing.

Kiley and Wisker (41) investigated threshold concepts as related to research education. Meyer and Land (56) pioneered the notion of threshold concepts to account for undergraduate learning. A threshold is explained as being an obstruction or limited understanding of a concept (56) which gives rise to a 'portal' or 'conceptual gateway' that needs to be crossed. Once the concept is grasped, there is a change in understanding something, a new way of thinking, a 'transformed internal view'. New language is also used to express this new thinking and new identity. This new position may be 'troublesome, challenging and transformative' (41,56).

Kiley and Wisker (41) propose that in research writing obstructions that occur and prevent postgraduate students from advancing in their scholarly thinking are viewed as portals that need to be crossed. The space before the threshold is crossed is described as 'liminality'. During this stage the researcher appears to be stuck or challenged. The authors (41) suggest that the understanding of threshold concepts and liminal states in research education places supervisors in a better position to support students as they will be able to identify the indicators of these states, hence be able to facilitate the student to success. They contend that this may reduce student attrition and improve retention and throughput. It also allows students to have greater insight into the research process which adds to their development as researchers and to be able to craft an articulate, well conceptualised dissertation / thesis. Again, this would contribute to retention and throughput (41). Trafford and Leshem (57) investigated threshold concepts with Doctoral students and their findings concur with those of Kiley and Wisker. The focus of their research was on the difficulties that Doctoral students experience, however, Master students have to overcome similar difficulties, experiencing intellectual challenges and frustrations that may lead to feeling *stuck*.

It appears that feeling *stuck* in writing is a rather common experience "Most writers feel stuck at some point in the writing process" (4). Wisker and Savin-Baden (42) focused on threshold concepts in the writing process with particular emphasis on being *stuck*. Participants in this study were postgraduate students and academic staff (as supervisors and academic

writers). The researchers describe being *stuck* as a liminal space before more productive writing happens after the crossing of a threshold. Being *stuck* leaves participants feeling insecure. Shifting out of this space, as the threshold concept is crossed, also leads to the challenge of dealing with new areas of “troublesome” knowledge (42). The study also revealed that being *stuck* can be seen as digressing from writing and ineffective writing activities are engaged in. Nonetheless this step and its activities contribute to more effective writing being possible later as the threshold is crossed. It was also found that writing that receives negative feedback can be detrimental to both the novice and the experienced writer which negatively impacts on the writing process and the writer as self.

2.3 Research and Knowledge Generation

Mouton (58) calls attention to the ethical obligation that researchers have to publish their work and in so doing, to share their knowledge. Joubert (59) researching the success and problems with publications in postgraduate studies in the Health Science Faculty at the University of the Free State, emphasises the importance of publication for the development of health care through the development of science, as well as the financial benefit for the HE institution through the subsidy awarded for the publication.

Hoffman investigated the reason for low publication rates in South African HE institutions and proposed the following metaphor so as to better understand the situation: “academic publishing as creative industry with performance-stressed participants” (60). It is common knowledge that one of the main functions of HE institutions is to undertake research. Hoffman (60) reminds us of the obligation that HE institutions have to serve the community at large. This is achieved through the publication of knowledge generated through research. Participants in this study were from five different HE institutions in South Africa. The study revealed that the HE environment was not conducive to improving publication rates which is highlighted in the following statement:

“If academic publishing is regarded as a creative industry, it must be managed in a way resembling the industry. ‘Production’ should be optimised by giving the potential author the necessary resources (time, support personnel), building in a system of encouragement (mentoring), continuous training in academic writing skills, and rewards (extrinsic and intrinsic).(60)

In most cases the choice to do an M-programme is voluntary and is generally a very gratifying experience on a personal and professional level. At the same time as members of a profession, postgraduate students in occupational therapy realize the significance of research and publication for the continued growth and existence of the occupational therapy

profession. The 'publish or perish' sentiment for the profession of Occupational Therapy in South Africa is strongly voiced by Du Toit and Wilkinson "If we do not research and publish the profession will not show progress and we will not be able to receive the necessary recognition globally, and could in other words, perish" (3). Nogueira-Martins, Fagnani Neto, Macedo, Citero and Mari (61) refer to this as professional stress because of the 'publish or perish' implication that it holds.

The need to improve research and publication is not inherent to the South African occupational therapy profession, as noted before it is an international necessity (1-4). In her editorial of the Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, Froude (62) acknowledges that it is not easy or simple to get research published and that it is a means in which the profession is able to get confirmation that their service has a beneficial impact.

Cusick's study (63) explored the experience of Australian occupational therapists as practitioners who engage in research. She reported that although there is a call for practitioners to do so only a minority are actively engaged in research. Her findings revealed that the practitioners' motivation to undertake research stemmed from positive academic experiences (in high school and at undergraduate research study level), family or friends who had been or were engaged in research, as well as working in an environment where other team members (mostly doctors) were engaged in research. The school experiences provided a sense of personal success. The undergraduate experience was related to positive interaction with the research study supervisor as well as the supervisor being seen as a role model to emulate. The experiences with family, friends and colleagues gave a sense of appreciation for scholarship. The study recommends the re-assessment of the call for practitioners to engage in research because despite practitioners' awareness thereof, many don't heed it. Those who do are motivated by other factors as mentioned above. Further research into the experiences of practitioners who engage in research is also recommended. This will allow for better understanding and planning of how to support research development amongst practitioners in the profession and ensure the continued development of the profession.

Du Toit and Wilkinson (3) also acknowledge that there are many research studies undertaken by occupational therapists in South Africa that go unpublished. The authors question the fairness of the professional stress (of "publish or perish") within the South African, Developing Nation context where the occupational therapist working in the public health sector works under tremendous pressure and having to do research (fundamental to evidence based practice) may only add to the cumbersome load they already have to cope with.

2.4 Supervision

Wisker (47) identifies research as “*the* fundamental human learning activity” which makes good supervision, which is supportive and capacitating in nature, critical. An integral part of postgraduate education is the supervisor-student relationship which strongly impacts not only on the standard of the thesis or research project as an end product, but also on the postgraduate student (64,65). Ngcongco (66) argues that supervision has to facilitate the transformation of the postgraduate student which capacitates them as researchers who are then able to contribute to the HE institution’s research goals.

Quality supervision is characterized by the supervisor epitomizing life-long learning and acting as the ‘catalyst’ to the student’s own learning (8,44,65). The importance of the supervisor for the postgraduate student’s induction into the academic world is aptly described by Hugo (67) as that of a “gatekeeper”. Entry of the postgraduate student into the intellectual world has to be facilitated and supported. In Chapman’s study (8) participants (supervisors) agreed that it was part of their role to share their research expertise and experiences in the process of helping their students with conference presentations. One of the strategies utilised by Rochford (9) to facilitate postgraduate students’ throughput success in the faculty of Humanities, is to strongly encourage the student to have a short article or conference paper ready for submission within 4 months of starting to work with a supervisor. The literature clearly recognizes the importance of the supervisor in the supervisor-student relationship.

... graduate students who had favorable mentors in graduate school had more publications, more conference papers, more first authored papers, and were more productive after graduate school when compared to those graduate students who did not have a favorable mentor during their program. All in all, the graduate advisor can influence the advisee’s perceptions of graduate school, learning, progress, and possibly future success (64).

Support, care and guidance contribute to postgraduate students’ success (2,65). In the study by Punyanunt-Carter and Wrench (64) results indicated that because of “confrontational conflict management” (verbal aggression) students had negative perceptions of the supervising relationship which may impact on completion rates.

Part of the communication between supervisor and student takes the form of feedback. The importance of feedback in postgraduate medical education is depicted as fundamental to teaching and learning practice (68). For feedback to be significant it needs to be specific and to guide the student and this ultimately leads to success.

Rochford (9) personally views the role of the supervisor as that of a research coach instead. Rochford's approach has been to supervise postgraduate students, particularly those who are dependent on their supervisor, on a daily basis. The result has been an incredulous one hundred percent success rate in throughput (9). Daily supervision, is however, not always practical in view of the supervisor's and the student's work load (18), nor is it conducive to developing independent researchers (18,69). Olivier (18) contends that postgraduate students need to be empowered and emancipated through the supervision process to becoming confident and independent researchers.

Holtzhausen (44) refers to the "supervisor's accountability" and "student's responsibility" as the "two sides of the working coin of supervision". These responsibilities (relating to contributing to a productive learning environment and own learning with and without supervision) are based on specific skills and knowledge that need to be taught. However, because this is a time- and energy-consuming pedagogy and "As long as higher education achievement is defined narrowly in terms of postgraduate achievement, the chances of successfully cultivating responsible postgraduate behaviour as defined, are remote" (44). Over-emphasis of throughput could be considered a narrow definition of successful postgraduate study (29).

Lessing (69) investigated the role of the supervisor from the supervisor's view at the University of South Africa. The evidence revealed that most lecturers acknowledged very few roles as their responsibility. Most of the roles related to the research project were viewed as being the student's responsibility. Lessing (69) states that the low success rate (throughput) of postgraduate students may be the result of this 'unwillingness' on the part of lecturers to take responsibility for student's research projects. It is recommended that lecturers need to develop a different outlook and that they should be trained to supervise postgraduate students (69).

Another aspect that adds to the success of the supervisor- student relationship is how they are matched. Often this is dependent on the research topic or question, the research methodology or the supervisor's area of expertise or interest. Rau (65) recommends that it should be broader than this. Before students and supervisors are matched consideration needs to be given to each one's "ontology", "values" and their "discourse" of choice. These are likely to shape their professional and personal affinity and, by association, the thesis-as-product, the person-as-product, and the influence of both in the university and broader educational domains (65). Wisker (42) believes the possibility that exists for a good match between student and supervisor is the same for a poor match between a supervisor and

student with the outcome of this disparity being discontented students and non-completed work.

Lessing (69) citing Bitzer indicates that supervision approaches are constructed on the supervisor's personal experience of having been supervised. Nevertheless, experienced academics are aware that neither having completed a thesis nor the experience of having had a supervisor that demonstrated the supervisory role very aptly renders the academic to be able to supervise a postgraduate student to successful completion of study.

Recent research recognizes the dilemma that supervisors are faced with in having to cope with more under-prepared students (as a result of widened access) and at the same time having to adhere to completion times while maintaining the standards and quality of the research produced (9,21,50).

In view of the pressure that government places on supervisors to improve retention and throughput of postgraduate students, how do HE institutions in South Africa prepare postgraduate supervisors for this important supervisory process? Chapman states "Supervisor training in South Africa, if it occurs at all, is at best haphazard" (8). This serves to strongly emphasize the fact that academics may not be properly prepared to supervise the increasing number of postgraduate students.

At the University of Southern Queensland in Australia lecturers are obligated to attend three out of six workshops in order to be accredited as a supervisor (70). The study investigated supervisory practices to facilitate completion of doctoral students and one of the recommendations made is further training of supervisors.

It is acknowledged that supervisors have a very full work load in addition to postgraduate supervision (18,21,47). In view of the increased number of both undergraduate and postgraduate students Swanepoel acknowledges that this workload in the South African context is beyond full and that it negatively impacts on supervision "...this increase [in students] bears no relation to the increase in academic personnel. As a result, lecturers are overburdened which, in turn, has an effect on their attitude towards being involved in the supervision of master's students" (21).

2.5 Motivation

Recent studies have shown that motivation plays an important role in HE academic success (16,71-74). Maclellan (72) and Pintrich (75) argue that the role of motivation must be considered with regard to issue of why some students achieve academically while others grapple with it.

Authors (7,39,58) of books aimed at guiding postgraduate students through the study process often start with the suggestion that the student needs to reflect on what his or her motivation to engage in postgraduate studies is. Tinto ascertains that a lack of goals and commitment, amongst others, are prominent causes of student departure. "... the interplay between individual goals and commitments (internal and external) influences not only whether a person leaves but also the form leaving takes" (17). This is further supported by Dass-Brailsford's findings (73) whereby one of the three themes relating to academic success was attributed to the individual. These characteristics of the individual were: having goals, initiative, motivation and confidence in his/her ability to effect change (73).

Goodman, Jaffer, Keresztesi, Mamdani, Mokgatle, Musariri, Pires, Schelchter determined that "intrinsic motivation is the strongest predictor of academic performance" (71). When students are intrinsically motivated there is a tendency to exert effort, hence they achieve academic success. It is interesting to note that Müller and Louw (74) found that females had significantly higher intrinsic motivation as opposed to their male counterparts in the study. One of the reasons ascribed to this difference is that for women studies are selected on grounds of intrinsic reasons, such as personal interest, as opposed to extrinsic reasons such as status (74). Equally important is the effect of confidence on intrinsic motivation as Sikhwari (16) noted. Students' perceptions of themselves not only influence their behaviour but their motivation to learn and achieve success as well. In addition the motivation levels of females were found to be significantly higher than that of the males in this study (16).

It is also apparent that the different phases of motivation are fuelled by different motives (76) because as Schumann and Kanfer cited in Dörnyei (76) argue, simple tasks that are easily or quickly achieved or tasks that do not require serious or prolonged learning do not have the same motivational features as tasks that require complex learning such as the learning of a skill or the gaining of knowledge or learning over a prolonged period of time. Igun (77) reporting on the difficulties and motivation of Nigerian postgraduate students, relates that motivation is critical to postgraduate studies particularly with regard to prevailing over hindrances.

Postgraduate students are involved in a complex learning situation which takes place over a prolonged period of time. To add to the complexity of the situation, most students enrolling in these programs are already engaged in full-time employment and have other family and/or social and/or community responsibilities and commitments. This is apparent of the participants (postgraduate students) in the research by Conneely (1), Dawkins and May (2) and Vryonides and Vitsilakis (78). A study by Albertyn, Kapp and Bitzer (38) found that the completion rate of MPhil students at the Centre for Higher and Adult Education at the University of Stellenbosch (from 2001 to 2006) was longer than the PhD students at the same centre. The attrition rate of the MPhil students was also much higher than the attrition rate of PhD students. They attribute the longer completion time and higher attrition rate possibly to the stress of engaging in M-programmes as part-time students having to cope with course work despite full-time employment.

Variations in student motivation can be ascribed to individual differences (in terms of the person and his/her context) nonetheless the student's reaction to the conditions in the "learning process" also impacts on his/her motivation (79). As a student the postgraduate is engaging in developing and generating knowledge, thus he/she is equally susceptible to having reactions to the learning environment at the Division of Occupational Therapy that may sway his/her motivation. Katt and Condly (79) used the theoretical framework of Herzberg who purports that motivating and de-motivating factors are independent and different. The result of this study was that classroom motivators and de-motivators were identified.

The four most commonly identified categories were: achievement (for example completing a difficult assignment); recognition for achievement by the professor or peers; professor care (whereby the professor showed real concern); and relevant work in that the assignments and/or course work related to reality, thus were useful or practical (79).

The three most commonly identified de-motivators were: class management in terms of the professor's supervision (this mainly entailed the professors' lack of professional behaviour); problems ascribed to the student him/herself (for example lack of preparation and absenteeism) and class policy and/or administration (for example inflexibility of policies regarding absenteeism or handing in work late) (79).

Müller and Louw's study (74) investigated the relationship between the motivation and interests of first year students and the learning environment in higher education. It was found that four environmental variables were applicable to learning motivation and interest, namely: transparency of requirements, social relatedness (together with support of the

students' autonomy and competence), relevance of contents and quality of instruction. 'Transparency of requirements' was found to be a common variable and as such an essential contributor to the students' motivation. It would appear that because the academic requirements were made very clear from the beginning, the maintenance of the students' initial motivation was facilitated (74).

Using the literature Maclellan (72) argues that although motivation is determined by the individual, it is influenced by the tutor through feedback which can be in the form of praise or criticism. Attention is also drawn to whether the focus of the feedback (be it criticism or praise) is in relation to the person or the process as the effect of each is different. Person praise is generally directed at the student whereas process praise is aimed at the effort or the method the student applied. Person criticism is a general evaluation of the how the student fared whereas process criticism focuses on the error or completeness of the task while at the same time requiring the student to think of possible alternative solutions (72). Person criticism negatively impacts on the affect, self-perception and persistence of students. With person praise the students develop a view of intelligence that implies that it is pre-determined and remains unchanged. By comparison process praise develops the understanding of intelligence as being changeable. Process criticism allows the student to see errors or failure as part of the learning process as their effort mediates learning. In this way they may show greater achievement than those with a fixed view of intelligence (72).

In addition to the support from the particular HE institution, support from the broader community is also essential for the sustained motivation of postgraduates. This community includes family, spouses / partners / significant others, friends, colleagues and employers (1,2,78,80). Although motivation per se was not researched in these studies participants disclosed that the lack of support from those mentioned above was one of the stressors they experienced during their studies.

The time and energy that these already established responsibilities and commitments require from an individual can be staggering at different points in time. This in turn can also affect the students' ability to sustain their motivation on a daily and longer term basis. Golde cited in Dawkins and May (2), found that doctoral students left their studies in the first year as a result of the personal cost of the "unbalanced and all-consuming lifestyle of doing research".

2.6 The Multiple Life Roles of the Postgraduate Student

“The part-time post graduate student is loaded with responsibilities over and above those that their studies will bring to bear” (37).

As mentioned before the occupational therapy profession predominantly attracts women, thus the gender of M-students is more often than not, female. This also serves to explain the reason that records of the Occupational Therapy Division at Stellenbosch University reflects that only one male had registered for and completed an M-programme.

With the Master of Occupational Therapy Programmes being offered on a part-time basis, postgraduate students are generally in full-time employment with family responsibilities. This makes the postgraduate a mature (adult), part-time student who enters the academic world with pre-existing multiple life roles, each with its own commitments and responsibilities.

The implications for the M-student for whom work and family are two main activities, adding on a third intense role such as being a part-time postgraduate student, seems to tip the scales against success even before the study process has begun. The part-time postgraduate students in Wright’s study (22) expressed negative commentary with regard to the struggle of having to manage the demands of family, work and research. Wingfield’s (81) response to the frequent question of how she copes with her career in science and motherhood is simply “with difficulty”. She realises that as precise as that reply may be, it does not provide any direction to women who find they are wrestling with the same situation. Wingfield (81) points out that most people are rarely able to attend to more than two time-consuming activities at a time. The ideal situation is to have only one activity around which energies are centred but for most mothers this is not an option. In her opinion three activities to focus on is “impossible” and she warns that this generally has catastrophic results.

Women generally undertake care-giving responsibilities – as a spouse or partner, raising children and caring for aging parents, which is a huge and never-ending task on its own. Home (80) citing Baines, Evans and Neysmith, notes that there is an expectation for women to be primary care-givers in spite of any other roles they may have. A study by Chireshe, Shumba, Mudhovozi, and Denhere (82) investigating students’ (between the ages of 20-49 years) views on factors that contribute to academic success or failure at a South African HE institution found that gender differentiation on failure rate was statistically significant. Looking at their HE academic history, females had a higher incidence of failing an assessment than their male counterparts. Culture was attributed to possibly being the cause

of thereof, “Presumably, female students without residential accommodation lose a bigger chunk of their study time to domestic obligations as the girl child is culturally required to undertake household chores” (82).

Similarly a study by Reay, Ball and David (83) exploring the factors that contribute or hamper the transition that mature students (male and female) make to HE found that gender, marital status, ethnicity and class made the transition harder for working-class single mothers. The lack of time for both family and study commitments was more intensely experienced by females. A constraint that all the women experienced was that of “uncared for carers”. This is referred to as a typical “gendered process” whereby women assume family caring and household responsibilities above themselves. Participants who were parents also endured psychological costs – these being feelings of guilt, anxiety and the perception of being inadequate. Seven of the 23 participants had decided to discontinue their studies. Financial limitations, time limitations and childcare difficulties were the reasons for non-completion (83).

One of the recommendations made by Carney-Crompton and Tan’s study (84) is that HE institutions need to re-look at providing adult women financial and social support as a means of facilitating their success because lower income has been proven to more likely result in attrition.

It is not surprising that Osman and Castle’s study (29) found that males did not perceive balancing home, work and study to be a difficulty whereas female participants approached it as a known factor and put strategies in place to help achieve the balance between home, work and study. The employer also played a critical role in the retention and throughput of mature postgraduate (honours) students by providing financial support, technical support (computer technology) and time support by allowing the search for information or literature pertaining to their studies during work time. Participants did however experience difficulties in balancing work and study responsibilities. Work took priority over studies thus at times classes had to be missed in order to meet work demands. Similarly other research also reveals that work takes precedence over study (32).

With mature part-time students having to juggle home, work and study responsibilities, social life is commonly sacrificed (32,83). The stress of having multiple roles as mature part-time female students creates what is referred to in Home’s study (80) as “role strain” and strongly contributes to student attrition.

Kember has extensively investigated the conflicting demands of study and other responsibilities that mature, part-time students have to grapple with and how this impacts on attrition and retention rates. He also draws on the work of Tinto with regards to part-time student's sense of belonging and persistence (as discussed earlier). The main problem that is frequently experienced relates to the lack of time. He acknowledges that the stress of balancing home, work and study has a contributory role with regard to attrition (32). Children also place demands on time and mature female students especially, experience the effect of having limited time to meet the demands of the study and home at the same time (83). Carney-Crompton and Tan (84) contend that although mature female students are cognisant of the time required to attend the study programme, most are not fully aware of the amount of time required for the activities that take place outside of the class such as reading for and writing assignments.

A study investigating how part-time students cope in addition to other obligations found that sacrifice, support and negotiation were three coping mechanisms that were employed with respect to self, work, family and social life (32). Results indicate that 'self' had the highest scores for support, sacrifice and negotiation which imply that students were aware of the importance of applying these coping mechanisms to themselves so as to succeed with part-time study. 'Family' had the next highest score due to the fact that students realised the value of family relationships in support and negotiation thus giving the student the opportunity to engage in part-time study. Although work had the lowest score, it could be seen as the most important domain for within work there was very low use of application of these coping mechanisms. This is most probably as a result of the fact that work does not allow for an option other than that work obligations have to be fulfilled. This leaves social life as the area within which sacrifice is mostly applied. The results indicate that for successful part-time study alongside other obligations, coping mechanisms are essential. In this study a coping model was developed which in turn gave rise to a framework for counselling part-time students early on, to facilitate their success in HE. Subsequent research investigating the coping mechanisms of part time students confirmed that the use of coping mechanisms is important for part-time students' success (85) and failure to do so significantly contributes to attrition (86).

In view of the strenuous combination of home, work and study demands the implication for postgraduate student attrition is explicit. Osman and Castle (29) contend that for mature students widened access on its' own is not enough. It should be partnered with support for retention and throughput that is geared for the context of mature students in HE. Fraser and Killen (87) in reference to first year students argue that it would be immoral to admit students

if (for any kind of reason) they do not have a chance of academic success. This issue should also be addressed with regards to mature, part-time postgraduate students who battle with tremendous demands without adequate support from HE institutions or government.

2.7 Optimal Performance as Students

As mentioned in chapter 1 the performance of postgraduate students is seen as a measure of the HE institution's success. As mentioned before, government has linked funding to post graduate throughput rates. This makes it essential to have a holistic understanding of how factors impact on the postgraduates' performance as students. In order to be able to engage in the study process, factors, both inherent and external to the postgraduate student as a person, need to be integrated (88).

In the occupational therapy profession models with an ecological approach highlight the essential role that the environment plays with regard to occupation and the performance thereof (89). One such model is the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model (90) that has been used in clinical and academic settings (91). The PEO Model looks at the dynamic interconnectedness of people, their everyday living environments and their occupations and roles, over time. Each of these areas (person, environment and occupation) is represented by three overlapping spheres. Each of the areas has an impact on and is impacted on by the other two areas. The area where all 3 spheres overlap with each other is referred to as occupational performance.

The person may be an individual, a group or an organization (91). The person is described as a "unique being" who has several coexisting roles which change according to context and with the progression of time. Each person has qualities, competencies, skills, interests and experiences that influence the person-environment-occupation transaction thus contributing to occupational performance (90,91). The postgraduate student is an individual and postgraduate students as a collective can be viewed as a peer group. Either way, the literature indicates that postgraduates are mature, part-time students with existing life roles in the areas of work, family and community (29,32,80,85,86,92).

The transactional relationship between the person and the environment indicates the reciprocal relationship between these two spheres. Law, Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby and Lets (90) explain that in a transactional approach the unit of study becomes an "event" as opposed to the person and the environment as separate entities. Subsequently the environment in which the "event" occurred and the meaning that participants attach to the

“event” would be studied. The implication is that a person’s behaviour is shaped by the environment and at the same time, the environment is shaped by the person’s behaviour (89,90). Within the environment attention has to be given to “cultural, socio-economic, institutional, physical and social” aspects (90). With regards to each of these aspects the viewpoint of the person, household and community is taken into account. For the postgraduate student the “event” that is being considered would be the study process. As a group the postgraduate students share similar environments in terms of the “event” – this being the HE institution, a place of work, a home and a community (89,90). However the context for individual postgraduate student will differ according to the above-mentioned aspects such as culture and socio-economic status, as well as each one’s unique characteristics as a person.

Occupation is viewed as the things people do in relation to their roles, within their environments (90). In accordance with the PEO model this sphere consists of the activity, task and occupation in close relation to each other (90). The activity is defined as the “basic unit of the task”, the task is a “set of purposeful activities in which a person engages” and the occupation is defined as “groups of self-directed, functional tasks and activities in which a person engages in over the lifespan” (90). Occupations are performed with the purpose of meeting the person’s need for “self-maintenance, expression and fulfilment” (90).

The reason for and the course of the occupation is influenced by the person’s roles and environments. For the postgraduate student examples of activities would be searching for and extensively reading scientific literature, in preparation for the task of critical thinking, which ultimately is for the occupation of academic writing. Academic writing is an aspect/ component of the role as postgraduate student. The role of the postgraduate student as a mother in the context of the home shapes how reading or writing may happen at the end of a full day’s work and why it happens in this way.

Occupational performance is determined by the fit or match between the person, the environment and the occupation over a period of time which may be “a day, week, or longer ... the lifespan of the person” (90). In other words occupational performance is the experience the person has of engaging in an occupation which takes place in an environment over a period of time (91). The better fit between the three spheres the greater the occupational performance and vice versa. The result of this fit also is indicative of the quality of the experience in terms of satisfaction and performance (91). The interrelatedness of the spheres can be seen in that should the fit or match between just two of the spheres not be optimal, then occupational performance will not be optimal. However, should the

aspects of one sphere improve, the interconnectedness of the spheres implies that the other spheres will be influenced as well, resulting in greater occupational performance.

The literature has shown that the demands on the mature, part-time student can be overwhelming. For postgraduate students there indeed appears to be a poor fit between the person as a mature, female, employed, part-time, postgraduate student; the environment of home, work and the HE institution; and the occupation (in relation to the role as postgraduate student) with its respective activities and tasks to meet postgraduate study requirements. The impact on occupational performance may be inferred in the delayed throughput and attrition rates. This model will be used later as a framework for the discussion of the findings of this research study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Methods

For the purpose of this study qualitative research using a phenomenological design was selected. The study aimed to investigate what factors facilitate or hinder completion of the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes from the student's perspective. Gaining insight into the students' experiences may lead to a deeper understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder postgraduate students' success, which in turn, may assist lecturers and supervisors to guide future postgraduate students to persist and graduate within the residency period.

Phenomenology aims at understanding and interpreting the meaning that participants allocate to their lives (93) with the aim of understanding the "essence of the experience" according to Moustakas cited in Fouche (93) and the individual's perception of things "through experience or in our consciousness" (94). Phenomenology is concerned with the revealing of meanings of a phenomenon, specifically as subjectively experienced by the participant and not with the testing of a hypothesis (95).

The use of phenomenology in occupational therapy research has gained favour in recent times (95). Occupational therapists and other health care professionals have adopted phenomenological approaches in research. This is because it relates closely to their professions' paradigms and has a better fit with their manner of practice (96,97). Since it is the occupational therapist's aim to enable the client to return to his/her day-to-day life or everyday life, by implication, occupational therapists have a greater understanding of the life world of the client (96,97). Comprehension and appreciation of the life world is fundamental to phenomenology.

Since the researcher was a member of staff of the Division of Occupational Therapy as well as a postgraduate student in the M-programme, an interpretivist epistemology position was selected. A characteristic of interpretivism is that the researcher is neither separate from nor neutral to that which she or he is studying. The researcher's experiences, perceptions or bias, play a crucial role in both the research process and the research findings (94,98). It is accepted and even valued in phenomenology that interpretation is always based on the context of socio-cultural background and day to day experiences of the participants and the researcher. This is further elaborated on in *Truth value* (see 3.6.1), which is a facet of *Rigour*.

Finlay (97) recognized that although many health care practitioners apply a phenomenological approach in research, the ideas within phenomenology are so complex that it has resulted in the varied and sometimes even contradictory application of the method. In an attempt to reduce this she outlines six principles in applying a phenomenological approach in research (which was adopted in this research project):

- (a) The life world / *Lebenswelt* is central to phenomenology. This refers to the intricate meanings of our daily lives that give the basis to our interactions with objects, ourselves and others. After ensuring that participants met the selection criteria, the researcher invited as many participants as possible so as to ensure that a varied life world would be included as participants varied in age, marital status, being with or without children, ages of children, employment status, number of years employed, and different socio-cultural backgrounds.
- (b) The aim of phenomenology is to describe and understand, not explain meanings that participants ascribe to their lives. In this study the researcher aimed to obtain rich descriptive data about the phenomena as it existed.
- (c) The application of reduction within phenomenology requires that the researcher attempts to earnestly see things from the participant's point of view so that the researcher can "attend genuinely and actively to the participant's view" (97). This entails bracketing any pre-understandings or assumptions before entering the participant's world. It is also acknowledged that bracketing everything is also not possible. The researcher made use of bracketing which was the process of setting aside any former understandings or assumptions she may have had of factors that may facilitate or hinder the completion of the M-programmes so as to be open to the lived experience from the participant's perspective. This was achieved by recording these understandings and assumptions in the researcher's journal before and after interviews were conducted.
- (d) Having a non-judgemental approach so that whatever the participant says with regard to his/her experience is accepted and appreciated and not judged in any way. The researcher accepted and audio recorded verbatim what the participant had said about his / her experiences.
- (e) "An acceptance of a role for interpretation" (97) whereby individuals always have pre-conceptions based on their socio-cultural background which enables them to make sense of the world they are in. The researcher acknowledged and understood that the

meanings that individuals gave to phenomena and interpretations made of phenomena, was based on what the individual had experienced before and up to that moment in time within her individual context.

- (f) “The concept of intentionality” (97) which implies that the world is based on our experiences and perceptions of it, thus multiple realities of a single situation exist. The researcher acknowledged and recorded each participant’s experiences no matter how varied they may have been.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Type of sampling and inclusion criteria

Purposive sampling was used with the aim of obtaining “information-rich cases” that will “illuminate the questions under study” (19). The researcher purposefully selected participants from the 38 postgraduate students who had been registered for the M-programmes at the Division of Occupational Therapy at Stellenbosch University between January 2000 and April 2011. For the purpose of this research project a total of 14 participants were selected – 2 from the group who were enrolled for the thesis programme (they were only two postgraduate students registered between January 2000 and April 2011), 6 from the initial structured M-programme (of 2000) and 6 from the revised structured programme (of 2008). Postgraduate students were selected from each of the following groups. The description of the groups indicates the selection criteria as well:

- students who had successfully completed the thesis programme within 2 - 4 years (there were none)
- students who had successfully completed the thesis programme beyond 4 years (there were only 2)
- student who had suspended the thesis programme (there were none)
- students who had successfully completed the initial structured programme (of 2000) within 2-4 years
- students who had successfully completed the initial structured programme (of 2000) beyond 4 years
- students who had suspended the initial structured (of 2000) programme
- students who had registered for the revised structured programme (of 2008) and have completed their studies within the residency period of 2 years
- students who had registered for the revised structured programme (of 2008) and completed or intend to complete their studies within 3-5 years
- students who had suspended the revised structured programme (of 2008).

Participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the research study and reserved the right to withdraw from the project at any time during the study (see Appendix B and C). None of the participants withdrew from the study.

Informed consent was obtained from each of the participants (see Appendix B and C).

3.2.2 Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria would be any participant that declined the invitation to voluntarily participate and postgraduate students who had registered for the M-programmes at the Stellenbosch University's Division of Occupational Therapy before January 2000 or after April 2011.

3.2.3 Sampling Method

Some of the selected participants declined the invitation to participate in the study and a few other participants were either elsewhere in the country or out of the country. Data collection was interrupted due to the researcher's work and personal obligations and thus took place over two different periods during 2011 and 2012 respectively. The result was that the sample population had to be amended by changing the date within which participants had registered for the M-programmes from Jan 1996 – April 2008 to those who had registered between Jan 2000 – April 2011. This made the data collected more current, however in the process one of the participants no longer met the selection criteria and data from that interview had to be excluded from this research study.

The researcher decided that when it appears that saturation of data has been reached, that one more interview will be conducted so as to ensure that saturation has indeed been reached and then interviewing would stop. This brought the total number of participants to eight.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Stellenbosch University's Committee for Human Research before data collection commenced.

Written informed consent was obtained from postgraduate students who volunteered to be participants in this study.

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were guaranteed as the researcher assigned pseudonyms to the participants, in so doing, protecting the identity of the participants.

3.4 Data Collection

Interviews are most commonly used in qualitative research to collect information (99-102). It is also well suited to the phenomenological approach as “Interviews allow participants to provide rich, contextual descriptions of events” (99) and would culminate in a better understanding of a phenomenon (98,102). Patton (19) indicates that in order to obtain a thick description about an experience the researcher has to use in-depth interviews with individuals who have actually “lived” that experience.

For the purpose of this research data was generated by means of in-depth, one-to-one interviews with participants. These interviews were conducted at a place that was suitable to the participants and were approximately 45-60 minutes in total per participant. An interview protocol was used during the interviews (see Appendix D). The probing questions were based on current literature about student persistence. The use of in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to provide the participant with ample opportunity to describe her experiences of engaging in the M- programmes and in so doing the researcher obtained sufficient data to be able to produce a substantive description of the experience. Stein and Cutler (102) state that the focus of in-depth interviews is on listening to and obtaining a complete understanding of the individual participant’s perspective.

The interviews were audio recorded (digitally) with the aim of obtaining a permanent record of participants’ responses and field notes were made to record the non-verbal communication that audio recording was unable to capture.

3.5 Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher employed the services of a transcriber to assist with five of the interview transcriptions. All transcriptions were read and re-read whilst the audio recording (digital recording) was played to correct any possible transcription errors. A code known only to the researcher was used instead of actual names of participants. This was to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, thus transcriptions (data generated) are not traceable to the participants.

For this study the researcher adapted the general principles of data analysis according to Stein and Cutler (102) by means of a thematic analysis, using an inductive approach.

The first was that data analysis takes place alongside data collection. This allowed for emerging insights to guide subsequent interviews and according to Patton (19) forms part of

the fieldwork and in the end when data collection was completed these insights were also used in the final data analysis.

The second principle involved a systematic process of analysing data. The concept of reflection was applied. The researcher read and re-read field notes and reflective journal notes alongside transcriptions so as to enhance her understanding of the data.

The third principle involved the process of open coding. Data was broken down into 'units of meaning' and given a code.

The fourth principle involved comparisons of these meanings of the data with the aim of finding 'common regularities'. These were compared to formulate concepts which were also compared to determine subcategories and at a later stage to determine categories.

The fifth principle involved the clustering of these categories into themes as the researcher became more and more familiar with the data and her insight into the phenomenon intensified.

The sixth principle of the analysis was to bring together this data through critical thinking with the aim of describing, interpreting and explaining the phenomenon. This conceptualised information was discussed with a participant for validation and was used as a means of member checking (103,104) and to improve trustworthiness and credibility of the results. This method was applied in the study by Conneeley (1).

3.6 Rigour

In qualitative research measures to ensure validity and the terminology used to describe different forms of validity often differ from quantitative research. To establish *trustworthiness* (validity) Guba's 1981 model as outlined in Krefting (103) was used. The aspects are: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality which are applicable to both qualitative and quantitative research. However the strategies used to assess trustworthiness are specific to the research design.

3.6.1 Truth value

Truth value deals with *credibility* (internal validity). Based on the research design, the participants and the context (of the study), the qualitative researcher has to display his/her confidence in the truth of the findings. "Sandelowski suggested that a qualitative study is credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience

that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions” (103).

The strategies that the researcher applied were prolonged engagement, reflexivity and member checking. Prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to spend a considerable length of time with participants during interviews and with the transcriptions of the interviews. According to Krefting (103) the extended time enables the researcher to identify and verify recurring patterns and themes and in addition, it allows the researcher to improve rapport with the participants which may lead to the participant sharing information that may be sensitive.

In qualitative research reflexivity accentuates the significance of the researcher’s awareness of his/her perceptions and cultural and political background. It requires the researcher to constantly be aware of the effect that the researcher’s background will have while conducting the research. Aamodt cited in Krefting (103) indicates that the researcher is not separate from the research and as such needs to constantly “reflect on his or her own characteristics and examine how they influence data gathering and analysis”. Bearing this in mind the researcher in this study made use of a field journal to record not only information regarding the planning of the research but also to note and reflect on her own personal feelings and views about the research process. This raised her awareness of biases and allowed her to change the manner in which she generated data or did the analysis. This enhanced the credibility of the research.

Member checking is a method whereby the researcher verifies with participants that their experiences and perceptions have accurately been transformed into data (103). The researcher conducted a follow-up interview with a participant in order to discuss the conceptualized information for validation.

3.6.2 Applicability

Applicability deals with the extent to which the research findings can be applied to other contexts and other people. Guba cited in Krefting (103) viewed this as *transferability* where the focus is on how well the findings of the research can fit into situations outside the context of the research and that it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide ample descriptive data so as to give the reader the opportunity to consider the goodness of fit. In this research study the researcher aimed to provide a rich, detailed description with the view to leading the reader into the world of the postgraduate student so that it can be experienced and clearly understood.

3.6.3 Consistency

Consistency in qualitative research involves *dependability* (reliability). Qualitative research acknowledges multiple realities (98,103,105) as a result of variation in experiences and perceptions. Within this context dependability refers to being able to identify or explain the sources of this variability. The researcher applied strategies of providing a description of research methods and peer review. According to Kielhofner cited in Krefting (103) a good, detailed description of the methods used indicates the replicability of the study or uniqueness of the study situation. In this research study the researcher gave a detailed description of precisely which methods of data generation and analysis was used. Peer review entails having colleagues and experts in the methodology used, verify the analysis of the data (103). The researcher made use of a colleague who is also an expert in the methodology that was applied in this research study, to serve as a peer reviewer.

3.6.4 Neutrality

Neutrality as viewed by Guba cited in Krefting (103) within qualitative research focuses on the neutrality of data rather than on that of the researcher and that *conformability* is the measure of neutrality. Conformability is attained when credibility and transferability are established. Strategies that the researcher applied to establish conformability was an audit trail and reflexivity (103). With an audit trail the aim was to establish if the 'auditor' was able to understand the reasons behind decisions made. The researcher made use of a colleague to track the progression of events throughout, from the implementation of the research plan to the data generated, findings documented, and interpretations and recommendations made. Reflexivity was applied as discussed under 'Truth value' (see 3.6.1).

In the following chapter the researcher used the categories and themes that emerged from the analysis of the data to describe and explain the postgraduate student's perspective on the experience of engaging in a Master of Occupational Therapy programme at Stellenbosch University.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results reflect the participants' experiences of having engaged in master studies, under the themes that emerged from the data. Participants related positive and negative experiences and the influence thereof on retention and throughput rates.

4.1 Participants

The gender of all of the participants in this study was female. These women resided in the Western Cape at the time of data collection. According to the records of the Division of Occupational Therapy, only 1 male had completed the Master of Occupational Therapy programme, unfortunately the date of his registration fell outside of the researcher's inclusion criteria thus he was not invited to participate in the study.

Participants were employed in either government institutions/facilities or in private practice. Their work experience varied between 5-25 years.

All participants, except one, had children during the course of the study period. Most participants were in fulltime employment.

The profile of participants is depicted in Table 4.1. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants.

Table 4.1: Profile of Participants

Participant	Marital Status		Number of Children According to Age (in years)				Employment			English Language Status			M-programme	Duration of Studies (in years)			
	Single	Married or Partner	0-5	6-12	13-18	>18	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed	1 st Language	2 nd Language	3 rd Language	T(thesis) S(structured)	2-3	4-6	Defer- r-ed	Discon- tinued
1		x	2	-	-	-		x			x		S			x	
2		x	-	-	-	-		x				x	S	x			
3		x	-	-	1	-	x				x		S		x		
4		x	1	-	-	-	x				x		S		x		
5		x	-	1	1	-	x				x		S				x
6		x	-	-	-	-	x				x		T		x		
7		x	2	-	-	-		X for latter part of studies	X for initial part of studies	x			S	x			
8	x		-	-	-	2	x				x		S				x

4.2 Summary of findings

As indicated in Table 4.2 four themes emerged from the data, namely: the academic writing disposition, the effect of the environment, the sway that non-academic factors hold and the attraction and value of an education.

Table 4.2: Summary of themes and categories

Theme	Category
1. The academic writing disposition	Readiness in undertaking Masters Proficiency in academic writing Guidance in academic writing Ownership
2. The effect of the academic environment	Engaging in the M-programme Influence of the presenters of the M-programme The supervisors and student triad Communication between supervisors and student
3. The sway that non-academic factors hold	Family support Employer and financial support Time as a commodity
4. The attraction and value of an education	Reasons for engaging in M-programme Motivation for the duration of the study period The experience of doing

4.2.1 Theme 1: The Academic Writing Disposition

The disposition to be able to write academically did not come easily to any of the participants. Although participants had experience with report writing, as it is part of the administrative process in the profession, academic writing for postgraduate studies proved to be different. Table 4.3 indicates how each of the four categories manifested for different participants

Table 4.3: The manifestation of academic writing disposition per category

Category	Subcategory
Readiness in undertaking Masters	Was prepared for academic writing Enthusiasm about research Will learn in the study process Was not prepared for academic writing Unsure of expectation at Master-level
Proficiency in academic writing	Reading of scientific articles for writing The struggle with academic writing English as the language of choice for writing
Guidance in academic writing	Received guidance with writing Did not receive guidance with writing Other support for academic writing
Ownership	Student takes ownership Shared and displaced ownership

4.2.1.1 Readiness in undertaking Masters

The extent of readiness to engage in postgraduate studies differed to varying degrees amongst participants. How equipped they perceived themselves to be or not to be impacted on the experience of writing academically.

Readiness coupled with eagerness to embark on this study journey was reported by only one participant

Oh, I was so ready. I love it. I mean, till today I will constantly look for information, research up on my own ... So I was ready, I was excited about it, I was excited about what Stellenbosch had come up with.

Geena

Being ready to study was more than just a mind-set, for Geena it included the equipment that would facilitate this process as well

I would say that that's kind of like how prepared I was, and of course in terms of the physical. I got my husband to give me a laptop. I need a laptop for my work.

Geena also expanded on how the laptop allowed her to work whenever she had time and where-ever she may be, even when she was outside with her children while they were playing in the garden or at the park.

Many participants shared the feeling of not being ready or equipped for the research process.

Not, I don't think prepared enough. Not, not with regards to research. Hannah

Probably not. I think I just jumped into it, kind of. Diane

In retrospect some felt they could have and perhaps should have prepared themselves better before registering for the M-programme by clarifying the research topic or attending courses specifically aimed at engaging in research or academic writing as Hannah mentioned

So a lot of it was new knowledge, and I would've benefitted from attending courses or whatever, just to have a...grounding.

Or first of all decide on what I'm going to, what my topic is going to be and then decide it's going to be quantitative or qualitative ... 'Ja', there was a lot of reading that I had to do just to sort my thoughts out and a lot of that could have been done, beforehand, I think.

Another participant was unsure of what she could have done in preparation for writing and research.

Not at all. It was a decision that I made, and I don't know what would have prepared me. Fiona

Initially there appeared to be an excitement around engaging in research at a postgraduate level. It could be described as a keenness to investigate so as to gain knowledge and to be able to construct a meaningful end-product as depicted by Anne and Emma respectively.

En toe het ek met my navorsing begin. Met my navorsing was ek verskriklik gemotiveerd want dit sou my 'n eindproduk gee wat ek kon gebruik in praktyk.

Die M opsig self, die werkstuk of wat ookal hulle dit nou noem was so half vir my, ek was baie entoesiasies daaroor. Die deel wat ek wou ondersoek het was vir my, ek was baie passievol daaroor.

Diane related that with the progression of time, that initial eagerness for engaging in research diminished

I was very enthusiastic when I started out, and very eager, but I think as time went on, obviously the motivation took a dive, the enthusiasm took a dive.

Whether or not participants were ready to undertake their studies, there was openness to learning about the process whilst engaging in the process of studying, as described by Bianca

No, I wasn't prepared beforehand because I expected that if I enrol, then I'll learn. So, that's my attitude. When the challenge comes, I'll learn.

The fact that participants were engaged in postgraduate studies did not imply that they were fully aware of the expectations, specifically with regards to academic writing, at Master-level.

Ja, wel ek het nog nooit 'n M gedoen nie, en ek gaan nooit weer 'n M doen nie of 'n doktorsgraad doen nie, so ek het glad nie 'n 'clue', oor enigiets hoe om 'n navorsingsproduk op 'n M-vlak in te handig nie. Anne

Ek dink partykeer vergeet mense ons is nie almal in 'n akademiese 'setting' waar jy weet wat is die volgende stap. Carol

4.2.1.2 Proficiency in Academic Writing

The propensity to produce academic writing did not come naturally to participants. The actual task of writing was coupled with numerous challenges which had made it a daunting task.

Amongst participants the reading of scientific articles was understood to be the precursor to academic writing. Diane and Carol expressed that they had initially experienced challenges with the reading of scientific articles

So, it was very, very problematic to me to actually read, summarise. Diane

So dit al klaar moes jy jou indink en sielkundig voor voorberei het, maar nee, ons is nie voorberei op – of ek was nie – op hoe om 'n artikel te gaan lees nie, watter inligting is belangrik in 'n artikel en watter nie, wat soek jy voor in 'n artikel. Carol

Participants also understood and experienced that the skill of reading scientific articles had to be practiced repeatedly, as indicated by Anne

En ek dink nie iemand kan jou half wysmaak oor hoe om dit anders, hoe om dit te doen, plaas van om dit net te doen nie. Die lees, veral die lees van artikels. Niemand gaan vir jou sê lees 'n artikel so, dit gaan vir jou beter wees nie, jy moet dit maar nou net inoefen.

Over time this continuous practice of reading scientific articles improved the competence to understand the material. In fact reading articles became an enjoyable activity.

Kyk dit gaan maar kom maar met tyd nê. Mens, jou eerste artikel wat jy lees dink jy: 'Oh my word', wat op aarde moet ek hier uithaal. En as jy nou al by jou twintigste een kom, dan dink jy: ag jus, dus eintlik so half, voel half jy lees en jy weet presies wat gaan volgende kom in hierdie ding. So dit kom met tyd en dit was vir my lekker om dit half uit te vind oor tyd. Anne

So, maar daai proses was vir my lekker en ek, ek is nogsteeds na gaande daarmee want dit is nogal baie my ingesteldheid, dis nou nie iets wat vir my 'n aanpassing was. Emma

Bianca shared the same positive experience with regard to the reading of scientific articles. She noticed that all this reading facilitated her writing ability.

Yes, the thing I think that changed the most is reading scientific articles and being able to analyse and really understand what they are telling me. And also to see it on a different level. And also to see what's not written. I think that's one of the biggest things I've really learnt, how to read, interpret and, not criticise but to ... *analyse*, 'ja'. I think that's one of the best things and that helps, the more you read, the better you can write. So, I read a lot.

All the same the reading of scientific articles did not automatically or easily render the participant to have a proclivity to write academically as Anne indicates

... ek kan verstaan jy moet nog artikels lees maar, gaan jy wetenskaplik raak al het jy nou, ek het maklik al honderd artikels al deurgewerk. So moet ek by 'n duisend artikels kom voor ek op daai punt gaan kom?

Being able to express thoughts, ideas and insights in an academically appropriate manner was a challenging discourse experienced by all participants to varying degrees.

Die skryf is vir my verskriklik moeilik, die akademiese skryfstyl en dit is een van hulle, van my studieleiers se grootste, half terugvoer, is my, ek skryf nie wetenskaplik genoeg nie. Anne

That was really, really bad ... if I really, really, really am honest with myself, I'm not really an academic person. So I will never be the person that would just like get onto the computer and write articles. Diane

It seems to have been easier to verbally express thoughts, ideas and insights during discussions with supervisors as opposed to the written word.

Emma and Diane described it as a challenge to be able to put their thoughts onto paper in a manner that would make the reader perceive all the ideas that they had around it

Ek het baie keer die gevoel gekry dit wat ek daar wil skryf is daar nog baie ander goed wat hier in my kop aan gaan wat nie daarop staan nie. Maar as ek hom lees dan lees my kop dit wat ek verstaan in al daai in. Ek sukkel om dit op papier te kry sodat die ou, dit wat in my kop an gaan, nog steeds sien en ek nie te omslagtig raak nie.

I can express myself probably much better through talking versus writing, because sometimes I have things in my head, but it's putting down on paper which is a problem.

Participants' struggle with academic writing may have led to the confidence that they had in their own writing ability, to waiver. Emma described how it affected her confidence as she regularly wrote reports in practice, yet with academic writing she felt it was difficult to make herself understood

Die aanpassing het meer gekom om dit neer te sit op papier en ewe skielik het dit vir my gevoel: okay wel, nou sit ek met 'n problem want niemand verstaan my nie. En, ek is eintlik gewoon aan verslae skryf, ek doen dit elke dag. So, mens begin half dan aan daai vaardigheid overall twyfel, jy weet, selfs in jou kliniese werk. En nou ewe skielik, niemand verstaan wat ek op papier sit nie, maar so skryf ek al nou verslae vandat ek al klaar gemaak het, jy weet en nou. So jy begin bietjie daai self-vertroue ook nogals dan verloor in die proses.

Of the eight participants only one had English as her first language, yet all participants wrote in English only. For another participant English was her 3rd language.

The choice to write in English appeared to have been based on the fact that participants were familiar with writing in English in their everyday work situation. Anne related that she would not have opted to write in her first language (which was not English).

Ja, maar 'n mens se werk is mos maar in engels so jy, ek voel gemakliker om in engels in te skryf as wat ek sulke goed in afrikaans sou wou skryf. Ek sou dit glad nie in Afrikaans wou doen nie.

For Emma the decision to write in English was more than just using it for work, it related to the fact that English was the language of the literature available in the profession and the terminology used did not necessarily exist in her first language.

Nee, ek het in engels geskryf. Daar was daai voorstel ook om na Afrikaans oor te gaan. Maar wat my nou daar weer nou laat vas val het was, baie van die terminologie was moeilik om nou weer in Afrikaans nou, daar is nie, al die teorie en die agtergrond vir die ondersteuning vir die studie was in engels. Dan moet mens nou weer gaan en in Afrikaans begin uitdink amper, want daar is nie afrikaanse terme daarvoor nie. So ja, so ek, ek het toe na maar gehou by my engels.

Emma also doubted if writing in her mother tongue / first language would have made a difference in her ability to express herself in writing

Of daar 'n verskil is tussen Engels en Afrikaans nie. Ek, ek, dink die probleem is om vir my te kry om myself in skrif uit te druk. Of dit nou in Engels of Afrikaans is. Ek dink dit is die ding.

For Bianca writing in English as her third language was a complicated process. She required assistance in finding the English words for the thoughts and insights that she made in her mother tongue /first language. She also acknowledged that without this assistance she would not have achieved success.

It took some time because I had to first understand what is said, then understand the meaning and then try and figure out how to answer the assignments. I had my sister to assist me with the editing, I have to say, because otherwise I would failed the first few assignments hopelessly in trying to put in words what I want to say. So, she helped me. If I said it in [first language], she would so tell me in lay language what is the main thing you want to say, and then she would help me find the English. So it was a bit tough. I spent a lot of time on that.

4.2.1.3 Guidance in Academic Writing

Participants experienced varying degrees of guidance in academic writing ranging from insufficient to very little to adequate. They also had different expectations of guidance from supervisors with regard to writing.

Geena and Bianca both related that they had received quality guidance from their supervisors that assisted them greatly.

No, they definitely gave good, solid guidance.

Geena

And something else that really helped me as well was [supervisor's name] and having her as study leader, because she also helped, putting in extra time for us to do scientific writing. Like with the abstract, we met one Saturday morning, we brought our laptops and said okay focus on this and just write. Don't think too much about if it's right or wrong, just write it and then we'll go through the process of correcting it. Bianca

Participants related the need for guidance from their supervisors to be able to write in an academically appropriate manner. Emma narrated that she had experienced this need early on in the research process ie. with the development of her proposal, even though it had been addressed during the research module

Dit is verduidelik in die groep, die proses, maar miskien is 'n mens nie altyd 'open-minded' genoeg om die proses op te neem nie, en dit miskien weer verduidelik. Jy het meer as eengeleentheid om rêrig te verduidelik word waar pas watter deel van dit in...van die protokol.

Anne shared that the feedback from her supervisors made her aware of her academic writing limitations but it was their lack of guidance of how to write academically that caused her frustration.

...maar daai tyd het ek gevoel half, daar word gese jy's nie wetenskaplik genoeg nie, maar dis al dit. En dan gaan ek huis toe en dink maar hoe op aarde gaan ek meer wetenskaplik raak in 'n jaar se tyd want, it's not my background and it's not something I'm gonna pursue. So dis half jy weet, jy's nou half hier, okay nou's dit die terugvoer maar wat gaan ek hier omtrent doen want ek kannie more oggend opstaan en nou is ek wetenskaplik nie. So dit was vir my nogal soos, 'okay', en ek voel net ons het nie leiding gekry noodwendig in dit in nie.

For Carol there was a difference between writing within her profession as a clinician and writing in an academic style for postgraduate studies that her supervisors needed to assist her to be able to transcend.

Ek dink nie ons is glad nie voorberei daarvoor nie, en dis hoekom ek sê, dis hierdie totale leemte tussen dit wat ons heeldag in die praktyk doen as 'clinicians' en dit wat in die teorie van jou verwag word. Daar is 'n groot skuif tussen dit, en ek dink as jy al klaar deur die proses is vergeet jy partykeer, of ek weet nie, as jy studente seker leiding gee en jy het dit nou al 'n paar keer gedoen, vergeet jy eintlik daar is mense wat eintlik van hierdie goed eintlik half niks weet nie, en miskien moet 'n mens meer bedag wees daarop.

Emma related that she needed more specific guidance as she experienced the guidance to be too vague thus she was unsure of how or what she needed to change to improve her writing.

... ek dink ek het miskien 'n bietjie meer, spesifieke leiding nodig as dit so, mm, meer, 'n rigting. Die leiding was vir my as persoon te vaag, ek het half vir myself vas geval veral, en dan het ek half in sirkels begin dink en dan is ek maar seker, en as ek weer die produk in gee, weet ek nie of daar rêrig dalk verskil was in dit nie, wat ek in gee nie.

This culminated in a feeling of being *stuck* with her writing, unable to move forward.

So dit was vir my 'n bietjie sleg en ek het ook vas geval in die sin van, ek het later nie meer rêrig geweet wat ek uit my eie uit moet doen om dit te laat werk... So later toe het ek nou nie eintlik nie half geweet, eintlik. Nou's dit tot so en nou nie verder nie. Emma

Emma also suggested that supervisors perhaps be given alternative ways of guiding students when it is apparent that with the current supervision style that the student is making very little progress and that supervisors need to have a clear understanding of the requirement differences between the research assignment and the full thesis

As die student nou langer as dit vat, herdink die scenario van hoe die leiding dan gegee word, of om ander mense in te trek om ekstra leiding te gee, of te 'pinpoint' dalk vir die student waar die groot probleem lê en wie dan gekontak moet word... As dit te lank vat vir daardie student, okay goed, dan is die leiding nie reg nie. Ja, ek dink miskien meer struktuur selfs dalk vir die studieleiers.

Nee, die werkstuk, of die 'effort' wat daar ingaan. Ek is nie lekker seker of ek weet, of selfs of die studieleiers die onderskeid kan maak nie, en dalk was dit ook een van my probleme, dat die onderskeid nie duidelik was tussen waaraan ek besig is om te werk nie, en dat dit eintlik net 'n werkstuk is nie 'versus' die tesis, die volledige. Emma

Some participants were aware of other support for writing that was offered at the university, others suggested starting a support group for students. Hannah found that attending these workshops whilst in the process of her studies and having a full-time job was overwhelming

There were courses presented by the university, which I attended while I was doing my masters. And that type of thing I think one should have done before hand, because working and doing your masters and doing this was just too much. Hannah

Emma was aware of these workshops but deemed it to be too late as her time for completing her studies had already started running out

Ek dink hulle het tog maar ek het dit nie bygewoon nie want toe het dit half in gekom toe ek nou al bietjie my tyd al verbygegaan het, het hulle tog, skryf mm, werkswinkels aangebied, so ek het dit nou ongelukkig nie bygewoon nie, so ek weet nie wat die konteks of of die inhoud was van daai werkswinkels nie.

Prior to this Emma had sought the assistance of another professional, independent of the university who assists adults in similar situations, to help remedy her difficulty with writing. Despite this input Emma found that her writing was still not considered to be academic thus she remained *stuck*.

... so sy het vir my gehelp en so sy het my verstaan. Ja so, daai terugvoer wat ek op die einde van haar gedoen het, van die buite persoon gekry het, was dat sy verstaan presies wat ek gesê het en wat ek bedoel. Maar die terugvoer nadat ek dit in gegee het was dit is nogteeds nie reg nie. So, ek het rerig waar gevoel ek hak vas, 'and I'm not moving forward'. En kry nie uit myself uit om vorentoe te beweeg nie, en die bronne wat ek nader kry mens ook nie verby daai punt nie. So ja, dit is nou maar... Emma

With regard to the suggestion for support groups for M-students, participants viewed this as a positive way for students to help each other through the study process as described by Geena and Carol

Maybe some motivational seminars for the students, like okay, come on girls, where are you at now. Come on, let's see if we can't all be finished with this by then, just maybe have almost like a support group so that the students can just motivate each other a little bit. Geena

Ondersteuningsgroepe, ek weet nie, miskien is dit dan alreeds begin om studente amper half 'n 'deadline' gee om te sê kom ons kyk hoe gaan dit, teen daardie datum moet X, Y en Z op die tafel wees sodat jy amper half kan monitor waar daar 'n knoop lê voordat hulle nog eintlik rêrig by die proses kom van data insameling. Carol

Carol goes on to describe how this process then allows the student to obtain multiple opinions on her work and the value of this feedback for the student

Ek het nou met iemand anders gepraat wat eintlik nou aan die einde van sy meestersnavorsingsproses is en wat vir my sê mens moet eintlik hierdie goed gereeld terug bons van ander mense af sodat jy terugvoer kan kry en jy daardie terugvoer kan implementeer voordat dit by die merk slag kom, want daar is soveel goed wat eintlik, of soveel opinies kan verskil as dit kom by die merk. So, sodat jy amper half daardie inligting kan implementeer nog voordat jy jou tesis inhandig om te sê hier is my finale produk. Jy kan amper daardie goed al klaar bymekaar trek.

Geena also recognises the value to have a facilitator for these groups to ensure it supports students and does not disintergrate into only being a session for venting of complaints.

But then you really do need somebody that can facilitate that process a bit, because I think it could become a little bit of a moany-groany session instead of a motivational session to get going. Yes, we're all sleepy and there's no time, but come on, let's push now and see. They could do with Weight Watchers. Everybody get on the scale and have a look at how much you've lost. Everybody get on the scale and let's see how much further we've got to go.

4.2.1.4 Ownership

Ownership of the postgraduate studies was indicated by participants as taking responsibility for their own study process, which either led to completion or non-completion. The extent of this responsibility however, varied with some taking most of the responsibility themselves whilst others shared it with their supervisors.

Some participants were assertive and took complete ownership of their studies by making their own decisions and acknowledged their supervisors as advisors in this process as Geena and Bianca describe

... so this one says this and that one says that, so I'm just going to follow my middle ground now after the questions that I posed and I understand. I rather think I'm going to go this way.

Geena

So maybe it was a bit more difficult on them because they had to argue with me the case. It's not 'Yes mam' now go and do it. So I think, especially [supervisors's names] their knowledge, if they needed to they could argue with me. Either to show me that I don't have enough knowledge or to be scientific correct you have to do it in a different way or whatever.

Bianca

Bianca asserted her position even more firmly and left it up to her supervisors to convince her differently.

But not always, there were still points that I said no I don't want to do, this is not how I want to do it. I have an opinion of my own and they have to prove me wrong before I change it.

Bianca

Geena also recognised that her supervisors respected her right of ownership with regards to her studies in that their guidance allowed her the freedom to make her own decisions.

I can't say it was ever told to me you must do this, which was also nice because it gives you the opportunity to think about how you feel about the research that's presented, or your idea of what's going on in terms of your clinical reasoning, putting your ideas on paper, so that was nice. Geena

Most participants acknowledged that the responsibility to complete their studies lay with the students themselves as indicated by Anne and Fiona

... op die ou einde gaan dit af hang seker van jousef as jy gaan klaar maak of nie. Ek dink jy moet besef half dit is jou eie verantwoordelikheid. Anne

They cannot be accountable for decisions and choices that you do make. Fiona

Once Diane grasped her responsibility in this study process she was able to make preparations for her discussions with her supervisors and in so doing took ownership of her studies

...but then I think as time went on, I realised but you know, hey, I'm an adult, I'm a postgraduate student, so things need to come from my side as well.

I mean, I always felt, I think, relatively okay after a meeting. I mean sometimes maybe things weren't as clear, but I also learnt later that I need to be clear in terms of how I ask my questions, or I would actually go with a piece of paper with all my concerns and all my questions. So I became more structured in my approach maybe, I don't know, which maybe helped in a sense.

Ownership of the study process was also conveyed in participants' decisions to defer or discontinue their studies

En toe gee ek net op. Toe dog ek: 'stuff' dit. Ek gaan nou baba kry. Ek gaan my praktyk laat groei. Ek gaan nie aan met dit nie...Toe't ek dit nou gevries vir hierdie jaar. Anne

My eerste een [doel] het ek bereik, meer as ten volle, wat half toe op die ou end 'n keuse moes maak eintlik vir my genoeg was om te sê okay, fine, dis fine. Ek het nou nie gekom by daardie deel om nou te bewys dat miskien is daar iemand anders wat dit vir my kan doen, maar die eerste deel het ek teruggekry. So, ek het vir my my kennis bevestig en weer uitgebrei en my passie vir arbeidsterapie behou en my 'core' weer teruggekry...So, daardie was nie verniet nie. Ek het niks om te wys daarvoor nie, maar dit is vir my as persoon van nuut. So dit was dalk nou in daar ook vir my makliker om dalk te besluit om op te hou want ek het tog iets daaruit gekry. Emma

Along with the acknowledgement that postgraduate studies are the students' responsibility, there was also the realisation that there is a dependency on supervisors, thus this responsibility was a shared one.

I think it's my responsibility if I choose to study then I study. And I'm not going to be dependent on somebody here, except now for my study leaders. Bianca

Look, you're not going to be spoon fed at a Masters level, so they will guide you in a direction, but they're not going to give you the stuff. You've still got to go and look it up and write it out and thrash it out for yourself and go and do the extra research. Geena

Some participants realised that the study was no longer as manageable as they had planned and would impact on other aspects of their lives as Hannah and Emma explained

...but at that stage I just felt it was spinning out of control, I was adding more and more and more tests and, I would've needed so much time to do the study, to get the information that, that meant lots of time out of my workplace.

As ek seker bietjie meer versekering hê dat as ek nou 'commit', en ek offer nou maar weer op en ek lig almal om my in wat nog geaffekteer gaan word daardeur, dat ek binne vier maande my protokol sal uitsorteer, en dit is eintlik al wat ek wil weet. As ek binne vier maande 'n protokol sal kan uitsorteer en iemand kan my daardie versekering gee, dan sal ek dit heel waarskynlik weer oorweeg. Maar om by daardie klein stukkie van die groot prentjie vas te hak is net nie vir my prakties op hierdie stadium die moeite werd nie.

A different view to ownership of the study process is one that is placed on a per-chance occurrence as expressed by Bianca

Otherwise...I don't know, I think I was just lucky that my study leaders are what made it really good for me, and the amount of appointments we had, the manner of feedback, the discussions we had.

4.2.3 Theme 2: The effect of the academic environment

The impact of the academic environment on the students' experience of engaging in M-programme varied between positive and negative. The M-programme itself, the teaching staff and the supervisors contributed to this experience. The categories as well as the factors identified in each of these categories are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Influence of factors in the academic environment per category

Category	Subcategory
Engaging in the M-programme	Students' perspectives of the M-programme The effectiveness of the research module in preparation of the research study
Influence of the presenters of the M-programme	Students' expectations Supportive factors
The supervisors and student triad	Supervisors will support collegially Support needs fulfilled Support needs unfulfilled Relationship with supervisors
Communication between supervisors and student	Perceptions of communication with supervisors The students' experience of feedback

4.2.2.1 Engaging in the M-programme

Participants' perceptions of the M-programme differed, some were very content and others less so, some felt the programme was well planned and organised and others thought it could have been better and perhaps even differently organised with specific reference to the research module.

Geena perceived the M-programme as well planned, found the content of the programme favourable and the expectations were clearly situated as well.

Coming in, I thought that they had really outlined nicely what the course material was going to be. I had no major questions around what content would be covered, etc. I liked the way that they had set out the programme. I liked what they said they were going to

teach us and what they would focus on. I thought all the expectations from both my side and from their side were nicely set out from just coming in at the beginning.

Other participants perceived the M-programme as having not been planned well enough in advance which had made their experience far less favourable.

I understand that we were the first Masters students doing this particular Masters, and I think maybe in a sense the Department was just still feeling their way around. It wasn't maybe as organised as it could have been if we weren't the first students. Diane

Daar was blykbaar 'n probleem met die persoon wat die lesings moes aanbied, so ek dink dit was maar in elk geval saamgeflanse inligting op daardie stadium en baie selfstudie. Carol

When we did the course, with [area of specialisation], I mean I know there were blocks organised a week or what before we did the block. I mean, I don't think that that is acceptable. Hannah

Nonetheless the content of the modules was regarded as worthwhile by participants as explained by Anne and Emma

Want ons het lekker, veral in die [area of specialisation] deel, lekker inligting gekry, praktiese goeters gekry om te gebruik in die praktyk. So dit was my oogpunt hoekom ek ingesksryf het, ja en dit was great ... Kyk die motiveering van die begin af was die inhoud van die vakke, in die tweede jaar definitief. Anne

So dit was vir my baie lekker, om die klasse by te woon omdat ek 'n redelike tyd al gewerk het. So daai, die klasse se inhoud was vir my goed om baie keer net weer miskien om herbevestiging te kry van ek klaar weet. En baie keer dan ook 'n nuwe uitgangspunt van wat in die teorie nou aan gaan, of in, in die akademie nou begin verander. So die klasse was vir my baie insiggewend. Emma

Some participants also experienced disappointment and expressed their annoyance as there had been aspects that they had expected would be in the programme, that in the end was not in the programme.

'Cause my perception was we're going to do the full thing. That was one of the main reasons why I enrolled, but then just to find out no we're not and made me really frustrated. Bianca

There were times that I was frustrated, maybe because of how things were being done, more so when we still did the modules, or felt that maybe we weren't informed properly of what was expected. Diane

So daar was daardie deel wat so 'n bietjie van 'n teleurstelling was van jy het amper gedink jy gaan met meer daar uitstap as wat jy het. Carol

Other participants with different experiences found some of the content of certain modules not to have been worth their while.

With regard to the [lecture in specialisation area] part, I didn't learn that much. Unfortunately I had done the diploma before and I think a lot of the information came out of the diploma. Hannah

Some of the courses were unnecessary, like the [lecture in specialisation area]. Because of my background, I am [lecture in specialisation area] trained Bianca

As a result some participants suggested that whatever is offered in the M-programme that good quality be assured or else it should be excluded as Bianca and Emma explain

Either do it and do it good or leave it. I'd rather them just reduce the additional stuff as information provided and ... does it make sense?

So daardie balans dink ek moet ook na gekyk word, dat hulle net seker is dat as hulle iets aanbied, bied dit eerder dan nie aan nie, kan ek amper sê, as wat jy die klasse probeer volmaak met sprekers.

Participants did not feel that the research module equipped them adequately to do the research study which may have led to them feeling stuck at times and not knowing how to overcome it, resulting in some dissatisfaction.

Ek dink my agtergrond is te min. Ek dink die lesings wat ons gekry het rondom die navorsingsproses en hoe om die hele ding aan te pak, veral vir my wat van navorsing eintlik maar baie min weet, was nie doeltreffend genoeg om vir my op die regte pad te sit nie. Daar is vir my 'n leemte in amper half, ek weet nie, miskien wil ek te veel rigting hê en te veel struktuur hê, maar dit voel vir my op hierdie stadium ek sit en hak en tak op een punt en ek weet nie rêrig vorentoe nie, en jy kry amper half nie ook 'n regtige duidelike riglyn van hoe om vorentoe te gaan nie. Carol

Emma shares Carol's sentiment above and adds that the research module should perhaps have been presented much earlier in the programme and reinforced during the course of the programme.

Ek dink dit was vir my te vinnig en te oppervlakkig. Hulle het wel dit probeer, dink ek, aanspreek later in die kursus, maar ek dink dit moes al vroeër gebeur het, en soos ek sê ek dink meer gereeld, sodat mens half aan die begin 'n oriëntasie kry ten opsigte van

navorsing, net half vir algemeen miskien net iets, en dan miskien in die middel weer te sê okay, onthou ons het daarvoor gepraat, dus kom ons gee 'n bietjie meer vleis, dit is presies hoe dit werk.

Others made similar suggestions to have the research module presented earlier which possibly could have given them a better chance at completing their studies within the residency period of two years.

Om dit half op die been te kry kon ons dit eerste geskuif het het ek gevoel net om ons langer tyd te gee om dit miskien in tweede jaar te kon probeer klaar maak. Anne

Ek dink die eerste ding wat ek sou aanbeveel is dat hulle daardie navorsingsblok so vinnig as moontlik moet doen, sodat studente sommer reg in die begin kan begin om vir hulle 'n onderwerp te kies waaroor hulle sal wil navorsing doen dat hulle die protokol kan begin. So, al het hulle dan ander modules en ander 'assignments', is dit amper dan iets wat kan parallel loop daarmee. Carol

In addition to the research module being presented too late, the link between the other modules and the research module was poor.

I think if it's a structured course, then the planning should be that within your first year your protocol gets done, because how our course was set up, only in the second year, your protocol is completed. Then in your third year, then you still have to do your data collection and then fourth year possibly you are writing up... But there was no linking between the structured course and your process that you had to follow Fiona

With the poor link between the modules and the research module Emma described how the student's focus in the programme is subsequently split and proposed that the research focus be constantly repeated throughout the other modules as well.

So miskien net baie duideliker en meer gereeld dalk net herhaal word deur die loop van die gestruktureerde blok, want mens hoor dit miskien aanvanklik, maar nou, jy fokus ook nog op klas. So daar is nou hierdie twee fokusse wat ook al verskil. ...

Ek dink rêrig die grootste voorstel is maar net om daardie navorsing van die begin af gereeld deur te trek, en die fokus daarop te hou. Want die grootste werk is eintlik dit op die ou end, en dit voel vir my half die minste fokus was eintlik daarop, en as jy dink dis 'n gestruktureerde M, die idee was nog altyd dat jy doen dit sodat jy die navorsing klas kan kry, die teorie kan kry, en die ondersteuning daarvoor kan kry, en dan voel dit tog vir my die fokus was baie laag daarop. Emma

Participants were concerned that the weighting of the research assignment (within the structured M-programme) did not match its colossal workload

...because it's not so much the modules are the problem, it's more the research stuff, because that's what takes up a huge amount of time...So maybe it should even count more. Geena

Op die ou einde is daai ure omtrent vier keer meer as al die projekte saam wat ek gedoen het wil ek amper se. So mens, ek het nie dit besef, besef daai, daai ding gaan soveel tyd van my vat, soveel, nog soveel gewig nog dra nie, want dit dra minder gewig as die tyd wat ek in sit voel ek. Anne

So ek meen dit sou my volgende aanbeveling wees om te sê as die navorsingsdeel, want dit voel amper vir my hierdie navorsingsdeel weeg, in vergelyking met die modules, eintlik meer. Carol

Had participants been better aware of the research assignment's immense workload it may have influenced their decision to do the full thesis instead

En dit sou miskien my keuse beïnvloed het om 'n volle navorsingsprojek eerder te doen as dan die vakke, as dit nie vir my die vakke, as vir ander mense wil ek nou half sê, as van die vakke nie so belangrik was nie sou iemand anders dalk gekies het om eerder die, die vol tesis te doen, as hulle weet hoeveel ure in elk geval gaan ingaan in die mini-tesis. So dus dalk een ding wat ek sal aanraai, Anne

Participants made several suggestions to re-design the M-programme to ensure that students reach completion sooner. Fiona suggested re-structuring the programme with the aim of enabling students to complete within the two year residency period.

But if it's a two year timeframe, then the course should be structured that your protocol is done within the first year and in the second year data collection, all data collection and writing up is done. Even the setting up of the for example research methodology course, that once you're done with it, you actually have a proposal. Fiona

She continued to express that it would still be the student's responsibility to ensure completion within the residency period but that the M-programme design must make this a planned possibility.

...restructuring the course so it makes it possible for the student to exit within the two years. If you don't exit within the two years, it's onto you as a student, but create an environment so that it is possible to do that.

Geena suggested the extension of the residency period.

I don't know how much the University could change, besides sort of making the course extended, extend the time that you have to complete it, the course work etc. So just taking an extra six months, or making it a three year thing.

Emma recommends that the full thesis M-programme continues but that the contents of the structured M-programme be offered as certificate course

Miskien moet 'n mens dalk kyk om heeltemal anders te dink daaraan, en nou iets anders... ek weet nie, dat 'n mens heeltemal die twee 'either' glad nie 'n gestruktureerde M aanbied nie en net gaan maar vir die M met al die blootstelling van alles wat in elk geval beskikbaar is, en dan iets anders doen met die inhoud, die kliniese inhoud van die kursus. Ek weet nie of dit moontlik is nie, maar miskien op 'n laer, ek kan amper sê, verwagtingsvlak, dat dit ek weet nie wat ook al, diploma of sertifikaat, iets ander is as 'n M, want saam met die M kom die navorsing, sodat mens dit half apart het van die ander, van die vakinhoud.

4.2.2.2 Influence of the presenters of the M-programme

Participants' experiences were also swayed by the influence that the presenters of the M-programme (the Division of Occupational Therapy) may have had on them during their interaction with each other. The participants in turn had expectations of the presenters which also contributed to their experience.

Participants' expectations of the presenters were with regard to the lectures, lecturers, and M-programme co-ordinator. Carol anticipated becoming an expert in her area of specialisation and was disappointed that she had not acquired as many skills as she had foreseen.

Toe hierdie gestruktureerde Meesters beskikbaar kom, het ek gevoel dit is nou my geleentheid. My behoefte was om te kan sê as ek hier uitstap, is ek 'n ekspert in [specilisation area], en ek dink ek was 'n bietjie teleurgesteld in dit. Dit het nie heeltemal vir my daardie gevoel gegee nie. Ek dink al wat dit bevestig het is dat ons eintlik baie meer weet as wat ons dink ons weet. Ek dink nie ek het soveel meer skills bygekry soos wat ek gehoop het nie, maar miskien was my verwagting ook nie heeltemal op die regte 'track' nie.

Carol

Hannah too had high expectations of the M-programme wanting it to be unparalleled by any other M-programme in the profession and in so doing rendering the postgraduate an expert.

No, just having structure there, just proving to the student that it's well thought through, and that what they're offering is the best. Is the best they know, not they think, they know is available. So that the student will believe that if I walk away with this Master's, I'm ready.

There was also the expectation that the lecturers would only be the well-known leaders in the field. When some of these lecturers were peers, Carol and Emma struggled to view them as leaders in the field thus they believed they were not given the expert information they had envisaged.

Ek dink daar was baie keer 'n gevoel in die kursus rondom die teorie, die kliniese inligting, dat daar was partykeer nie noodwendig gevoel dat die persone wat kom aanbied het noodwendig - hoe kan 'n mens dit nou stel - meer vaardig is as van die deelnemers aan die groep. Nie noodwendig almal nie, daar was 'n verskriklike wye groep. So dit, dink ek, het ook 'n invloed gehad, dat van die ouens wat kom aanbied nie noodwendig iemand was wat meer vaardig was as van die mense wat selfs in die kursus was, wat dan nou ook vir mens laat wonder het die vlak, jy doen jou M, maar jou 'peers' kom gee vir jou klas.

Ek dink een van die goed wat vir my daar gepla het is dat ek nie gevoel het dat die medestudente wat ons gehad het noodwendig altyd vir my gevoel het dat hulle meer kennis het nie as die mense wat in die klas sit nie, of dat hulle ekspert is in die veld en daar kom staan en 'n lesing aanbied. Dit sou vir my gevoel het dit moet iemand wees wat ek weet is 'n 'guru' in die veld, sodat ek weet ek stap hier uit met iemand wat al 'n magdom inligting het, of kennis het, en vaardighede het en jy kan gaan en jy kan hulle konfronteer met enigiets en daar gaan 'n antwoord wees.

Participants also questioned their own expectations of the M-programme. Carol speculated that she may have entered into the M-programme anticipating to get more out of it than what actually could be gained, hence her expectations may have been unrealistic.

Ek dink dit was maar net iets, miskien het 'n mens soos 'n blindemol daar ingestap en gedink jy gaan meer kry. Ek weet nie, miskien was dit my verwagting wat miskien bietjie onrealisties was.

Hannah too realised that she had entered the M-programme with expectations that may have been unrealistic. Despite the programme being a Masters, her desire was to expand her knowledge in her area of specialisation, whilst at the same time engaging in a much smaller research study.

So, maybe I came in with the wrong ideas. I wanted to learn a lot, that I can apply in my work and I wanted to do a little research just to get my masters, and it didn't end up to be that simple.

Looking retrospectively participants shared the expectation that the presenters of the programme would guide the students' understanding of engaging in the M-programme so that students would have a clear perspective of the postgraduate options available to them for their specific professional development needs as Fiona explained

I think it's just in terms of having to sit with you, whether it's your supervisors or the postgrad coordinator, for anybody coming in doing their Masters, why are you doing it, because some people come in just to up their knowledge. Others go in if they want to enter into for example academics, or going into that academic route, this is what is actually required of you. If you want to go into expert knowledge and expert skills and no future in academics, this is how you should approach it. Fiona

Anne describes her expectation that the presenters should explain from the outset of the M-programme the weighting and the associated time of the structured M-programme assignments in relation to the structured M-programme research assignment

Miskien ook om vir ons te verduidelik vooraf, wat, wat presies van ons gaan verwag word, in terme van die werkstuk. Ja, 'n bietjie meer in 'detail' gewees het, soos, ure gewys wat van ons eintlik gaan verwag word want mens dink half as jou eerste projekte doen dit is, dit vat soveel tyd, en die gewig wat die twee opweeg, die navorsingsprojek teenoor al die projekte wat jy inhandig.

Diane related that she would have benefitted from more individual guidance from the M-programme co-ordinator so as to help her thrash out ideas with regards to her research topic. In her experience this could possibly have prevented her from changing her topic and re-doing her proposal which extended her study period by one year.

I just think maybe if I had more guidance in the beginning, maybe I wouldn't have wasted a whole year, or maybe it's me. I think some people came into the programme knowing exactly this is what I want to do, this is the research topic I want to do my study on, and I think maybe that was a handful of people. But I think for the rest of us, and I think it took some time to finally get to the point of this is what I want to do. Diane

Diane recommended that the M-programme co-ordinator make time even before proposal writing commences to see students individually hence making them aware of the potential of the research.

I think maybe to have, if the Masters coordinator, if that person can actually have individual meetings with each of the students when they start talking about research, and really have a chat to you about the possibilities, or that when you as a student come with your ideas, that they can actually, that this person can actually just have time for you, sit with you, chat to you about it, and give you some guidance in terms of that.

Despite the above situation and subsequent recommendation Diane also empathises with the M-programme co-ordinator who had a rather large group of students to give direction to.

I also think that the supervisor, the Masters coordinator, maybe it was a bit too much to just have one person as a coordinator, considering the fact that we were 17 students. So I think the Department didn't actually expect to get that kind of response. Or maybe it was the first time that it did have that much, or that many students, Master's students. But I think maybe it was a bit too much for one person to actually coordinate, or handle.

For Geena the expectations were clearly set out from the beginning by the presenters of the M-programme and she was appreciative thereof as it allowed her to organise her time.

It was very clear to me what would be needed of me, and what would be needed of not only the lecturers but especially regarding the articles and things like that, what I could expect of the supervisors. I liked the way that it was set out throughout the year, it was just sort of like a week and a week and a week with the modules. I found that that helped me just to be able to manage my time a little better, and also it wasn't oh, okay, by next week you're going to have to have done this assignment on this module.

Participants experienced the staff and the presenters of the M-programme to be approachable which allowed them to build positive relationships with them as Geena, Diane and Bianca mentioned

I loved the open channels, like you could ask questions at any time, and then your question would always be answered, if not then in some other way, or by some other person. Geena

I think, I mean obviously if you look back now, I think I've always had a good relationship, I think, with probably almost everybody within the OT Department. Diane

I like the, if you could also say, doing the clinical supervision, the relationships under the staff, that's nice. That's enjoyable, that's not leaving you on your own, if that could be a role. It's being, everybody was accessible so if I really had problems, say if I was dissatisfied with my study leaders I think I would have had the possibility to Mrs [HoD at that time] and say and state my problem, I don't think they aren't approachable. Bianca

The need for support after the modules were completed was voiced by some of the participants. The technical assistance support group that was later started (by new research co-ordinator) was of value to participants during their research study period.

...maar hierdie wat ons nou beginne het, hierdie, die ondersteuningsgroepie, van wat ons nou by is - dit is nou nogal vir my rereg 'n groot motivering. Dit voel vir my half daar iets wat, ek moet terug kom met iets. Anne

Yes, I think they're starting it now, the whole support group thing, but I just felt after our modules, we all just kind of scattered in different directions, and it's now two years basically down the line, almost a year and a half down the line. I just felt it would have been nice, even after that, even if it was once a term, maybe even just for the ones that are still busy, I think there were suggestions like that of maybe just getting together.

Diane

...dit voel net vir my na daardie eerste sessie wat ons nou gehad het met hierdie groep wat ons begin het, het ek amper half, van die ondersteuningsgroep, het daar vir my amper uit daardie een sessie uit meer 'n gevoel van 'support' en leiding en ons het saam met jou in hierdie proses gekom, as wat ek nou in hierdie hele tyd gekry het van my studieleiers, en dit is nie eers my studieleier wat die groep aanbied nie. Carol

Anne also acknowledges that it was helpful to be able to consult a statistician at the university.

... ek het die, ek het die statistikus gebruik van die universiteit, wat vir my goed was, as 'n mense daar oor kan praat half, dit was goed om daai, om dit hier te he. Anne

4.2.2.3 The supervisors and student triad

The perception of the relationship between students and the respective supervisors was based on various expectations that students had with regard to support from their supervisors and on their interactions with each other.

Participants had expectations of the mentoring and support that they would receive from their supervisors as Anne explains

Hulle gaan my ondersteun, hulle gaan my nou en dan 'e-mail' en vra: Luister hoe gaan dit met jou ding? Is jy nog op 'track'? ... waarmee sukkel jy, waarmee kan ons help? Daai hele idee van ons is hier om te help... Dit was my verwagting. Dis 'n half 'n leier ne, dis iemand wat jou gaan mentor in die hele storie. Anne

Fiona had also expected more support from her supervisors and expressed a desire for them to have been more actively involved and concerned during the study process.

Then I think supervision, now that I reflect back, I would have liked if my supervisors had a closer relationship with me in terms of where you develop your project plan, actually asking you why are you not sticking to it, where are you now. Not that they're your watchdogs, but actually be more supportive in asking us about how can we support you, what is difficult for you. Fiona

Besides mentoring and support participants also had the strong expectation that their supervisors would teach and guide them through the research process.

So my verwagting was hierdie mense gaan my leer gaan my 'teach' en my lei. Anne

Diane received some guidance and support from her supervisors but it appeared to have been limited.

I think maybe I was expecting to be taken more by the hand, probably. You know what I'm saying? I didn't think that I should do less, but I think maybe I was just expecting that they would give more guidance, more support...

Hannah shares the same sentiment as many of the other participants and also realises that the desire for more guidance from supervisors is shared by other postgraduates as well.

This is, this is my experience, but my son has done his masters and some of his friends have also done their masters and the complaint is always, one wants more one on one and more, guidance.

Some participants had a different experience whereby their expectations with regards to support and guidance were met as Geena described.

So I never left there feeling oh goodness, I have absolutely no idea of what I'm supposed to be doing here. I left there with a lot of ideas on which direction can I go in here.

Bianca very clearly indicated that her supervisors assisted her through the research process and went on to explain how she could rely on her supervisors for support and guidance at any time and that they would respond positively to her request.

So if I really sat 10 'o clock at night and think 'oh I can't, I just don't manage this thing' I knew I could phone [supervisor's name] and say [supervisor's name] please tell me something, or help me, or send them per email or phone them any time and they would help me.

Both Bianca and Geena greatly appreciated the positive contribution the expertise of their supervisors and guidance from their supervisors made to their experience of the research process.

They are both knowledgeable in the areas of [specialisation], etc, which was nice, because they could also give me lots of guidance on specific things that I was focussing on relating to my topic ...

And we didn't have that many meetings but the feedback I got from both was very helpful to get me to where I am, to finish it.

The sentiment that the expectation of support and guidance was not met is shared by several participants. Carol related that her experience of the research process and the lack of supervisor support and guidance as having been unpleasant.

Ek dink dis meer die proses en die ondersteuning wat vir my op hierdie stadium nie 'n aangename ervaring is nie.

To Fiona it appeared that her supervisors had lost interest in her as a student.

There was a stage that they just lost interest in this whole process. I actually thought oh my goodness, I still have a Masters to complete, but I just continued with nobody asking me hey, what's going on.

Emma's experience of the guidance was that it is simply too little.

Die leiding is net vir my, ek moet eintlik sê, te min, as ek nou vir myself eintlik luister, dan voel dit vir my vir die gestruktureerde M is die leiding te min.

For Carol having this expectation of being guided and taught unfulfilled possibly led to her feeling that she was left in the dark and wasting time.

So, sê vir my dan as hulle sien ek doen dit nie self nie omdat ek te onnosel is met hierdie proses, dan hoor hier, die volgende stap is miskien om ... maar moenie dat ek nou maar self moet agterkom na 'n jaar lank maar ek kon eintlik al in die begin dit gedoen het nie.

Carol continued to express how this lack of guidance and teaching had frustrated her leaving her with the feeling of being stuck.

Dis sulke klein goedjies wat dit vir my voel, wat miskien die proses vir my makliker sou gemaak het en minder frustrerend om... ek dink as 'n mens nie so sit en water trap op een punt nie en jy beweeg klein bietjies vorentoe, klein bietjies vorentoe, dan voel jy heeltyd maar ek bly net op een plek, ek beweeg nêrens vorentoe nie.

Carol further explained how the supervisors' guidance could have served to motivate her as opposed to her feeling that her studies had weighed her down.

So ek dink jy gaan meer gemotiveerd voel om aan te gaan met jou studie as wat jy voel die heelyd hier is hierdie ketting aan jou enkel wat jou terug hou. Dit voel ek, dis nie konkrete goed wat hulle vir my kon gesê het nie, maar dis net so bietjie 'n 'nudge' in die regte rigting.

Hannah wondered if the study process ought to be a lonely journey without the expectation of guidance or not.

And maybe doing your masters doesn't mean that you should actually [be] doing it by yourself and not expecting that much guidance from your lecturers, I don't know. But I would've, I would've appreciated more... I think more time.

Fiona suggested that supervisors make a greater effort to support their students collegially through the research process and especially during the times when the student doesn't make contact.

As I said, to actually make more contact with the students, not only relating to assignments or due dates or work that was handed in, actually to have appointments other than to find out okay, now what are you struggling with. Once you've submitted for example a chapter, what did you struggle with, what was difficult for you to complete within that timeframe? The times when there's no contact where you don't hear anything from the student, actually to ask hey, what's going on.

Despite feeling that her supervision and guidance needs had not been met, Hannah later realised that she had received guidance from her supervisors.

You know one is, one is critical, and if you really think back to, it wasn't that bad. What more guidance would I have liked? 'Cause I would've lied if I said they didn't guide me.

The relationship that participants shared with their supervisors was positive or negative to varying degrees. Geena found her supervisors to be approachable at any time.

I found them both easy to approach. I never ever thought would this be the right time to call or whatever.

Bianca shared a professional relationship with her supervisors. Each respected the other's role without any aloofness.

It was an open relationship, not friends, but open professional I would say. Or warm professional. There's always this, my study leader and the student role, but not, I don't know how to say it, there wasn't a distance.

Carol describes her relationship with her supervisors as fairly open and also found them to be approachable.

Ek het 'n redelik oop verhouding gehad met [studie leiers], en toeganklik...

Some participants experienced the relationship with their supervisors differently and even negatively. Fiona describes her relationship with her supervisors as very formal.

The relationship that I had with them was dot your I's and cross your T's.

Diane felt that sometimes she was treated as an undergraduate student.

I think one of the things that like I said, maybe I haven't experienced as much but I know that other people were also talking about, is that at times they felt that we were treated as kids. You are almost treated like undergrad students

Anne's disapproval of being treated as an undergraduate student led to her to believe that the relationship would've been different had she been able to select her own supervisor (not from the presenters of the M-programme).

Ek's nie meer 'n student, 'n voorgraadse student nie. Ek's 'n volwasse terapeut wat 'n praktyk het wat my M doen. So daai uitkyk van student, jy's 'n student amper ding sal verander het voel ek, as ek half iemand kon kies, miskien buite.

Anne mentioned several negative experiences of the relationship with her supervisors. She repeatedly expressed the wish to have different supervisors or else to find a way to side step them in the research process.

So dit was vir my verskriklik frustrerend en ja, en ek wil half sê as ek van studieleiers kon verander dan doen ek dit vandag.

...en ek wens ek kan hulle bypass, soos 'funny' ek het gedink ek wens ek kan net my studieleiers ignoreer en dit vir iemand anders gee om te lees, en dit net inhandig... Anne

This relationship with her supervisors was her biggest issue with the M-programme.

Dog ek: as ek hulle net kan 'bypass' (lag). Ja, so ek dink, ja, my hoof ding is maar die studieleiers, van die hele M. Van al die goed, die klasse, die begin, die uitleg van die vakke alles.

Anne

With the negative experience of the supervisor-student relationship and the expectations regarding support and guidance having not been met, participants recommended that students be allowed to select their own supervisors. Anne believed she would be more comfortable and the relationship with the selected supervisor would be better as it would be more supportive and less authoritative.

Ek sal definitief dink ek iemand in my veld gekies het, in die [spesialisie] veld self, sal ek definitief in gebring het, en dan iemand wat van navorsing af weet. Ja, so dit sou daai verandering gemaak het. Ek sou gemakliker gevoel het, ek sou gevoel het hulle, ja, ek dink ek sou gevoel het dit is meer 'n ondersteuning as wat 'n student - dosent die verhouding is.

In Emma's view the relationship would work better as the selected supervisor would be involved in that area (of topic) and understand the student's thinking easier thus being able to guide the student better. In this way progress with the research would be facilitated.

So ek dink nogals ja, ek sal gedink het dit sal 'n impak hê. En dan ook kennis gewys. Want nou's dit jy as student wat 'n idee het waarom jou studie nou gaan. So dan het jy klaar 'n idee van wie is die kundiges in daai gebied. Want daar's mos nou 'n rede hoekom jy gedink het om daai studie te doen. So ek sou gedink het jy sou dalk 'n, ek weet eintlik nie, maar ja, dalk sou dit gehelp het. So jy sou dalk vinniger by 'n punt gekom het, waar jy op dieselfde bladsy is. So met ander woorde vinniger oor gekom het met meer direkte terugvoer, vinniger daar gekom het met 'n voorentoe beweeg. Emma

This suggestion ties in with Bianca's opinion that the supervisors need to share the interest in the research topic as opposed to accepting the role as supervisor because it's obligatory.

...the study leaders need to be convinced of the topics. It shouldn't just be. You need to be convinced of what the students' going to do and really stand behind it. Not just take it on because you have to.

Some participants voiced an awareness of the high workload their supervisors have to cope with. Hannah was very sensitive to this

The feeling I had was that they were incredibly busy. I always felt I was, sort of intruding on their busy schedules with my, and then, I know they were very busy and they didn't have a lot of time and I always felt incompetent.

Geena expressed her empathy indicating her understanding of the supervisors' position.

I also think that working in education for a while also enlightens you to the fact that the people at this level and below have a lot of work to do. So, it's actually a pity that the

workload is so high, because I think they have to deal with a lot of flack on for example their own time management when maybe the time actually isn't available for them to do it.

Emma was aware that the student's extension of her timeline impacts on the supervisor's other responsibilities thus the relationship has to be based on mutual respect and understanding.

Ek voel dit is nogals belangrik dat die student ook toegeeflik moet wees vir die studieleiers en vice versa. Want die studieleiers het ook verpligtinge wat moet na gekom word en sy kan nie ook net, jy weet, uitstel, uitstel vir die student se onthalwe en dan op die ou einde hak sy weer vas met ander goed wat ook moet klaar kom. So ek dink daar moet net 'n goeie verstandhouding tussen die twee partye wees. Elke ou moet hom respekteer en ons gaan saam deur dit .

Anne acknowledged the supervisors' busy workload but at the same time was aware that workload is experienced by everyone - which would include her.

Daar is nie 'n kommunikasie lyn nie, al se hulle gee my twee weke, ek gee hulle twee weke, want ek weet hulle is besig, maar die wereld is besig, verstaan?

4.2.2.4 Communication between Supervisors and Student

Communication between students and supervisors take place in different ways, mostly verbally or in writing (albeit manual or electronic). There are meetings to have discussions, and e-mails, cell phones and telephones are used to convey messages. Work is submitted by hand or by email and feedback is given accordingly.

Based on their different experiences participants had different perceptions of communication with their respective supervisors. For some participants it was positive, for others not. Carol related that she had no communication difficulties with her supervisors.

...daar was nou nie, daar was geen kommunikasie bloke vir my nie.

Diane regarded the communication with her supervisors as having been consistently good.

I feel that communication has always been good. Whenever I submitted an email or sent them an email, or needed them for anything, they would respond fairly immediately, and even in my meetings with them. I have never been frustrated about oh, they're not getting back to me.

Diane also mentioned that her supervisors' communication had also been about their concern for her, something that she appreciated.

Actually, I have gotten emails once or twice, just asking where you are, 'is jy nog in die land van die lewendes', things like that, which is actually nice.

Fiona found the opposite regarding communication with her supervisors which was limited only to work submitted and she would've liked some regard for her to be shown as well.

But as I said earlier, the two-way communication was only related to I have handed in things and then once I get something back, hand in, get something back, but at the times when there was nothing, I also had no contact. Nobody asked hey, what's going on, how can we support you a bit better. It was on the level of I'd submit, I get my feedback, I submit, I get my feedback, and that was where it ended. Fiona

The responsibility of making contact is perceived as being the student's responsibility as Diane mentioned

Like I said, I know other people have complained about they don't get response when they for instance contact, or the lecturers don't worry, you know, months can go past and if they don't hear, you know, they don't send out an email saying hey, what has happened to you. I just thought but that's not their responsibility, and that's what I've been trying to do.

Carol accepts this responsibility but also relates that the actual contact time with her supervisors has been extremely limited.

Ek beseft ons het 'n verantwoordelikheid as 'n student, maar ja, ons het in twee jaar eenkeer kontak gehad fisies. Wel, kom ons noem dit nou nie twee jaar nie, een en 'n half jaar, ons is nou net mooi een en 'n half jaar.

Moreover participants strongly felt that supervisors took too long to respond and this led to feelings of frustration.

'n Mens lewe in 'n wêreld waar dinge so [vinnig] gaan en 'e-mails', mense stuur vir jou 'e-mails' en jy kry die volgende dag 'n response, maar nou stuur jy 'n 'e-mail' vir jou studieleiers en jy kry oor 'n maand 'n response of, nog nooit. Verstaan? So daai ding het my heeltemaal ge-irriteer en daar is nie 'n ander word nie, ek was net ge-irriteerd daarmee. Anne

The other thing I think is when I was ready to move ... the mini research, when I was ready to move on, I was waiting and waiting and waiting for feedback from the supervisors, and I didn't like that because I had a goal set that I am finishing within the two years. So, if I have to now wait for an additional four weeks for somebody to give me

feedback when I've done my part now, that annoyed me a lot, although I could understand that they are very busy
Geena

This delayed response from supervisors had implications for participants in how it affected their timeline for completion of studies.

As I say, I think the only way they could have supported me within my specific situation was, because if I remember correctly, you could expect feedback within such and such a time from your supervisors, I think they said within like two weeks or something. If they had stuck to that, that would have helped me, because I think sometimes not getting the feedback back within the two weeks meant now I couldn't carry on until I got the feedback.
Geena

Anne explained how she decided to take action on her own.

En toe verander ek die goed, stuur dit vir hulle en kry nie terugvoer nie, en kry nie terugvoer nie. Toe kom die datum van die tweede inhandiging so naby, toe dog ek: ek gaan nou als vat en vir die etiese kommitee stuur. Wat ek nou toe gedoen het en toe goedkeuring gekry.
Anne

In addition to students' timeline having been affected, for Hannah the supervisors' delay in response also contributed to her decision to discontinue with the M-programme.

But then it was a question of coming back to me later than they had commit to come back to me, and then say, and the changes were just more than I could handle at that stage. And I mean, basically immediately after I put down the phone, I just thought, I'm not doing it. 'Ja', and now years later and I haven't had that courage to tackle it again.

There was a strong recommendation for supervisors to improve their response time as expressed by Anne and Geena.

Ja, die ander ding sal ek definitief sal aanraai dat hulle baie meer beraad raak op kommunikasie. Jy kan nie vir maande wag om 'n email terugvoer te kry nie en dan weer te se het julle my 'e-mail' gekry ek wag nog steed om van julle te hoor, of daai tiepe goed sal moet opskep as ek vir hulle kan raad gee.

But just to try and stick to the feedback times given, because that would have made it even easier, then I would have probably finished by the December cut-off rather than have to wait for March. I really think that I could have finished for the December grad[uation] if the feedback had been given as I thought it would be, timeously.

Obtaining feedback on work submitted is part of the communication between students and supervisors. Geena portrays her experience of feedback as having been constructive and supportive.

But it was nice to have somebody to say have you thought about this aspect, because then you kind of think oh, I didn't think about that aspect of it, so then it gives you more scope ... So that was nice, as I said, having the expertise that they do and the extra knowledge that they have in that particular field, they could guide you, have you thought about this, have you thought about that.

As noted before Bianca attributes her success to the guidance and expertise of her supervisors. This guidance and expertise was also conveyed in the feedback that she had received from them.

And we didn't have that many meetings but the feedback I got from both was very helpful to get me to where I am, to finish it.

On the contrary, other participants depicted their experience of feedback as unsupportive. Anne described it as surprisingly negative and it made her realise that the research was much more involved than she had anticipated.

En toe het ek half rêrig gegaan vir dit en my goed op begin tik en alles, en toe met my eerste terugvoer by my ... studieleiers af, was 'n absolute blaas in my gesig, dit was net te veel vir my om te handle, te hanteer, en ek toe nou besef, luister hierdie ding is baie groter as wat ek gedink het dit is, baie groter.

Anne continued to relate that the feedback was querying in nature instead of guiding thus not helpful.

En al wat terug kom na my toe is wat is dit en wat is dit en wat is dit en wat is dit en wat is dit? Plaas van om terugvoer te kry en kom ons verander jou ding so, was dit net al hierdie vrae wat heel tyd op my afkom.

A contributing factor to Hannah's decision to discontinue her studies was related to feedback. Constant feedback of having to make changes to work submitted made her feel that she wasn't achieving much at all.

But I think it, it was everything together, it wasn't just that. It was that and not tasting success, always getting feedback of changes that had to be made

Moreover, participants also experienced contradictory feedback from one session to another as Geena, Emma and Hannah explain.

The one thing about the feedback, it actually happened more than once where I would go in for feedback and then they'd say maybe in terms of how I'd set something out, they would say okay, perhaps you want to do it this way rather in terms of this and this and this reason, just in terms of the set out or what to include in a table for example. Then I'd go back and I'd change it and I'd resubmit for feedback, and then they would say we actually think you should do this and this, and it would be what I had done the first time. Geena

So dit was nie, ek het nie problem gehad ook oor die beskikbaarheid of die tyd of oor die sperdatums of enige so iets was die probleem nie. Dit was meer die 'contradiction' van die terugvoer. Emma

I mean, changing things and then changing it back again and, and you just feel you not moving anywhere. Hannah

The negative experiences around feedback, especially when it hindered progress, led participants to question whether the supervisors and respective student had the same understanding of the research.

En ek wonder partykeer of die mens aspek ook daarmee is nie, die student het 'n idee van wat sy wil bereik en die studieleier het 'n idee van wat sy dink moet bereik word. En daai twee 'clash'. So dit kan 'n manier [wees] wat twee partyje mekaar uit hou - wat die student nie kan duidelik oordra wat sy wil bereik nie, en die studieleier inlees in wat sy sê wat sy dink wil bereik word. En daarom is daar dalk frustrasies en hak plekke van vorentoe beweeg. Emma

Nog steeds dat ek gevoel het ek het glad nie 'n vordering gemaak nie. Goed wat ek moes verduidelik het was net half, goed wat ek nie nou voel is op my vlak nou my verantwoordelikheid om aan hulle te verduidelik wat in my veld aangaan nie. Anne

On the other hand, Bianca did not simply accept feedback from her supervisors. She structured the written feedback in a manner that suited her, which she could relate to.

But from then, that was after the first or second meeting, I documented every meeting. And I required of them, what I also did is I don't just take their feedback I made forms for them to write their feedback on to give to me. I structured the feedback for them to give me the feedback because I don't like scribbling on my work it just confuses me.

She challenged her supervisors and had them motivate their feedback.

So they, I think it was a bit tough on them because if they give me feedback they have to explain themselves. Bianca

Her supervisors had to prove to her why she needed to make changes to her work.

Either to show me that I don't have enough knowledge or to be scientific correct you have to do it in a different way or whatever. Bianca

As a possible solution Hannah recommended weekly feedback initially, at the proposal writing stage, as this will result in regular feedback as opposed to being discouraged after handing in a proposal, having invested all that time and effort, only to have to re-do it all again.

I think in the initial stage, just to get it off the ground, probably, once a week. One must also be careful, I mean, you, you also have a lot of work to do, after you've seen them, so, One doesn't want it to be that regular that you would have to work yourself into a sweat. But, but it's, you also, one doesn't want it to be such a lot of work and it's been such a lot of time just to go back and say: no, no this isn't what we meant. We actually meant this. And then having to rewrite a whole chapter or something, I mean that's disheartening.

Emma raised the issue that although it is a common experience to get feedback and subsequently have to write and re-write, it is important to be able to make progress with the feedback that was given.

Dis nie dat dit noodwendig behoort vir iemand 'n probleem te wees nie want jy hoor maar daardie terugvoer, ek meen dit gebeur met almal. So jy hoor dit maar en jy moet maar bewus wees dat dit gaan nou nie so wonderlik wees om dit een keer te doen en alles gaan reg wees nie. So, jy gaan maar terugvoer kry. Maar ek dink dit is om van daardie terugvoer vorentoe te beweeg is belangrik.

Besides the academic environment other factors also influenced the experience of engaging in the M-programmes.

4.2.3 Theme 3: The sway that non-academic factors hold

Outside of the academic environment there are also factors that influence the M-students' experience of engaging in postgraduate studies. Once again participants experienced the subsequent effects positively or negatively to varying degrees. The non-academic factors mentioned by participants are indicated in Table 4.5 and were mainly related to support the need for more time.

Table 4.5: The effect of non-academic factors per category

Category	Subcategory
Family support	Impact of family responsibilities Reliance on family support Bargaining for support Families as motivators
Employer and financial support	Financial freedom versus financial limitations No time or space for studies at work
Time as a commodity	Limitations on time Creating time Guarding time Impact of limited time

4.2.3.1 Family Support

Family support was deemed important as participants depended on it. This support also had to be negotiated as participants' responsibilities still had to be fulfilled.

Coming into and whilst engaging in the M-programme participants still carried family responsibilities. The impact of different responsibilities had varied effects on participants' experience of undertaking their studies. Emma recognised that all the M-students' responsibilities are still present and have to be fulfilled despite their studies.

Ek twyfel of enige een van ons was in die posisie om ons verantwoordelikhede aan hold te sit.

Geena described her experience of studying whilst being a wife and mother as rather overwhelming.

I think for me it was quite a daunting idea because of the family life and what was happening etcetera.

Anne was one of several students who had the joy of becoming a mother during her study period. She related how she had prepared herself for both the arrival of her baby and to be able to continue with her studies.

So hier in die middel van [noem jaar getal] het ek begin met my navorsing, voordat die baba toe nou gebore is het ek half die protokol ingehad, al daai goedjies reg gehad, met die toetse begin, en toe [baba] gebore is, nog direk daarna, daai eerste week nog weer terug gegaan, fabriek toe om die goeters gou gou af te handel, sodat ek al my, my veld werk klaar het en net half kan begin tik in die [volgende jaar].

Nevertheless the baby did have an effect, slowing down the pace at which she worked with regards to her studies.

En toe, toe word my baba mos nou gebore, so toe gaan dinge effens stadiger... Anne

When she considered attending workshops at the university, Anne had to plan well and in advance, so as to ensure the care of her children.

Ek sal, ja, dis net die hele dag so ek gaan van voor af moet baby sitters moet reel vir die hele dag. Maar wat ek sal doen as ek by die skryf deel weer kom miskien.

Becoming a mother after the completion of her studies, Fiona conceded that it would have been an arduous task to fulfil her family responsibilities, to work and to study.

...and as I said, I didn't have any kids at that point in time, but should I have had children, as in the situation now, things would have been different. It would have been much more difficult to do, and as now, in terms of now it's difficult for me because I come to work, you need to attend to the needs of your family, and then you still have to do your studies.

Fiona

Bianca acknowledged that she was at liberty to study because she didn't have any family caring responsibilities at the time.

The other responsibilities, like having to take care of a whole family, and I didn't have that, so I was really quite free to study.

Even when these responsibilities had been temporarily passed onto someone else, the participant still remained ultimately accountable. Emma perceived this as a difficulty that women as postgraduate students have to contend with.

So (jy) gaan nogsteeds supervisor [van verantwoordelikhede] wees maar die rol gaan deur iemand anders vervul word vir 'n tydjie. En gaan moet beheer hou of 'bargain' of iemand anders in kry of wat ook al, maar jy gaan steeds die verantwoordelike persoon bly. En ek dink dit is wat dit moeilik maak vir die vrou oor die algemeen.

Participants depended on their families to assist in taking over some responsibilities so that they could engage in their studies. The supportive family members were different people for different participants. For Geena it was her mother who had agreed to take over her mothering responsibilities at certain times.

That support was primarily by my mom, because we would have an arrangement that on a Wednesday between 8 and 10, I would go and sit and she would look after baby and fetch the kids and give them lunch or whatever, and then we had a set time like that every week that I would just sit and phone while she helped, so that was huge. It was actually mainly my mom just with the research. Geena

Anne also had the support of her mother during a lecture week when her child was still very young.

ek moes iemand [later genoem dis haar ma] 'n duisend kilos ver laat kom om na my kind te kyk, en toe moes ek skielik vir haar haar hele kaartjie kansileer en probeer skuif want die blok is nou aangeskuif.

Bianca acknowledged it that was her sister who had helped her cope with writing in a third language (see 4.2.1.2).

Bianca also had the support of her husband.

Yes, he [her husband] supported me as well. That's the way we are

As they were a young married couple, Fiona too relied on her husband for support.

Positively I had a good support structure at home.

For Emma it was difficult, she did not have extended family to rely on and had to lean on her nuclear family.

Ek het baie gesukkel. Ek het nie, mm, ekstra hulp half gekry in die sin van, ander, ander familie lede wat kon instaan of so. So dit was 'n kwessie van my huishouding moes my akkomodeer.

Even though Hannah did not need family to assist with responsibilities, they still showed their support of her.

I mean the kids were proud that I am doing, their old mommy was doing her masters.

In order for help to be received it has to be requested and negotiated for. In much the same way participants needed to bargain for the support that they needed from their families.

Emma pointed out that this negotiation with family members has to continually take place in order to create time and space for the student to work.

So as jy daar is of by die huis is en jy wil die naweek die heelyd werk en jy wil niks skottelgoed was en jy wil nie jou wasgoed was, en wat ook al, en dan gaan jy tog maar 'bargain' met either 'n kind of jou man of 'n ouma of 'whoever'. So jy is die heelyd, dit is die enigste manier hoe jy dit sal kan 'manage'.

With family it can be difficult to hold onto the time and space negotiated for studies. Bianca described how setting boundaries with family is important with the purpose of retaining study time and space.

Yes, setting the boundaries, and if they don't respect me, then I leave, I go somewhere where they can't reach me. Like here in the library and turn everything off. Turn off your cell phone, turn off everything, unplug the doorbell. I've done that. And if I say it, I mean it. They all know me like that, so that wasn't a problem.

Bianca admitted that being that assertive is not easy for everybody.

So, these are my boundaries and that's how I'm structured ... No, really. Not everybody can be like that, but that worked for me.

Undertaking an M-programme is a long process, more than two years. This implies that continuous bargaining is necessary with various family members for the duration of the study period. Emma described how difficult this can be for some and that it may result in feelings of guilt.

Daai skuld gevoel wat ons het ook. As dit jou rol was en jy kry hom nie vervul nie, sit ook druk en stres op. So as ek nou maar luister na van die ouens wat saam met my was, geswot het, dis maar wat jy doen. Jy kontrakteer uit, kry maar vir ouma in om daai naweek in te sit, maar jy gaan dit ook net tot op 'n punt kan doen en dan gaan die skuld gevoelens nou kom en sê maar hoe lank gaan ouma dan nou nog steeds vir jou moet in staan? En hoe lank moet jy nou nog steeds vir manlief vra om maar die wasgoed op te hang? Jy weet, so. En hoe lank gaan jy nog steeds vir jou kind sê nie nou nie want mamma's besig.

Emma also questioned the fairness of expecting her family to continue to accommodate her until the completion of her studies in view of the sacrifices they had already made.

Net vir my eie genot of vir my eie gemoed of wat ook al, is dit bietjie. Ek het nie gevoel ek kan dit, daai van hulle verwag nie, kom ek stel dit liewers so. As dit seker nou rereg waar nou daarvoor ge-fight het dan sou hulle seker vir my gegee het. Maar ek het nie gevoel ek kan dit verwag, want toe is dit al drie jaar, toe dink ek wat dan toe nou al klaar op geoffer is.

During times when morale was low participants' family members readily provided motivation. When Anne had been feeling rather despondent after a feedback session with her supervisors, she had decided to discontinue with her studies. It was her husband who had convinced her to pursue it the following year.

Toe't ek dit nou gevries vir hierdie jaar. En my man het my toe nou half omgepraat om dit nou volgende jaar nou te doen en nie te stop net nie.

Thereafter Anne related that other family members also talked her into continuing her studies.

...ja, so baie mense het my nou half omgepraat om nou maar die ding klaar te maak.

Diane related a similar experience when she was feeling downcast about having to re-write an entire piece of work, her husband influenced her to take the opportunity to re-do the work.

I felt it was the end of the world, and then my husband is like really, just get over it. You can get the opportunity to redo it, just do it better.

At another time when she felt dismayed and wanted to discontinue her studies, her husband too, persuaded her to persevere with her studies.

...but my husband was the one that said to me, "you will not quit". Diane

When Carol was feeling equally despondent, her family also played a role in driving her to complete her studies.

Ek kan nie rereg sê dat daar iets is wat motiverend is nie, behalwe jou 'inner drive' en familie wat druk sit en sê jy moet hierdie ding klaarmaak nie. Dit is nou op hierdie stadium eksterne motivering.

Apart from family support, postgraduate students also need other kinds of support.

4.2.3.2 Employer and Financial Support

When undertaking postgraduate studies financial support is required for the studies as well as for the continuation of everyday living activities. Both of these factors had an impact on participants' experience of engaging in the M-programme. By the end of the respective study periods, participants were all employed – most in full-time positions with only some in part-time positions. Financial freedom reduces the restrictions of how a research project will be carried out in terms of having the necessary tools and assistance for the research. This in turn may have implications for the time required for completion of studies.

Having financial freedom allowed Bianca to purchase whatever she needed for her research without concerns of having to obtain funding first.

...and I didn't have any financial worries. Also not in buying tests. I bought the [names test], or imported the [names tests], and I bought toys, whatever I needed for my research, and without having to apply or look for funding. My husband funded me.

With her financial freedom Bianca was at liberty to structure her research process the way she wanted it to be without having to compromise in any way.

Yes. He was like “whatever you need, if you know it's important, then you just do it”, and I did it, because I was convinced of those tests. That's why I had to go ahead and import them and not say okay, so let's use something else that's available here.

Without the financial freedom Bianca possibly would have had to change her research project.

Yes, because if I hadn't had that, then I would have had to use other tests, which I was not as convinced as being the right measurement tool for my research... but I would have changed the study then.

Financial assistance can create time. It allowed Fiona to employ someone else in her place at work which in turn generated the time she needed to complete her studies.

It [financial assistance] gave me more time, and that's why I was able actually complete it for the last six months.

Nevertheless financial support on its own is not enough to facilitate completion as Carol explained.

Ek moet sê, behalwe die finansiële ondersteuning wat daar was vir die eerste twee jaar, is daar geen ander ondersteuning in die Departement nie. Jy kry nie af om jou tesis te gaan opskryf, of af om te gaan 'n bietjie navorsing doen of so nie.

By comparison financial limitations place restrictions on the research conducted and moreover, on time. Diane listed financial limitations as one of the factors that had forced her to change her research topic.

After writing the proposal, not submitting it to the Ethics Committee but just writing it, I mean obviously putting a lot of effort, putting months of work into writing this proposal and then eventually realising, and I really, really, really thought about it, that maybe it wasn't realistic in terms of time, in terms of money and in terms of assistance from other therapists.

The implication of changing her research topic was that it practically set her study back by almost a year.

I think I kind of experienced a - what do you call it - a relapse, kind of like. So once I got to that point of okay, this is not going to work, so it's like where do I start now, starting from scratch almost, and I think that was the whole problem. So then it took me almost a year kind of to get back onto track in terms of what I want to do. Diane

Financial limitations also directed the decisions individuals made with regard to the use of time. In response to how and where she created time for her studies Emma explained that she could not compromise on her time at work as this would negatively have impacted on her income earned.

So wat jy absoluut nie, ek nou absoluut nie kon vat by die werk nie. Want dit was nou, ek werk vir myself. So nou, 'no work, no pay' so ek kon nou nie daar vat nie. Emma

Financial limitations also served as a deterrent. It discouraged Carol from discontinuing her studies.

Ja, ek moet sê op hierdie stadium, ek het 'n beurs gekry en ek was by 'n punt wat ek gedink het ek gaan nou stop. So as ek nie daardie klomp geld terug moes betaal het nie, onmiddellik nie, dan sou ek seker ook maar daardie roete geloop het om te sê okay, hierdie ding gaan nou nie vir my verder van nuut wees nie.

The supportiveness of the work environment had an influence on the experience of engaging in postgraduate studies. As I have noted, all participants were employed, most on a full-time basis. Hannah relates that she did not sense a spirit of supportiveness in her work environment.

And from the work, I didn't really get the feeling they were, that excited, you know standing behind me.

None of the participants indicated that they had had time and space at work to continue with their studies. There was no opportunity to engage in studies while at work. Fiona views this lack of support in her work environment as one of the reasons she took longer than the residency period to complete her studies.

I think there are two main things that contributed towards this long extension. Number one, the working environment in terms of I did not get time off for my studies...so the one was the working environment. You had to juggle it between your work and then your own studies, and that always got put aside because the structured course had deadlines that you had to meet, but with your proposal and your data collection, that was in your own time.

Carol's experience was similar with regard to the lack of supportive spirit at work and time off during work to pursue her studies. She also acknowledged that her expectations may have been too high as her employer had given her financial assistance.

So ek dink daar is ook baie min ondersteuning in ons Departement. Ek het nou geluister 'n bietjie by van die ander hospitale waar daar 'n bietjie ... meer van 'n ondersteunende rol was in terme van bietjie aanmoediging en hoor hier, jy kan daardie middag in 'n week gebruik om jou navorsing aan te werk of wat ook al, wat nou nie in ons geval so is nie. Maar ek meen mens kan dit seker ook nou nie verwag nie. As hulle die geld gee is dit seker ook goed genoeg.

It was only when Hannah was leaving her job for another position elsewhere that she was informed that she could have had time off from work for her studies. She was subsequently praised for not letting her studies affect her work in any way.

And when I left, I heard that actually I, I could've sort of, did less at work. That they were waiting for me to do that and I never thought it was an option ... of just booking in less patients and, I was complimented for the fact that my unit was run, the way it was run while I wasn't studying...

Nevertheless Hannah related that she would not have made use of the opportunity to do less work at the cost of the people who depended on her service. Service delivery was important to her as a practitioner/therapist.

...even if it was an option from the department I probably wouldn't have seen it as an option because, I felt really serious about my work and I felt serious about the service that

I had to deliver to the population we were serving, and I would never have been able to, say, I booked ten in, instead of fifteen patients for my own personal gain. So, I probably wouldn't.

4.2.3.3 Time as a Commodity

In the life of the M-student time was a precious item that was constantly in short supply thus had to be created, guarded and effectively used.

So dit is, tyd dink ek is half eintlik die main issue. Van alles dink ek tyd is maar die 'main issue'.
Emma

Several factors imposed limitations on the M-students' time. For most participants time use generally centred on family responsibilities, work and the study process.

The impact of family responsibilities has been noted as a subcategory of Family Support (see 4.2.3.1).

In brief family responsibilities that existed before participants undertook their studies, continued to exist during the study period. These responsibilities still had to be fulfilled and the participant remained ultimately accountable for it. The work pace (in terms of the research) of participants with children slowed down and advanced planning needed to occur to ensure the children's care. The limitations that family responsibilities placed on the availability of time could be inferred from this.

Emma explained how her children of school-going age needed additional support as one was at the end of primary school and the other had just started Grade 1. The implication was that her children needed more of her time which she initially had not foreseen.

So [ouer kind] was toe Graad 5 en 6, in daai 2 jare besluit ek toe nou met hom. En dit was moeilik. Dit was moeiliker, Graad 6 is moeiliker as Graad 7. Mm, en hy het meer ondersteuning nodig gehad en [jonger kind] het skool begin, en ek moes toe nou half nou ook betrokke by haar huiswerk wat ons mos nou ook nie voorheen gehad het nie. So dit was daai klein goedjies wat mens nie aan dink aan nie, en besef dat daai goed gaan oor jou pad kom wat jy dan nog tyd ook moet voor maak.

Emma strongly recommended that before engaging in postgraduate studies careful consideration needs to be given of how even little things may have a huge impact on the availability of time.

'n ou moet maar net rêrig seker mooi gaan sit en dink as jy dit [nagraadse studies] aanpak. En klein goedjies, besef dat self klein goedjies 'n groot impak kan hê op jou tyd, en dis onvoorspelbaar. So jy kan nie eintlik beplan daarvoor vooraf nie

Participants shared the sentiment that working full-time limited their time as well. As noted before Hannah was not prepared to compromise the service she delivered during work time thus her time for postgraduate studies was limited.

Not being willing to compromise on the quality of work I did at the hospital. So, doing the masters was on top of a full day's work.

Working full-time all day Emma completed the administrative tasks of her job after hours which further reduced the time she had available for her studies.

En dan omdat ek nog ook vir myself gewerk het, het baie van my admin ook moes gebeur in my na-ure. Want jy sien jou kliënte in werkstyd, want dis waar die geld van daan kom. Jy word nie betaal vir jou 'admin' nie. So jy probeer maar in die dag so veel as moontlik mense sien sodat jy mos jou inkomste kan hê. En in die aand moet die 'admin' nog gedoen word.

Fiona's time after work was also compromised because, just as with Hannah and Emma, work took priority over her studies.

...but with your proposal and your data collection, that was in your own time. So that was always put aside because there was always something urgent, more urgent coming in from work related.

Working part-time granted some participants the time needed to undertake postgraduate studies. This gave Geena some re-assurance as she realised that the enormity of postgraduate studies.

I think for me it was quite a daunting idea because of the family life and what was happening etc, but I also felt a little bit more confident because I wasn't working full time. So coming in to do a Masters, which I realised was going to be a lot of work, I thought this is going to take up a lot of time.

In spite of her part-time employment, time remained an area of concern to Geena.

I was nervous to a certain degree, but again not because I thought I couldn't do it, but just around would I be able to manage my time effectively.

Bianca attributed her success of completing her studies within the residency period to the fact that she worked part-time thus she had the opportunity to pursue her studies.

I think the main thing why I could do this in two years time was because I didn't work full time, and I could spend the time I wanted on the research. The research part, I could spend as many hours as I wanted because of my availability of time.

Bianca noted the value of time and admitted that if she hadn't worked part-time she may not have done the research project or at least it would not have been the same study.

I wouldn't have done it, I wouldn't have chosen my research topic or the six hours of therapy for four weeks or the three month research period if I had to work full time. So, I think time is a factor.

As Geena was aware of the strenuous impact of working full-time she found it difficult to make a recommendation to M-students that may facilitate the timeous completion of their studies.

I'm thinking. It's difficult for me really, because I think most of the people that will do their Masters are working full time, and I think that that is going to make a big difference.

With time not being freely available it had to be created, mostly from personal time after working hours as indicated by participants.

Evenings, weekends.

Hannah

Ek het maar gevat uit my, uit my persoonlike tyd uit. So waar ek ook al kon skep...so dit was maar saans, na werk en dan natuurlik nou naweke aan gesit, op 'n Saterdag en 'n Sondag en so aan. Dit is baie ja, mens sukkel maar.

Emma

Although Geena worked part-time she still had to create time and for her it was when the rest of the family were generally asleep.

The other time in terms of time management, honestly, I would start 11 o'clock at night every night, and just work until 3, normally 3 o'clock in the morning, or if the baby woke up at 2, then sometimes I would say okay, now I've had enough. I don't know if you'd call it time management as such, it was just where am I going to find the time to do this.

Creating time out of personal time was not as simple as it sounds and it had an impact on the family. Emma described.

So ek moes nou maar by my persoonlike lewe vat en dan moes ek natuurlik mos nou vir die mense in die huis ook sê dat ma gaan nou dit aanpak so onthou nou dat vir hierdie

periode van tyd dat ma is nou 'n bietjie afwesig. En dit het dan ook van tyd dan 'n problem geraak.

As the study time progressed and was extended, family became annoyed with the participant's negotiated 'absence'.

Want dan het jy nou nie vorentoe beweeg nie en jy bly val, of jy, 'get stuck'. En jy bly waar jy is, jy gaan nie vorentoe nie. En dan hardloop die tyd uit wat jy met die ander mense half ooreen gekom het. Jy's nie daar nie, raak dan 'n probleem want dus half asof hulle later ook maar 'n bietjie geïrriteerd raak met jou wat nie klaar kry nie. Emma

Emma continued to explain that as a result of the drawn out study process, family forgot that the participant was still busy with studies, responsibilities re-surfaced and there was nowhere else to find time.

En ook half vergeet dat jy besig is want dit raak ook nou te lank. Dis al verby die wat jy gesê jy gaan besig wees. En dan begin die verwagtinge van daai kant of ook maar net weer kom. En dan, waar sit jy hom dan later in? Dis amper asof jy uit tyd uit hardloop.

As time was valuable it had to be used effectively. This implied structuring it and making others aware of the structure.

Just sit down, and I think that's also one thing, the discipline of using the time you have, structuring it, telling everybody I'm not available. My family knew I was not available. Don't call me, I'll call you. Don't disturb my thoughts Bianca

Anne developed a timeline to better organise her time especially when she was expecting her new baby's arrival.

Dit in gegee, en vir hulle 'n hele tydlyn gegee van hoe ek wil klaar wees voor daai einde van die jaar voordat die baba kom. En dit was rereg, dit was ten minste 7 maande tydperk wat ek alles kon klaar kry.

Geena found that the planning and expectations set out by the presenters of the M-programme allowed her to structure her time better however she was not working at the time either.

I found that that helped me just to be able to manage my time a little better, and also it wasn't oh, okay, by next week you're going to have to have done this assignment on this module. There was always, to me it felt like sufficient time to really go into what was expected of you and do it properly. But as I say again, I wasn't working. Well, not for some of it...

Working consistently on a daily basis facilitated Bianca's completion of her studies.

My motto throughout the two years was step by step and one day after the other, and that's the way you're going to finish it. It doesn't help you starting to pull out all the weeds in the garden until nothing's left and thinking oh my, I'm not going to finish this.

When Anne was feeling despondent and wanted to discontinue her studies, the time and money that she had invested in her studies helped to deter that decision from being made.

Want ons het nou baie geld daaraan ingesit en verskriklik baie tyd dat mens is amper so naby, ja, so baie mense het my nou half omgepraat om nou maar die ding klaar te maak.

Limited time influences the postgraduate study experience. As the M-programme proceeded participants realised the restriction of time and planned accordingly.

So ek het van die begin af besef ek sal eers my modules moet klaar doen en daardie 'assignments' moet klaar doen voordat ek begin met die navorsing. So, die navorsing het eintlik eers in die derde jaar begin, en ek trek nou in die vierde jaar. So dit was ook 'n besluit van my, maar ek dink dit gaan maar so. Carol

En toe is dit nou iewer skielik [jaar getal] toe ek nou weer met volle swang begin, en toe is al die vakke afgehandel en toe is dit net die ding [navorsing] om op te fokus en my praktyk en een baba. Anne

In addition, limited time impacted on supervision. Hannah expressed her need for more time for guidance from her supervisors whom she perceived as being very busy.

But I would've, I would've appreciated more... I think more time. More time with them. Hannah

Emma explained that with more time, she would have coped with her experience of insufficient guidance from supervisors. The combination of limited time and limited supervision was a hindrance to her.

Ek dink as 'n mens meer tyd gehad het, dan was leiding ook minder nodig, as ek dit dan so half kan stel. Want dan kon jy jousef die tyd gun om dalk jousef 'n bietjie met min leiding om erens te kom. Want is die tyd min en dan is die leiding dan ook nou nie, nou nie vars nie. Dan raak dit half amper 'n onmoonlike taak om te behaal kan ek amper se... So nou kry ook nie baie spesifieke leiding nie en jy maak oor en oor en oor dieselfde fout heelwaarskynlik. Emma

Geena's view was that if supervisors regularly gave feedback in good time, then time would be saved and the research would have been less of an issue.

If I have to think of sort of like with everybody involved, I really just think if feedback can be given, because it's not so much the modules are the problem, it's more the research stuff, because that's what takes up a huge amount of time.

Anne's impatience with her supervisors also related to their delayed response time and her desire to have completed her study within her timeline.

En dan die tyd wat ons daarop spandeer was net vir my kom aan beweeg aan ek moet klaar kry met hierdie ding. Anne

The limitation on time has an impact on the duration of the study period and on through-put. As indicated at the beginning of this subcategory Anne and Carol extended their study period, as did Diane and Fiona (as noted in the category Engaging in the M-programme p.15 above).

Emma wished that the study process had not been as long and drawn out because time was not on hand, it was taken from elsewhere.

Maar die proses dit moet net nie so lank uit gerek raak nie. Want, omdat almal maar êrens tyd steel daarvoor, raak dit 'n probleem as jy om, ek kan amper sê, dalk nie by jou eind mikpunt kom, kan ek amper sê ooreen gekom het met 'whoever' betrokke is om dit afgehandel te kry, raak net langer en langer en langer.

Eventually the time allocated for engaging in and completing postgraduate studies was depleted.

En die tyd het uit gehardloop. So die tyd wat ek bereid was om te spandeer daaraan, en op te offer, my ander verantwoordelikhede het my in gehaal. So toe kon ek nie nou meer my tyd afstaan daarvoor en my verantwoordelikhede nog steeds laat agterbly nie. So, toe moes ek nou maar kies. Emma

And then it was the end of the year and, and when, 'ja', they phoned me again, and said you know this and this must be changed and it must be finished by Friday because if you want to hand in. And it was just so much I had to change I just ... there was no way I, I could speed it up. Hannah

This had made the decision to discontinue with postgraduate studies, imminent.

En dan, hou mens maar op. Emma

So it was a question of having a lot to do. And it actually caught me and that's why I stopped... Hannah

With supportive factors in mind and in spite of the barriers mentioned, the benefit of having engaged in the study process is eventually determined by the postgraduate.

4.2.4 Theme 4: The attraction and value of an education

Each participant was requested at the end of the interview to reflect on what having engaged in the M-programme has meant to her. This valuation was dependent on various positive and negative factors that each individual experienced. The significance of an education is indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: The attraction and value of the study experience per category

Category	Subcategory
Reasons for engaging in M-programme	Personal growth as an Occupational Therapist Development of knowledge and skills Development of scientific reasoning The SU M-programme
Motivation for the duration of the study period	Factors that affect motivation positively Factors that affect motivation negatively Despondency
The experience of doing	A positive experience A negative experience

4.2.4.1 Reasons for engaging in M-programme

Various reasons inspired different individuals to a greater or lesser extent to engage in the M-programme. All participants recognised the value of the M-programme.

The impetus to engage in the M-programme was a personal and voluntary choice as Carol stated.

Daar is nie druk van enigiemand af in die Departement vir ons om te moet dit doen nie.
Ek dink daardie besluit was my eie besluit om my verder te verryk.

It did not hold a promotion of post (at work) or an increased salary benefit. Diane explained that in terms of her job she would receive a once-off monetary reward on completion of her studies while her post and salary would remain the same.

Well, in terms of my own profession, so in terms of my work, in the [names employer] I won't get any recognition for it because it's not a degree in [employer's primary role], it's not a postgraduate degree in [employer's primary role]. So I think you get a once-off payment or something once you've completed the degree. So, it's not going to affect my salary or my title or anything. I will still be just where I am in terms of work. Diane

Other participants working in different sectors also confirmed that their posts and salaries would remain unaffected by a master's qualification.

If I completed my Masters, so what? There was no added recognition or advantage at that stage for me to complete my Masters. Fiona

Maar ek het dit nie so gesien nie toe ek inskryf nie. Dit was nie my idee dat dit vir my 'n career path gaan oop maak nie, ek het besef dit gaan nie. Emma

...because even if you go into private practice as an OT, I don't think people are going to come to you, you're going to get more referrals because you have a Master's. People refer to, come to you because they think you're a good therapist, or they don't refer because you're not a good therapist, that's how I feel. Diane

The reason for engaging in the M-programme was for personal growth and development as an occupational therapist. Participants entered postgraduate studies with their eyes wide open - understanding and accepting this.

Dit is 'n kwessie van iets wat jy vir jousef doen. En vir jou eie, as dit nou vir akademiese groei is, of dit nou vaardigheids groei is, is dit iets wat jy vir jousef gaan doen. So ek was redelik bewus daarvan. Emma

Despite the fact that it did not hold financial or career status benefits, Diane deemed the Master's qualification worthwhile in view of her growth personally and as a practitioner.

But I keep saying to myself, and I keep saying to others as well, although it's not going to push me up my career ladder, but if I look at what I've learnt from a practical point of view, things that I still use within my clinical setup, how I'm thinking, maybe how I'm looking at things, I mean just in terms of that, I think it was worth it, and like even maybe in terms of my own personal development as well.

The M-programme offered participants more updated and expert knowledge within the profession. One of the reasons Emma had enrolled for M-programme was that she had been in a more managerial and less clinical position and wanted to once again get in touch with the core business of the profession.

...ek wou terugkom het na waaroor gaan arbeidsterapie, wat is ons 'core' nou weer, veral, en van weer daardie arbeidsterapie passie teruggekry het.

Bianca shared a similar desire and wanted to get in touch with the profession locally while at the same time getting academic recognition for it.

When I came back to South Africa I was, I thought just to get back into the South African system it would be good to enrol and I wanted to, I always studied. So this was a way of studying and making it count.

As a young professional Anne had the same idea of further developing her knowledge and skills and obtaining the academic recognition that goes with a master's qualification.

... ek het ingeskryf met die id e, om die vakke te doen, om die vak inhoud te kry eintlik vir myself. Op daai punt was ek redelik nuut in die praktyk ook. En toe dink ek, jus maar dit sal nice wees om nog inligting deur die vakke van 'n M te kry.

Carol wanted to expand on the skills that she could apply in practice whilst obtaining a master's qualification.

Ek het gevoel wanneer daar 'n Meestersgraad kom waar ek 'n 'skill' kan kry om te gaan gebruik in my praktyk, sal ek dit doen. Toe hierdie gestruktureerde Meesters beskikbaar kom, het ek gevoel dit is nou my geleentheid.

Just like Carol, Diane was keen to simultaneously obtain additional skills and the academic qualification.

So I've always been interested in something more hands-on, like a hands-on degree versus just a theory degree.

To be more scientific as therapists implied obtaining further academic (postgraduate) qualifications. In spite of participants indicating that part of their aspiration was to obtain a master's qualification, there was generally very little desire to become an academic.

Die navorsing is in elk geval so 'n klein stukkie van so 'n groot onderwerp, so dan ek meen, dit sal net vir jou iets beteken as jy verder gaan, jy raak doktoraal of jy... So dis 'n 'stepping stone' vir akademies wees nie vir my nie.

Emma

...my fokus is baie meer op praktyk en wat in die veld aan gaan en my resultate wat ek will gebruik as om ... akademies te word, verstaan jy, om half hierdie akademiese arbeidsterapeut te word wat navorsing as 'n beroep gaan kies eendag verder. Anne

I keep saying the Masters is not going to mean much and I won't be able to use it and etc ...So I think the only time is either when you want to lecture, or if you want to go and work overseas. I think those are the two times when it will be beneficial. Diane

Bianca however did enroll with the aim of possibly becoming a lecturer.

...and one of my aspirations coming back was to lecture. Okay and to lecture you need a master's degree.

As the M-programme progressed she changed her mind.

And then for my aspirations of becoming a lecturer No I'm better in the one-on-one with the students in the clinical field but not in the class. No, that's not for me. Bianca

Being more scientific involves research in the field. Emma explained that she wanted to research a topic she was passionate about and needed the research methods course to equip her to do the research.

Die tweede rede was omdat ek nie navorsing georiënteerd is enigsins, in my opleiding laas te doen gehad met rêrig navorsing en die metodologieë en die struktuur en die goeters. So ek wou gestruktureer gedoen het sodat ek daai ook nou kon kry... en die derde ding was dat ek het rêrig 'n passie gehad vir my onderwerp. Ek het dit gesien in praktyk en ek het dit gesien in my eie huis, en ek wou geweet het of dit wat ek al klinies my beredeneer het, of daar waarde daarin is.

Bianca viewed scientific reasoning as part of the standard of Master's level thinking and sees it as important to uphold the profession.

...because if you do the master's degree I expect, or this is my expectation, that as being a masters student or somebody with a master's degree you will work more scientifically, to promote the profession really Bianca

Looking at her own development, Diane related that she subsequently has a better understanding of scientific articles.

There's been growth. So I can see now even if I read an article now, the way that I read it with more critical eyes obviously.

Geena thoroughly enjoyed the searching for information and continued to practice this.

I love it. I mean, till today I will constantly look for information, research up on my own.

M-programmes are offered at all three universities in the Western Cape. Participants had selected to enrol for the SU M-programme for various reasons.

Ek het definitief ook ingeskryf vir die vaardigheid.

Emma

The specialisation areas seemed to have attracted attention.

Secondly, just because it sounded like it was a different type of Masters than just studying out of books and doing research study and that's the end of it.

Diane

Ek het ingeskryf net omdat ek daai inligting wou he. Omdat daar nie sulke kursusse is noodwendig nie.

Anne

What motivated me to do my M here was at the time, [names universities] did not have a [specialisation area] based Master's, and that was my only area of interest, because [names university]'s was more around sort of management, real OT concepts, but nothing really focussed on [specialisation area], and that was my direction and that's what I wanted to do.

Geena

For Hannah it was not only the area of specialisation that she was passionate about but also about convenience of the location of the university.

It was because, [it was] closest - I'll be honest. And because it was specialisation. It was focusing on [area of specialization] which is and will probably always be my passion.

Bianca shared the same sentiment about the convenience of the location of the university.

...no I can't say I looked at all the programmes and I choose I want to go to Stellenbosch. There was no aspiration I want to become a Matie or something like that. It's just that it was the university closest.

4.2.4.2 Motivation for the Duration of the Study Period

Motivation over the long study period was affected by various factors, factors within the individual and external factors. Participants' motivation was affected by these factors to varying degrees.

Numerous factors had a positive effect on motivation. Participants described an inner drive that compelled them to persevere.

I am not going to go longer than the two years, because then I know I'm going to start to lose enthusiasm for it. So I would rather 'vasbyt', put my nose down, and just go for it.

Geena

So, I think the main factor was, me wanting to make a success.

Hannah

Fiona mentions using her inner drive and at the same time acknowledged the strain of pushing herself through the tough times during the study process.

...and the drive within yourself, and how just to keep it going in that dead space, but how to get there, I don't know.

Fiona

Anne related that having a deadline served as a motivator to her. Setting a time limit allowed her to get herself ready to take on the process of writing her research report.

Van Julie af 't ek't mos nou gese, my 'deadline' is mos nou Julie, dan gaan ek nou weer oplees en half skryf oor die ding. So ek half sit in verwagting van ek weet ek gaan dit begin, en ek begin myself nou opwerk. So daai is 'n goeie motivering vir my.

Anne

The financial investment that participants had made in their studies also served as a motivator which Anne explained in the category Time as a Commodity (4.2.3.3).

As noted before, Carol shared that her fear of discontinuing her studies was related to the financial implications thereof - the immediate re-imburement of the bursary she had received from her employer (see category Employer and Financial Support 4.2.3.2).

Hannah listed the financial investment made as a motivating factor as well.

And, and the money I paid

Anne's expectation of herself to finish what she had started motivated her to persevere.

En om klaar te maak dit wat ek begin het. Dit is maar, ek gaan nie net iets los wat ek begin het nie, ek sal dit klaar maak oor dit, oor dit nou maar deel is van my persoonlikheid.

Fiona mentioned that others' expectation of her to complete her studies obliged her to continue.

The content was not what kept me here, kept me going. It's more the sense of - you have enrolled yourself in the course, so they expect it of you to come.

Not having the courage to throw in the towel forced Diane to continue.

I think it's obviously the fear of, not fear, but I guess like of - not fear, what would you call it now - of quitting. You know, not having the guts probably to quit.

This lack of courage to give up was related to the fact that she was aware that in time having quitted would trouble her and that she did not want to be seen as a failure.

I also know probably how I will feel if I don't finish this, if I just let it go, and maybe I might be content for a few years, but eventually it will start bothering me. You know, why didn't you finish? Why didn't you finish, and maybe deep down you'll feel like a failure. Or the thing is oh, we've expected it, we've expected [her name] to quit, kind of. You know, that's always obviously what keeps you going.

In addition Diane related her mother's story of persevering with tertiary education on a part-time basis and how that also urged her to press on with her own studies.

But I think it's something so deep inside her of wanting to finish, of wanting to have this feeling of I've actually accomplished it. It doesn't matter if I'm 70 and I might not be able to use my degree once I have it, and I also think that is what is spurring me on.

The contents of the modules also motivated participants during the first two years of study as Anne and Emma mentioned.

Kyk die motivering van die begin af was die inhoud van die vakke, in die tweede jaar definitief.

... wat wel vir my goed was, die kennis wat ek opgebou het, met die klasse en met die navorsing wat ek self moes doen, oplees werk, wat ek self moes doen, het weer vir my self-vertroue gegee.

Achieving the Master's qualification at the end and obtaining recognition for it served as a further motivator for Anne.

Ja, die M op die ou einde is 'n motivering, mens wil tog maar die M agter jou naam he vir jou verslae en goeters, dit sal nou nice wees.

A range of factors affected motivation to persist as well. The combined load of working, having family responsibilities and studying started taking a toll as Carol described.

Dit voel net vir my in my beroep waar ons regtig baie besig is kon ek nie nog dit ook iewers indruk nie, en dan het jy nou nog ook jou persoonlike lewe wat ook 'n bietjie aandag moet kry, en jou gesin en jou familie wat ook moet aandag kry. So dit was net vir my op daardie stadium te veel om alles in een te doen.

Anne shared the same experience as of her second year in the M-programme.

...en dit het net te vol begin raak. Alles het net toe te veel begin raak. Ek kon toe nou nie begin optik nie en ek het dit toe nou half stadig maar seker half laat gaan eintlik.

As noted before the only time Emma had available for work administrative tasks was after hours, which was the only time she could spare for her studies as well. This additional load and lack of progress also negatively affected her motivation.

So daai 'admin' saam met die studie 'admin' moes ek maar daa tyd, moes ek maar so 'wangle' en kyk om deur dit te kom. En ek dink dit is maar waar ek motiveering begin verloor het omdat jy nie vorentoe gaan nie.

In response to the question on factors that de-motivated her during the study period Hannah's answer was precise.

Time. Working and doing it.

Diane acknowledged that in addition to other factors, personal matters also contributed to her feeling de-motivated.

But I also think it wasn't necessarily maybe from the Department's side, but maybe also more from a personal, my own personal, I mean I had a lot of other personal things that I had to deal with. I think that obviously influenced how motivated I was.

The long drawn out process of engaging in postgraduate studies depleted motivation as Diane and Emma explained.

I think it's because it was dragging out. This is the fourth year and I think maybe when I started, and I think when all of us started, we thought oh, we're going to finish this in two years, and that would be the end of it.

Dit, die terugvoer is nou maar dat alles vat tyd en moet maar deur die proses gaan, maar dit was vir my 'n bietjie lank vir so 'n klein ietsie. Want ek meen die protokol was maar net die begin om my studie goed gekeur te kry.

The strain of it taking her too long to develop a proposal that her supervisors approved of negatively impacted on Emma's motivation.

Dat ek nogal later my, half my lus en my motiveering verloor het om eintlik verder aan te gaan met die hele storie.

Feelings of despondency regularly surfaced when participants related the strain of engaging in the M-programmes. When the despondency was low there were definite times when participants felt they did not want to continue with their studies.

When Diane had to change her research topic (due to reasons already mentioned) which set her back by almost a year, she wanted to discontinue her studies.

But I think with that, and obviously with my other personal things that were going on in my life as well, I think it just really felt like okay, you know what, I just want to quit.

Anne's despondency also led to tears being shed.

...met daai tweede terrugvoer toe't ek net op gegee. En toe was daar nou 'n klomp trane en ek is moedeloos en als...

Whilst still in the throes of doing her research Carol was feeling so disheartened that she did not feel that she had grown in the study process.

Ek dink as 'n mens nou seker deur die proses is en 'n mens gaan sit terug gaan jy seker meer kan sê 'okay', dis hier en daar waar dit my seker 'n ryker persoon gemaak het, of 'n sterker persoon. Maar ja, op hierdie stadium voel dit nie vir my so nie.

She also questioned whether all her effort had really been worthwhile and if the research process would enable her to deliver an improved service.

So ek het eintlik meer hier nou na die einde toe gevoel ek weet nie of dit die moeite is om deur hierdie hele proses te gaan nie... ek weet nie of hierdie navorsingsproses nou vir my gaan maak dat ek 'n beter terapeut gaan wees in die end nie. Ja, ag, ek weet nie. Carol

Diane also reached a stage of questioning the value of a Master's qualification looking at life in general.

So on the one side you might have these thoughts of I want to quit, it's not worth it. The other thing is as I am getting older, you know, you just keep asking yourself, or you realise that in the big scheme of things from just a general life perspective, from a spiritual perspective, you know what, it really doesn't matter if you're going to have your Masters or not.

In spite of feeling so downcast, some participants were able to pluck up the courage to try again and continue.

En ek het net daar half, het al my moed het in my skoene gesak, en ek het net daar half, gedink ek gaan net nog een go gee, verander wat hulle dink, en weer in gee, kyk wat gebeur, wat ek toe gedoen het. Anne

Nevertheless it is not as simplistic as that, Diane described the constant struggle between giving up, because it doesn't seem to be worth it, or continuing because receiving the Master's qualification would be an immense sense of accomplishment.

So I'm still battling with the, in the big scheme of things, it's really like a matter to one side, but on the other side, I keep saying to myself, you know what, just put your head to it and just focus and do it and get it done, because I'm sure it would be a great feeling once it's finished and you can stand there and get your degree. So, it's an ongoing battle.

For other participants it was more realistic at that point in time to make a decision not to continue with their studies.

Maar om by daardie klein stukkie van die groot prentjie vas te haak is net nie vir my prakties op hierdie stadium die moeite werd nie. Emma

4.2.4.3 The experience of doing

Whilst engaged in the M-programme participants often fluctuated between positive and negative experiences. For some this had led to having had a generally positive or negative feeling of the whole experience of undertaking an M-programme.

Various factors contributed to a positive experience. Many participants particularly enjoyed the positive feeling in the classes

I just loved the atmosphere in the classes. I thought it was just so relaxed and so open. Geena

Dit was lekker die klas goed, dit was lekker, die interaksie. Anne

So dit was vir my baie lekker, om die klasse by te woon omdat ek 'n redelike tyd al gewerk het. Emma

But I think just having fun at class as well really kept the motivation... Bianca

For Bianca the use of technology and convenient access to information enhanced the study experience.

And the one thing that I really enjoyed was the on-line thing, because when I first finished my studies we hardly had computers...And now it's like you sit at home, log in and you

have access to information as much as you want. That was really good. So I really enjoyed that one. 'Ja', not having to sit in the library and coming here all the time because that would have hampered me a lot. 'Ja' that was really good.

Fellow students also made the process very encouraging.

I loved the interaction between all the students... Geena

But I enjoyed us being a nice big group and harmonising and having our chats. I think it was something to look forward to coming to class, even if for that week you don't do anything else but that was really enjoyable...Yes, and I think that was one of the things that kept us motivated, as well as battling it out. Okay a few of us went quicker, being able to say but it's okay you know, you can manage it, it's okay, you can go on. Bianca

Die groep ding was ook lekker vir my gewees, dat jy nie net dit alleen hier sit in jou kantoortjie nie hier iewers en probeer half jou die ding te doen nie. Dit was lekker om kontak te he met die res van die studente. Anne

During the contact weeks students who travelled from elsewhere in the country were provided with accommodation and transport by fellow students. This allowed them the opportunity to support each other in the study process.

That helped. The exchange of perceptions, of what we about to do and how we going to apply it and who has what experience. That helped. Bianca

Despite individual fluctuations between positive and negative experiences, on the whole some participants still had a positive experience of engaging in the M-programme

But my own personal experience, I mean, I've had a positive experience all along, I think. I always felt that I was treated with respect. Diane

What was my experience? It was positive, I learnt a lot around things I didn't know about models and occupational science and things like that. Hannah

As noted before Geena greatly appreciated the structuring of the M-programme with clear expectations of both the student and the programme. Acknowledging that it was a strenuous experience it was nonetheless positive, positive enough to perhaps pursue a further postgraduate qualification in the future.

... because it really gives you a clear picture of what is most important here, what do they really want you to learn from this. So, because of that, and it was generally a good experience. Tiring, but a good experience, and because of that, I would consider doing my PhD one day. I would. Maybe when my children are ten, the youngest.

The research process left participants feeling downcast.

En selfs met die skryf van die protokol het ek nooit op die punt gekom waar hulle my gesê het 'okay' ek kan dit maar instuur nie. So dit was vir my 'n bietjie sleg.

So ek meen dis nie dat 'n mens niks daaruit vat nie. Ek dink daar is positiewe ervarings. Ek dink net op hierdie stadium kyk 'n mens mos maar aan een ding vas. Ek is in die proses van die navorsing, so dis nie vir my lekker nie. Carol

Ek wil nie half te negatief klink [nie] oor die algemeen is ek nie 'n negatiewe mens nie. Hierdie aspek in my lewe is, ... die [navorsing studie] negatiewe ding in my lewe. Dit is absoluut dit waaroor ek vir ure kan negatief wees. Anne

Some participants were tremendously discouraged by the study process

...en ek gaan nooit weer 'n M doen nie of 'n doktors graad doen nie, Anne

...ek dink daar is baie van ons wat wonderlike goed doen, maar nie van ons, miskien is dit kennis, maar miskien is dit ook net omdat navorsing so - dit voel vir my - navorsing op hierdie stadium is vir my so 'n aaklige proses, dat ek in my lewe nooit weer wil navorsing doen nie. Carol

Having had this very negative experience Carol questioned if this may be the reason that practitioners in the profession are reluctant to engage in research.

...is dit omdat dit vir mense so 'n negatiewe proses was en jy wil nie weer deur daardie proses gaan nie. Jy sal eerder maar jou werk doen en jou mond hou as wat jy weer deur hierdie kanaal wil gaan van ek moet nou gaan navorsing doen oor 'n ding.

Carol realised that this was not a simple matter and did not have a solution to offer but she recognised that the research process perhaps contributed to student attrition.

...en ek weet nie, ek het nie 'n aanbeveling van hoe om dit 'n beter proses te maak nie...So as mens dit miskien net kon 'n bietjie meer aangenaam vir die studente maak sal dit dalk maak dat ons minder studente verloor uit die program uit, maar ook miskien meer hê wat bereid is om op 'n informele manier navorsing te wil doen.

Participants' positive and negative experiences of engaging in the M-programmes have been described. The following chapter will aim to further explicate these experiences with the aim of gaining a better understanding thereof.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Four themes emerged from the data namely: the academic writing disposition, the effect of the academic environment, the sway that non-academic factors hold and the attraction and value of an education. The temporal element is a thread that is apparent through each of the themes and the impact thereof will be made explicit in the discussion that follows.

The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model (90) will be used to explicate the lived experience of the postgraduate student's occupational performance while engaging in the Master of Occupational Therapy programme.

5.2 The person

In accordance with the PEO model (90) the person may be an individual, a group or an organization (91). The person is described as a "unique being" who has several coexisting roles which change according to context and with the progression of time (90,91). Postgraduate students in this study are mature, female, part-time students with existing life roles mainly with regard to work and family. The postgraduate students each bring their individual qualities, competencies, cognitive skills, experiences, motivation, learning style, interests, expectations, and attitudes to the study process over a period of two and more years.

The postgraduate students had voluntarily decided to engage in Master studies. The anticipated growth and development was the desired outcome so as to improve their service delivery as practitioners notwithstanding the fact that a Master qualification held no financial or post-level promotion benefit. This indicates that the postgraduate students were intrinsically motivated to enhance their personal growth as well as to advance their skills as practitioners and realised that this would be achieved through research. The postgraduate study process would equip them with the necessary research skills and in so doing enable them to generally operate in a more scientific manner. This in turn serves to promote the occupational therapy profession. This is in keeping with Reay, Ball and David's research (83) where it was found that for mature students' further study held inherent value making learning pleasure and societal development the motivation to study.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is compulsory for all health professionals in South Africa. Postgraduate study is a recognised CPD activity. The Master qualification allows practitioners the added benefit of increased professional status as it would appear

alongside the practitioner's name on documentation. In this way postgraduate students were engaged in a CPD activity and at the same time were in a position to make it count.

Initially postgraduate students were enthusiastic about undertaking research. Based on the fact that the last time that they had formally engaged in research was at undergraduate level, they were generally keen to attend the research module and engage in the research study. Postgraduate students had the expectation that the research module and academics (lecturers and especially supervisors) would equip them for successful engagement in the research process. The extent of this expectation was subjective to individual abilities, needs and contexts. For some these expectations had been met and they were able to continue progressively and more smoothly along their research journey, reaching completion within the residency period. For many it was not so and they did not feel that they had been adequately prepared for, guided and supported during the research process. This resulted in discontent and frustrations that negatively impacted on motivation. In addition more time was required to develop the necessary skills for the study process. The combined effect of prolonging the study period and having reduced motivation contributed to delayed completion or non-completion.

As noted before, postgraduate students are selected to the M-programme. By implication they meet the intellectual requirements to engage in the M-programmes yet many were challenged by the task of academic writing for the research proposal and research report. This challenge is experienced by postgraduate participants in other research as well (8,23). Academic writing is preceded by critical thinking (40,54). Most postgraduate students expressed that they were unprepared or inadequately prepared for the research process. This is a reality that many HE institutions are faced with (9,21,50,53). Many postgraduate students in the current study experienced that verbal expression during discussions with supervisors was far easier than the skill to coherently structure thoughts and insights in writing. For most the development of reflection and of critical thinking in written form, took time to develop. In other words time is needed for the development of academic writing skills. Looking back some felt that they should have prepared themselves better for the challenge of research and academic writing by attending workshops. It was suggested though that the attendance of such workshops should take place before embarking on the M-programme as the full-time employed, part-time postgraduate student does not have the time to fit this into an already full life. Time is needed in preparation for undertaking Master studies.

Motivation was affected by both internal and external factors. At this point internal factors will be discussed as it relates to the postgraduate as person, external factors will be

elaborated on when discussing the environment. Initially all postgraduate students were eager and motivated to embark on their study journey. An inner drive (as a personal quality), and a passion for professional growth, area of work or research topic is described in the results. As the study process is complex and over a long duration of time, fluctuation in motivation was experienced which supports the findings of the study by Dörnyei (76). This was more evident with postgraduate students who took longer, more than the two year residency period to complete their studies and who later needed more external support to sustain or refuel the motivation to persevere with their studies. Time and motivation appear to be mutually influential.

5.3 The environment

In keeping with the PEO model (90) the environment and the person have a reciprocal relationship, each influencing the other, hence the study process is the “event” that was investigated. With the progression of time through the study period, circumstances may change, consequently contexts may change (90). As a result the environment in which this “event” occurred needs to be considered so as to better understand its influence on the postgraduate student’s behaviour in relation to completion and throughput rates. For the postgraduate student the environment encompasses the HE institution, place of work and home.

The HE institution is made up of the campus, the academic staff and fellow students. The facilities of the HE institution were viewed as enhancing the positive experience of engaging in the study process. Having access to the library physically on the campus and especially electronically from home was seen as an advantageous convenience that saved time and effort. The appreciation of saving time suggests that time is precious and valuable. The literature per se does not indicate the benefits of library access. Osman and Castle (29) found that the lack of access to the library was perceived as a barrier that had to be faced in the study process as part-time mature students at a South African HE institution reported experiencing difficulties in physically accessing the library let alone locating the required books. None of the postgraduate students in the current study shared a sense of belonging with the university. This holds implications for retention rates as integration into the HE institution’s systems is required for persistence (17). As will be shown below, their sense of belonging stems from their relationship with classmates, peers and academics.

The results indicate that fellow classmates and peers encountered in the technical advisory support group that was later started - by the new postgraduate programme coordinator- contributed to a positive study experience. Furthermore students also supported each other

socially by providing transport and or accommodation to postgraduates who were in need of it. This allowed for further interaction between them and facilitated discussions that sustained the study process.

The M-programme was generally perceived as well-organised with interesting and valuable content that was appropriate and applicable to practice. Where a few postgraduate students expressed dissatisfaction with the content albeit as a result of experience or expectations of what should have been included, it was recommended that the volume of the content be reduced and the quality thereof be increased.

Broad-mindedness and accessibility were attributes of academics (as lecturers) that were largely appreciated by postgraduate students. The combination of stimulating and supportive peers, interesting content and the attributes of academics made the interaction in the class during contact weeks gratifying. This supports Kember, Lee and Li's study (36) findings that part-time students experienced the strongest sense of belonging towards their fellow-students, with the lecturer following as a close second. This sense of belonging, as a construct in student persistence studies, fosters the integration of the part-time student into the HE institution's academic and social systems -as purported by Tinto (17) - albeit on a smaller scale. In other words it contributes to postgraduate student retention.

The student-supervisor relationship was complex. Although postgraduate students did not select their own supervisors, the match between the student's and supervisors' attributes, attitudes, expectations and needs in terms of guidance and support, helped shape the experience of the supervisory relationship. This study was however limited to only the postgraduate student's experience of the relationship, thus the supervisor's expectations of the postgraduate students in this study is not known. The majority of postgraduate students shared the responsibility of their study with their supervisors thus they were more supervisor-dependent. Postgraduate students who completed their study within the residency period had taken greater ownership of the study process and as such were more supervisor-independent. However, it must be noted that they were also the only students who were initially unemployed or working on a part-time basis. The advantage of having more time available for study is undeniable and supports the findings of Scott (31), Kember and Leung (32) and Crawford Seagram, Gould and Pyke (33). Watson (106) reported that at a HE institution in South Africa the throughput rate of part-time postgraduate students was 20% lower when compared to full-time students. Similarly, Wingfield (20) reported that more than 80% of the PhD (in natural science) students who reached completion within a 2 -3 year period were full-time students.

The availability of time it seems, contributes to the completion within the residency period of 2 years. On the contrary the lack of time seems to contribute to delayed completion.

The two postgraduate students who had completed their studies timeously experienced feedback and communication from their supervisors as being positive and helpful. Yet other postgraduate students expressed a great need for more specific guidance through feedback and emotional support from their supervisors in order for them to transition to the academic world. They experienced feedback to be critical of the way in which the postgraduate student had done the work and vague in terms of how to correct it. This was not only demotivating but also disempowering as postgraduate students did not know how to forge ahead and this contributed to delayed completion and non-completion. Gibbs, Bridegen and Hellenberg (68) and Schulze (107) highlight the importance of specific feedback for student success. Postgraduate students also perceived a contradiction in feedback from their supervisors where they would be asked to make changes only to have to undo the changes later. This hindered their progress. Sayed, Krauss and Badat's study (23) reported that in their research contradictory feedback was a challenge to postgraduate study, however in their study the contradiction in feedback was between the feedback from the lecturer of the research module and the supervisor.

Frustration was frequently experienced by all except one, in response to the delay in supervisors' feedback on work submitted. Regular and prompt feedback is recommended for success (9,18,53). The delayed response from supervisors encroached on the postgraduate students' limited study time and further contributed to de-motivation, delayed completion as well as non-completion. Erwee, Albion, van Rensburg and Malan (70) report that supervisors need to set a response time for work submitted on a quarterly basis in accordance with their workload. Under time-pressured conditions supervisors need to acknowledge the work submitted and provide some feedback so that the student can continue working. Silence was found to be the worst response (70). Postgraduate students in the current study strongly recommended that supervisors improve their response time to work submitted for the reasons already mentioned. The literature recommends the development of supervisor training programmes in view of the crucial role supervision plays in postgraduate success (8,69,70,108).

The implication of good supervisory practice and an amicable student-supervisor relationship is deemed crucial to student success (2,8,9,47,64-68). Thus it can be inferred that a less than good supervisory practice and a less than amicable relationship will contribute to delayed completion and non-completion.

A second environment within which the study “event” takes place is the sphere of work. Work consists of the facility, the employer, colleagues and clients. None of the postgraduate students were afforded the time or space by either their employer or colleagues to engage in their studies whilst at work. The results indicate that time for studies could not be created at work and which was also found in an earlier study (32). Support was only offered to some in terms of being granted time-off from work to attend classes but the workload remained the same. Postgraduate students did not indicate that colleagues provided assistance or support during the study period. In fact some postgraduate students noted the lack of support from colleagues and viewed it as a contributing factor to delayed completion. The implication is that time at work that was “lost” as a result of attending classes had to be found in the weeks thereafter. The consequence for the postgraduate student is a higher workload or having to fit work administrative tasks in after hours. Both of which negatively impact on motivation and having time available for study.

A strong work ethic obliged postgraduate students to meet the demands of work and to continue to deliver the same quality of service. Work takes precedence over studies (29,32). Postgraduate students who were in full-time employment recognised that it placed a severe limitation on the time and energy that was available for study. The two postgraduate students that had completed their study within the residency period were in part-time employment and were fully aware of the benefit thereof in view of the intensity of Master studies. For the one it provided some re-assurance of the availability of time to engage in her studies. The other postgraduate student attributed her success in completing within the residency period to the resultant time available. Sayed, Kruss and Badat found that being able to take time off from work to engage in research was a “key ingredient of success” (23).

Very few postgraduate students had the financial freedom that gave them the opportunity to engage in postgraduate studies fulltime or to scale down their workload or private practice to have more time available. Professional development in South Africa (CPD) is mandatory for occupational therapists to ensure the continued delivery of best service to society by means of serving the client. Employers thus have a responsibility to enable the practitioner in fulltime employment to engage in CPD activity by implication the employer has an obligation to enable the practitioner to study. One way to do this is by making time available for study. In this way successful completion within the residency period might be more attainable.

Financial constraints influenced whether students could complete their studies within the residency period or not. For most financial limitations dictated how the research would be conducted. Using more cost-effective or affordable methods or research instruments resulted in delayed completion as some postgraduate students only realised this later (after

initial reading and writing of the proposal had already commenced) or the more affordable method was more laborious. Financial restrictions also have greater repercussions in that taking time off from work in a private practice leads to a reduction in income. Subsequently the family is affected and it contributed to decisions to delay completion or to discontinue with the study. This is supported by the literature focussing on mature part-time female undergraduate and postgraduate students related to single mothers and women from lower income families (83,84).

Home is another environment during the study “event”. Home consists of family and culture. Like work demands family caring responsibilities still had to be fulfilled despite studies which was also found in earlier studies (29,80,83). The difference though is that within the family, as opposed to work, the postgraduate student is in a position to negotiate for opportunities to create the time to engage in the study process after hours. In much the same way as participants in other studies postgraduate students in this study relied on the support of spouses and children but ultimately the responsibilities remained theirs to fulfil studies (23,32). The prolonged study period of two years or more meant that postgraduate students had to continually negotiate or re-negotiate for study opportunities which was not easy to do. Sometimes it was difficult to hold onto the negotiated time as all this negotiation and re-organisation of responsibilities came at a psychological cost – feelings of guilt about children in particular. The issue of guilt confirms the findings of the study by Reay, Ball and David (83).

For postgraduate students the role of mother appears to have an immense impact on occupations related to the study process. A postgraduate student who was not working during the first half of the study period experienced apprehension before the M-programme commenced as she was very concerned about coping with her studies and family responsibilities. Two postgraduate students who were not parents during their study period acknowledge the difference in not having the role of mother made to their study experience. For the one postgraduate student it provided the freedom to focus her time and energy on her studies. This contributed to her completing her study within in the residency period. The other postgraduate student became a mother after the completion of her studies. She finds it exhausting to work and have family responsibilities and acknowledges that had she had motherhood in addition to her studies, it would have been incredibly strenuous. For postgraduate students the demands of motherhood and the household were tremendous and contributed to delayed completion and non-completion which serves to confirm the literature (23,81). It seems wise to heed Wingfield’s counsel (81) that taking on another time-consuming activity in addition to working and motherhood may end in disaster.

At times postgraduate students had to reach out beyond the family members within the household for further support to create time for study especially when children were younger, and as the study period progressed and later became extended. Mothers and sisters were named as the extended support. The literature indicates that women are generally involved in family-care responsibilities in addition to other roles that they have (80,82). In view of this cultural practise it is not surprising that the postgraduates as women turn to other women in their family for assistance in fulfilling care-giving responsibilities. This can be seen as a plan to assist in attaining a better balance between home, work and study. For the same reason the women in Osman and Castle's study (29) put such strategies in place as well, while their male counterparts with their different roles, did not see an imbalance between home, work and study. Postgraduate students in the current study generally experienced balancing home, work and study as taxing which contributed to delayed completion and non-completion. The strain of having multiple roles further contributed to delayed completion and non-completion (80).

In times of despondency, postgraduate students required external motivation to help them to persist. Family members were indicated as providing this support with spouses being the forerunners. None of the postgraduate students reported that colleagues or friends provided this support. The literature however indicates that the support from the wider community is required to maintain the motivation of postgraduate students over the prolonged study period (1,2,78,80). In this study mainly family support contributed to retention and as such to throughput.

5.4 The Occupation

In keeping with the PEO model (90) occupation is viewed as the things people do in relation to their roles within their environments. The occupation sphere is made up of closely related activities, tasks and occupations required for the postgraduate study process. The postgraduate students's roles and environments influences the manner in which the occupations will proceed. For the postgraduate student the main activities, tasks and occupations centre on reading and academic writing for the purpose of developing a proposal in the beginning of the study process, during the research process and for the writing of the research report at the end. Meyer (11) describes postgraduate learning as the research process - starting with the formulation of a research question and ending with the research report. The reading of scientific articles and development of critical thinking skills will be discussed in relation to academic writing as an occupation during the study process.

Postgraduate students certainly understood that academic writing is preceded by the reading of scientific literature which corroborates the literature (40-42,47). There was also the realisation that this reading involved careful analysis of the material. Reading widely and continuously provided the practice needed for the skill of critical analysis to develop and over time a love for this type of reading was cultivated. In other words, reading and the development of critical thinking necessitated time.

In spite of reading extensively postgraduate students were generally challenged with academic writing, to the extent that for some it was a struggle. The skill of academic writing also takes time to develop (70). Postgraduate students realised that the verbal expression of thoughts, ideas and insights was more easily achieved than the written expression. Although English was the first language of only one of the postgraduates, everyone had selected to write in English. This was based on the fact that they regularly wrote work-related reports in English and it is the language of the literature. Part of postgraduate students' academic writing difficulties may have been as a result of writing in English as a second or third language (8,44,45,48,50).

The literature also indicates that difficulty with academic writing encompasses much more than language proficiency (51,52). With underprepared postgraduate students, the result of a teaching practice in South Africa that is often more teacher-centred, is a lack of critical thinking experience (9,21,49,50,54).

Another factor to consider is the guidance that academics as lectures and especially as supervisors provide to students with regard to academic writing, the proposal and the research report. Retrospectively most postgraduate students perceived the research module as not having adequately equipped them to engage in the research process which was also found in an earlier study (23). This may have been strongly influenced by the fact that at that time the module was only presented in the middle of the first year which meant that postgraduate students had even less time within which to complete the research. In fact, for the full-time employed family carer this made completion within the residency period virtually impossible. Most of the recommendations that postgraduate students made centred on the need to have this module presented early in the programme as it may give postgraduates a better opportunity in terms of time to complete their study within the residency period. Another suggestion is that there must be a distinct connection between the research module and all the other modules which was also proposed by Sayed, Kruss and Badat (23).

Postgraduate students expressed a need for guidance with writing from their supervisors. Some wished to have had it from the start with the development of the proposal. There was a need for the guidance to be more specifically related to how academic writing should be done and less around continuously pointing out that it was wrong. Frustration was experienced as well as shaken self-confidence as they were independent practitioners who regularly wrote work-related reports. Ngcongco (53) noted the effect of feedback on the student's self-confidence. Only the two postgraduate students who had completed within the two year study period reported that they received good quality guidance from their supervisors. There were also two postgraduate students who sought assistance with writing from other professionals outside of the Division. However it was near the end of the time they had allocated for postgraduate study. As such it may have been too late as these postgraduate students had decided to discontinue their studies. Once again time was a factor.

5.5 The Temporal Connection and Occupational Performance

Within the PEO model (90) occupational performance is the area of overlap between the spheres of the person, environment and occupation over a period of time, ranging from as short as a day to as long as a lifespan. When these spheres are matched, there is a good fit between the spheres and occupational performance is optimal. When factors within any one of the spheres are affected or there is less of a fit between any of the spheres, occupational performance is reduced. For the postgraduate student occupational performance is also the quality of the experience of engaging in the M-programme for the duration of the study period ranging from 2-6 years (91).

Looking at the person-environment-occupation fit, interpretation of the results and the discussion that has ensued above, it may be inferred that for the postgraduate student there are factors within each of the spheres which are less than optimal. These factors will be discussed below in relation to time to demonstrate how the subsequent person-environment-occupation fit over the study period, is therefore less than optimal. As a result the occupational performance of the postgraduate student is less than optimal and this influences retention, throughput and attrition.

Interpretation of the results points toward time as a prominent factor that influences retention and throughput. It thus seems that occupational performance is conditional to time.

In keeping with the PEO model (90) time is observed in terms of the time-related pattern and pace of occupations for the postgraduate student during a more regular and routine day of

work, family and study responsibilities; and less regular days where routines and occupations may be affected, such as when a child or spouse may be ill, a busy period at work when the client load is higher, having to meet a deadline for academic work to be submitted to supervisors, when feeling overwhelmed and despondent about having too much to do or having received negative feedback on academic work submitted. A combination of regular and irregular days extends into weeks, months and years, depending on the duration of the study period. The impact can be seen in the vacillation of motivation over the lengthy study period of two or more years.

The discussion thus far has illustrated the mutually influential relationship between time and motivation and the impact it has on the factors within the postgraduate student as person. Postgraduate students were intrinsically motivated to engage in the M-programme which initially made them enthusiastic about the research process. Having been accepted to the M-programme implied that they have the intellectual capacity for Master studies. These factors contribute to a more optimal occupational performance and in so doing to retention and completion.

Time is needed for the postgraduate to be adequately prepared for the study process. The skill of critical thinking for academic reading (and later for writing) specifically needed more time to develop. This supports the findings of Carney-Crompton and Tan (84) in that postgraduate students are not fully aware of the time demands for activities such as reading that has to take place outside of class time. For postgraduate students in this study this had implications for the person-environment-occupation fit in that occupational performance was less than optimal. The struggle with academic writing resulted in de-motivation and the extension of the study period. The prolonged study period in turn also affected motivation. This made the experience of the study process less satisfactory. This contributed to delayed completion and non-completion.

The impact of the lack of time was severely experienced within the environment of the postgraduate student. The transactional relationship between the person and the environment was also clear. Generally postgraduate students were not adequately prepared for Master's study and/or were feeling de-motivated making them more supervisor-dependent in that they required more time and guidance from supervisors. The literature indicates that with widened access at HE institutions the dilemma of having under-prepared students is a reality that supervisors have to contend with (9,21,50). As a result occupational performance for the postgraduate students in this study was less than optimal. This contributed to delayed completion and non-completion. Naturally the opposite was also apparent for a few.

In much the same way time and motivation influenced the factors within the environment of the postgraduate student. Supervisors' delay in providing feedback resulted in postgraduates being de-motivated and contributed to delayed completion and non-completion. Again, occupational performance was less than optimal. Here the opposite was also evident when supervisors' feedback was prompt and guiding. This confirms Gibbs, Bridegen and Hellenberg's (68) argument that effective feedback contributes to the student's success.

Physical and electronic access to the library was a common positive experience that saved time, hence afforded the postgraduate student more time for study or other responsibilities. In this situation occupational performance was more optimal.

The priority that work takes over study and the time and energy that work demands commonly resulted in delayed completion or non-completion for postgraduate students who were in full-time employment. Consequently occupational performance was less than optimal. The literature confirms that in spite of study demands, not only do work obligations have to be fulfilled but there is also very little room for negotiation within the area of work (32). Financial limitations dictated the course of the research (often less favourable) which further contributed to delayed completion and non-completion. For participants in Reay, Ball, and David's study (83) financial limitations were one of the factors that led to non-completion of studies. For postgraduate students in the current study financial freedom on the other hand contributed to completion within the residency period as occupational performance was more optimal.

Home was the only context within which time for study could be created thus contributing to a more optimal occupational performance and the resultant retention and throughput. This is supported by Kember and Leung (32) where it was found that family support allowed the part-time student the opportunity to study after work hours. However for postgraduate students in the current study the created time is obtained through negotiation and involves personal and family sacrifice which contributes to the experience of de-motivation. Inevitably completion and non-completion rates are influenced as occupational performance is then less than optimal. The mature, female part-time students in Reay, Ball and David's study (83) reported the psychological costs (such as feelings of guilt and inadequacy) they endured related to their role as mothers.

As was shown earlier, motivation over the long study period fluctuated. Family was a great source of external motivation at times of despondency, affecting an increase in the motivation of postgraduate students. This contributed to more optimal occupational

performance and inevitably to retention and throughput. For participants in Kember and Leung's study (32) the value of family relationships for academic success was realised by the part-time student for the support and sacrifice that family offered or were prepared to make.

Similarly time and motivation affected the factors within the occupations of the postgraduate student.

The transactional relationship between the person and the occupation as well as the occupation and the environment was evident. As indicated earlier, critical thinking skills and academic reading and writing needed time to develop. The development of academic writing was dependent on the readiness of the postgraduate for study (in the sphere of person) as well as on the supervisor in terms of prompt feedback and guidance (in the environment sphere). The lack of person-occupation fit and/or occupation-environment fit led to the occupation of academic writing being experienced as a struggle. This contributed to de-motivation and delayed completion and non-completion. Once again, occupational performance was less than optimal.

The late presentation of the module (middle of the first year) implied that postgraduate students had less time for the research process. The perception of the ineffectiveness of the research module to prepare postgraduate students adequately for the research process led to postgraduate students needing more guidance from supervisors as well as to feelings of de-motivation. Together these factors contributed to delayed completion and non-completion.

From the discussion above the interrelatedness of time and motivation is seen to have an effect on the factors within each of the spheres of person, environment and occupation. For the mature, employed female engaging in postgraduate study the availability of time and / or motivation results in more optimal occupational performance thus contributing to success, hence timely completion, retention and throughput. A lack of time and/or de-motivation results in less optimal occupational performance which contributes to hindrances and in turn leads to delayed completion and non-completion.

From the discussion that has ensued conclusions, with regard to the factors that facilitate or hinder the retention and throughput rate of postgraduate students, may be drawn in the next chapter. Based on the conclusions the implications of the study will be explained and subsequent recommendations will put forward.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to understand from the postgraduate student's perspective, what factors facilitate or hinder the completion of the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes. As noted before there is a tendency for most students, irrespective of which M-programme they are registered for, to have difficulty in completing the thesis or research assignment resulting in delayed throughput (see 1.1). The findings have shown that numerous factors in various combinations at different points in time during the study period shaped the experience of participants as mature, female, part-time postgraduate students. Ultimately this impacted on the postgraduate student's decision with regard to completion or non-completion.

The findings revealed that factors that affect the study process were not exclusively facilitative or inhibiting, at times being both, depending on the specific student's situation at a point in time. This study has also called attention to the temporal aspect of the study experience as the findings illustrated that availability of time afforded to a few postgraduate students contributed to successful completion and the lack of time more commonly experienced by most postgraduate students, over the prolonged study period negatively influenced retention and throughput rates.

It has also been shown that over the study period of two and more years, the postgraduate study process relies on the support of the community in the form of family members (close and extended), peers, and academics (lecturers and supervisors) to help the postgraduate student to achieve completion. Despite the struggles that were experienced during the study process, the findings indicate that postgraduate students generally recognised and appreciated the growth of their knowledge and skills that the M-programmes facilitated.

6.2 Strengths and Limitations

- Participants in this study all female and as such gender-based roles and responsibilities impacted on and are reflected in their study experience, thus the findings of this study cannot be transferred to the males within the occupational therapy profession who engage in M-programmes.
- Despite the findings being limited to female postgraduate students only, it probably enhances our understanding of the more typical Master of Occupational Therapy student in South Africa who, more often than not, tends to be of the female gender.

- The present study confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests that mature, female, part-time students face challenges related to their roles within their families with respect to caring, household and financial responsibilities.

6.3 Conclusions

6.3.1 Conclusions Related to Students' Reasons for Enrolment and Preparedness for Postgraduate Studies

It was found that on the one hand intrinsic motivation for professional growth and development urged students to register for the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes. On the other hand a strong work ethic obliged postgraduate students to prioritize work over studies which negatively impacted on the availability of time for study as well as on their motivation.

Although enthusiastic, postgraduate students acknowledged that they were generally underprepared for the research process in terms of academic reading and writing. For many the development of critical thinking and writing required great effort which led to despondency, influencing retention and throughput rates.

6.3.2 Conclusions Related to the Experience of Engaging in the M-programmes

The experience of supervision varied depending on how student and supervisors were matched and what the student's expectations and needs of the relationship were. For some the relationship was supportive and effective and facilitated successful completion. For others it was unsupportive, did not provide adequate direction with the research process and supervisors' delayed response in providing the feedback caused frustration which negatively impacted on their motivation and contributed to delayed completion and non-completion. There were some unrealistic expectations on both sides, which emphasises the importance of clarification of mutual expectations at the beginning of the postgraduate study process.

Work was an area within which very little to no negotiation for creating opportunities for study was possible. Some postgraduate students would not compromise on the standard of work they delivered even if this was only to reduce the number of persons to which they delivered a service. Most were not in a position to negotiate for paid leave for study.

It is in negotiation with family (more so with mothers and sisters) that the part-time postgraduate student was able to create time for study. Although family (mainly within the household) sometimes forgot the boundaries of time that had been negotiated, it was family

that served as a great source of external motivation for the despondent postgraduate student to persist.

With respect to the person-environment-occupation fit optimal occupational performance for the postgraduate student varied over time as factors facilitated or hindered the study process. The demands of an already full life influenced the goodness of fit between the person, environment and occupation which minimised occupational performance as a postgraduate student.

6.4 Implications

6.4.1 Implications for students

As a result of the important role that academic reading and writing plays in postgraduate study, the under-preparedness of students implied that more time was required for the development of the skill. In this process however, the lack of academic reading and writing skills resulted in the need for more time to gather and critically reflect on information and may have had an effect on the quality of the rest of the thesis or research assignment.

As the availability of time is essential for postgraduate success, a new role appears to have emerged for the postgraduate student, namely that of a negotiator of time for the prolonged study period. Although postgraduate students are informally engaging in bargaining or rather bartering for time on the home front, it does not create enough time to facilitate success within a two year study period. This negotiation for time needs to expand to the work/employment front as well.

6.4.2 Implications for supervisors

The implication of students being underprepared for academic reading and writing is that supervisors would need more time not only to mark the work but also to guide the student in writing while at the same time facilitating the development of the student's critical thinking and academic writing skills.

In view of the student-supervisor relationship a lack of regular and open communication leads to the student experiencing frustrations that supervisors may not even be aware of. This influences not only their relationship but also the postgraduate student's motivation.

As noted earlier, through feedback supervisors are in a unique position to influence the postgraduate student's opinion of her own academic writing ability, potential as a researcher and desire to be a life-long learner (see 2.4). It is therefore essential that supervisors ensure

that their feedback is specific in terms of what is erroneous in the student's work but at the same time offers the student guidelines or options of how to do it differently.

6.4.3 Implications for the institution

With widened access to HE institutions and the obligation of CPD occupational therapists will continue to select to register for M-programmes. As noted earlier, the reality facing many HE institutions today is that postgraduate students are underprepared for the research process and in particular with respect to academic writing (see chapter 2). The lack of adequate support from the institution for the development of the part-time postgraduate's academic writing as well as the limited integration of the mature female postgraduate student into the university's academic and social systems, retention and throughput rates will continue to be negatively affected.

6.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study and in view of facilitating a better retention and throughput rate of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University.

6.5.1 Recommendations for practice

When aiming to improve retention and throughput rates it is essential for HE institution's Master's programmes not only to guide but also to teach academic writing skills to students.

6.5.1.1 Recommendations to facilitate the academic writing process:

- Prospective postgraduate students need to complete or be engaged in an academic writing course/workshop offered at HE institutions as a pre-admission requirement. In this way the development of the postgraduate student's understanding and practice of academic writing is facilitated from the outset of the M-programme.
- Supervisors' critical feedback on academic writing to consistently be accompanied with alternative strategies that may guide the postgraduate student to develop a possible solution. This will reduce frustration experienced when transitioning from the regular practice-based writing style to the more conceptually demanding academic writing style. This in turn will impact motivation and contribute to improved retention and throughput rates.

- Postgraduate students in the M-programmes should be made aware of and be strongly encouraged to make use of the Stellenbosch University writing centre to guide with academic writing process, from the development of the proposal to the research assignment or thesis. As academic writing takes time to develop the support of the writing centre will serve to help postgraduates to understand the process better and gain confidence in their academic writing ability. This will improve motivation and contribute to improved retention and throughput rates.

6.5.1.2 Recommendations to facilitate a better supervision process:

- Supervisors are in an ideal position to initiate a discussion to establish an understanding of the mutual responsibilities and expectations in the student-supervisor relationship at the very start of the process. It is especially important that students and supervisors clarify expectations of each other and agree upon methods of communication, particularly with regard to submission of work and turnaround time of feedback, suitable to both parties and to recognise that both are busy people.
- A good fit between supervisor and postgraduate student needs to be carefully considered as it better facilitates an amicable relationship between them and serves to facilitate the postgraduate's success.
- Supervisors should be encouraged to mentor postgraduate students and within reasonable limits, support them emotionally as well, not only academically. The postgraduate study journey is long and arduous with fluctuations in motivation that can be influenced by the supervisor being caring and supportive.
- A faster feedback response time from supervisors is strongly recommended. This might be achieved by communication related to when work will be submitted and when feedback can be expected. Supervisors need to be warned in advance that they will have to budget time for feedback. It is however also important that supervisors at least acknowledge receipt of work submitted with an indication of when the student can expect feedback.
- Supervisor training is recommended as this would allow for a more common understanding of the supervision process in general, and the difference between the research assignment and the full thesis. Training implies HE institution support of the supervisor to better guide the postgraduate to success within the residency period.

- Supervisors should initiate postgraduate students into the academic world by encouraging presentations of abstracts, proposals and research at local workshops, conferences or congresses to foster confidence in the postgraduate's ability as researchers.

6.5.1.3 Recommendations to facilitate the organisation of the programme:

- For the structured M-programme the coursework could have a closer link to the research module and facilitate the development of the research proposal. In so doing more time will be available for the research process.
- In view of the enormity of the research assignment and that it is the greater obstacle (in terms of completion) in the structured M-programme, it is strongly recommended that the coursework be reduced to 40% and the research project be increased to 60%. This may facilitate a better completion and throughput rate within the residency period as more time will be allowed for the research project.
- The residency period for the completion of the Master of Occupational Therapy programme should be extended to a more realistic and achievable period of three years.
- The Technical Advisory Support group for postgraduate students is an influential way for students to learn – from each other in a supportive environment and should be continued.
- In consultation or in conjunction with the Stellenbosch University's writing centre, to build academic writing development into the M-programmes. This would help direct academic writing development from the outset and with all tasks. This will also assist in countering the extra time that is needed for the development of academic writing skills, the frustrations experienced, as well as reduce the extra time and guidance required from supervisors to teach the process. Ultimately this will support a better retention and throughput rate. Perhaps this recommendation needs to be extended to the Occupational Therapy Undergraduate Programme Committee as well.
- The M-programme co-ordinator needs to make the supervisory relationship explicit to postgraduate students so that they are well-informed about acceptable expectations of the relationship and how and when to go about contracting these expectations of each other.

- The M-programme co-ordinator could guide the postgraduate to understanding / raising the postgraduate student's awareness of the extent of the sacrifice and negotiation that will need to take place within the social environment (personal, home, family and friends). This may help postgraduate students to plan more effectively and put measures in place with family and friends that would support their success.

6.5.1.4 Recommendations to Stellenbosch University and HE Institutions in general:

- Writing retreats offered to supervisors and their respective postgraduate students to facilitate the completion of the thesis or research assignment and the writing of an article for publication.
- Although HE institutions have granted postgraduate students access to further education, the HE institution's policies need to support the part-time, female postgraduate student's success. HE institutions need to advocate for financial support for the mature, female, postgraduate student who has family caring and / or financial responsibilities to uphold. This will assist in creating the much needed time to engage in studies.

6.5.1.5 Recommendations to government, employers and the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA):

- As Continuous Professional Development is compulsory for Health professionals in South Africa, government and employers could grant the postgraduate student paid time-off from work on a weekly or monthly basis. In so doing granting the postgraduate student additional time (other than the limited after-work hours) to engage in studies could facilitate better retention and throughput rates.
- Offer financial support to members who engage in postgraduate studies. It may encourage more clinicians to engage in and publish research. This will expand the theoretical base of the profession and strengthen scientific-based (evidence based) practice.
- If OTASA could encourage clinicians with postgraduate qualifications to mentor clinicians who are prospective or registered postgraduate students during the lengthy study period which is intellectually gratifying but nonetheless arduous. This may also facilitate more collaborative research projects in the future and sustain the growth of the occupational therapy profession.

6.5.2 Recommendations for further research

- At the Stellenbosch University Occupational Therapy Division only one male had registered for the M-programme between January 1995 and April 2008. The gender-based roles of male postgraduate students may be different to that of females and as such their experience of engaging in the M-programmes may be different. Further research is recommended to include males should they become part of the postgraduate student population in future.
- Although postgraduate success depends on good supervision, the effectiveness of overburdened supervisors needs to be investigated. It is recommended that further research be undertaken to include the supervisor's voice in the postgraduate study experience.

6.5 Final conclusion

The researcher has gained insight into the complexity of the postgraduate study process as the findings of this study have enhanced the understanding of the experiences of engaging in the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes from the perspective of the student. This study has shown that the main hindrance to completion of studies is the lack of time and the demands of the multiple roles that the mature, female part-time postgraduate student has to contend with. The findings also highlighted that the postgraduate study process is a journey undertaken with others walking alongside the postgraduate student at different times and for different durations, but all for the same reason of helping the postgraduate student to achieve success in her endeavour to expand her professional knowledge and skills.

The strength of engaging in further studies is aptly described in these words by Nelson Mandela "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

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APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
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17 January 2013

MAILED

Mrs A Sheik Ismail
Department of Occupational Therapy
2nd Floor, Teaching building
Stellenbosch University
Tygerberg campus
7505

Dear Mrs Sheik Ismail

"Factors that affect the persistence of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University."

ETHICS REFERENCE NO: N09/11/303

At a review panel meeting of the Health Research Ethics Committee that was held on 12 December 2012, the progress report for the abovementioned project has been approved and the study has been granted an extension for a period of one year from this date.

Please remember to submit progress reports in good time for annual renewal in the standard HREC format.

Approval Date: 12 December 2012

Expiry Date: 12 December 2013

Yours faithfully

MRS MERTRUDE DAVIDS

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Tel: 021 938 9207 / E mail: mertrude@sun.ac.za

Fax: 021 931 3352

17 January 2013 11:27

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APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

“Factors affecting the persistence of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University.”

REFERENCE NUMBER: N09/11/303

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Arifa Sheik Ismail*

ADDRESS:

*Division of Occupational therapy
Department of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences
Stellenbosch University
P.O. Box 19063
Tygerberg
7505*

CONTACT NUMBER: *021 9389192*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the study staff any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Stellenbosch University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and the Medical Research Council (MRC) Ethical Guidelines for Research.

I am from the Division of Occupational Therapy at Stellenbosch University. I am researching the experiences of postgraduate students who had registered for the Master of Occupational Therapy programmes between January 2000 and April 2011. I am keen to gain insight into the postgraduate student's experiences during the study process with the aim of sharing this information with the Division of Occupational Therapy. This would inform a better teaching and supervision process which may assist future postgraduate students to be able to complete their studies within the designated two year period.

I obtained your name as a postgraduate student from the Division of Occupational Therapy's administration records. I have selected to invite participants who have completed or are in the process of completing their studies within a two to four year period, four to six year period and those who have suspended their studies.

To participate in this study you will be required to do one interview where you will meet with the principal investigator (researcher) at a suitable place. The interviews will take place between April and June 2011. Should you agree to participate in this study, please fill out, sign and return the attached consent form using the enclosed self-addressed envelope to the researcher by 31 March 2011. The researcher will contact you in April 2011 to set up an appointment for the interview.

I intend to write an article based on this research project and it will be submitted to the South African Journal of Occupational Therapy for publication as a means of sharing the knowledge generated by the research so that it may be applied at other institutions of higher education.

Your name and personal information and will be kept confidential. All interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. Any information shared during the interview will also be kept confidential as your name will not be mentioned during the audio-recording nor in the transcriptions, analysis or publication of the study. Only the researcher and examiners of the study will have access to the transcriptions.

You can contact the **Health Research Ethics Committee** at 021-938 9207 if you have any concerns or queries that have not been adequately addressed researcher.

You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled “*Factors affecting the persistence of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University*”.

I declare that:

- I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the study doctor or researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 2011.

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by investigator

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 2011.

.....
Signature of investigator

.....
Signature of witness

APPENDIX C

DEELNEMERINLIGTINGSBLAD EN -TOESTEMMINGSVORM

TITEL VAN DIE NAVORSINGSPROJEK:

“Factors affecting the persistence of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University.”

VERWYSINGSNOMMER: N09/11/303

HOOFNAVORSER: *Arifa Sheik Ismail*

ADRES:

*Divisie van Arbeidsterapie
Departement van Interdisiplinêre Gesondheidswetenskappe
Universiteit van Stellenbosch
Posbus 19063
Tygerberg
7505*

KONTAKNOMMER: *021 9389192*

U word genooi om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingsprojek. Lees asseblief hierdie inligtingsblad op u tyd deur aangesien die detail van die navorsingsprojek daarin verduidelik word. Indien daar enige deel van die navorsingsprojek is wat u nie ten volle verstaan nie, is u welkom om die navorsingspersoneel of dokter daarvoor uit te vra. Dit is baie belangrik dat u ten volle moet verstaan wat die navorsingsprojek behels en hoe u daarby betrokke kan wees. U deelname is ook **volkome vrywillig** en dit staan u vry om deelname te weier. U sal op geen wyse hoegenaamd negatief beïnvloed word indien u sou weier om deel te neem nie. U mag ook te eniger tyd aan die navorsingsprojek onttrek, selfs al het u ingestem om deel te neem.

Hierdie navorsingsprojek is deur die **Komitee vir Mensnavorsing van die Universiteit Stellenbosch** goedgekeur en sal uitgevoer word volgens die etiese riglyne en beginsels van die Internasionale Verklaring van Helsinki en die Etiese Riglyne vir Navorsing van die Mediese Navorsingsraad (MNR).

Ek is van die Divisie van Arbeidsterapie by die Universiteit van Stellenbosch. Ek doen navorsing oor die ervarings van nagraadse studente wat vir die Meester in Arbeidsterapie programme gerigstreef het tussen Januarie 2000 en April 2011. Ek wil graag meer insig hê tot die nagraadse studente se ervarings tydens die studie proses met die doel om hierdie inligting met die Divisie van Arbeidsterapie te deel. Dit sal 'n beter onderrig proses en supervisie proses inlig wat toekomstige nagraadse studente mag help om hul studies binne die aangewyste twee jaar periode te voltooi.

U naam is verkry as 'n nagraadse student van die Divisie van Arbeidsterapie se administratiewe rekords. Ek het geslekteer om deelnemers te nooi wat hul studies binne die twee tot vier jaar periode en vier tot ses jaar periode voltooi het of in die proses van voltooiing is, en nagraadse studente wat hul studies gesuspendeer het.

Om deel te neem aan hierdie studie sal u verwag word om een onderhoud te doen waar u met die navorser sal ontmoet by 'n toepaslike plek. Die onderhoude sal tussen April en Junie 2011 plaasvind. Sou u instem om deel te neem aan hierdie studie, voltooi, teken en stuur asseblief terug die aangehegde toestemmingsvorm teen die 31 Maart 2011 deur die self-geadresseerde koevert te gebruik. Die navorser sal u kontak in April 2011 om 'n afspraak vir die onderhoud op te stel.

Ek beplan om 'n artikel gebaseerd op hierdie navorsing studie te skryf en dit sal aan die 'South African Journal of Occupational Therapy' ingedien word vir publikasie om sodoende die kennis wat deur die studie gegeneer is te deel aangesien dit by ander inrigtings van hoër opvoeding toegepas mag word.

U naam en persoonlike inligting sal konfidensieel gehou word. Alle onderhoude sal op oudieband opgeneem word en transkribeer word. Enige inligting wat tydens die onderhoud gedeel word sal ook konfidensieel gehou word aangesien u naam nie genoem sal word tydens die oudieband opneeming, of in die transkribering, analiese, of publikasie van die studie nie. Net die navorser en eksamineerders van die studie sal alleenlik toegang het tot die transkribering.

U kan die Komitee vir Mensnavorsing kontak by 021-938 9207 indien u enige bekommernis het wat nie bevredigend deur die navorser hanteer is nie.

U sal 'n afskrif van hierdie inligtings- en toestemmingsvorm ontvang vir u eie rekords.

Verklaring deur deelnemer

Met die ondertekening van hierdie dokument onderneem ek,, om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingsprojek getiteld "*Factors affecting the persistence of Master of Occupational Therapy students at Stellenbosch University.*"

Ek verklaar dat:

- Ek hierdie inligtings- en toestemmingsvorm gelees het of aan my laat voorlees het en dat dit in 'n taal geskryf is waarin ek vaardig en gemaklik mee is.
- Ek geleentheid gehad het om vrae te stel en dat al my vrae bevredigend beantwoord is.
- Ek verstaan dat deelname aan hierdie navorsingsprojek **vrywillig** is en dat daar geen druk op my geplaas is om deel te neem nie.
- Ek te eniger tyd aan die navorsingsprojek mag onttrek en dat ek nie op enige wyse daardeur benadeel sal word nie.
- Ek gevra mag word om van die navorsingsprojek te onttrek voordat dit afgehandel is indien die studiedokter of navorser van oordeel is dat dit in my beste belang is, of indien ek nie die ooreengekome navorsingsplan volg nie.

Geteken te (*plek*) op (*datum*) 2011.

.....
Handtekening van deelnemer

.....
Handtekening van getuie

Verklaring deur navorser

Ek (*naam*) verklaar dat:

- Ek die inligting in hierdie dokument verduidelik het aan
- Ek hom/haar aangemoedig het om vrae te vra en voldoende tyd gebruik het om dit te beantwoord.
- Ek tevrede is dat hy/sy al die aspekte van die navorsingsprojek soos hierbo bespreek, voldoende verstaan.
- Ek nie 'n tolk gebruik het nie.

Geteken te (*plek*) op (*datum*) 2011.

.....
Handtekening van navorser

.....
Handtekening van getuie

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Main Questions

- **How would you describe your experiences of engaging in the Master of Occupational Therapy program at Stellenbosch University?**
 - *Vertel my van jou ervarings tydens jou M-studies*

- **Why did you enrol for the M-programme?**
 - *Hoekom het jy besluit om jou M- te doen?*

- **How prepared were you for the studies?**
 - *Hoe voorbereid was jy vir jou studies?*

- **What motivated you during the studies?**
 - *Wat het jou gemotiveer tydens jou studies?*

- **What role did the University and the Division play in your experience of the M-programme?**
 - *Watter rol het die Universiteit en die AT Divisie gespeel in jou ervaring van jou M-studies?*

- **What suggestions would you make to the Division of Occupational Therapy that may assist future postgraduate students?**
 - *Watter voorstelle sal jy maak aan die AT Divisie om toekomstige nagraadse studente te help?*

Probing Questions

- **Details of expectations of the programme**
 - *Details van jou verwagtinge van die M-program*

- **Details of motivating and de-motivating factors**
 - *Details van motiverende en de-motiverende faktore*

- **Details of skills and difficulties with academic reading, writing, research**
 - *Details van vaardighede en moeilikhede met akademiese lees, skryf en navorsing*

- **Details of their expectations of the student-supervisor relationship**
 - *Details van jou verwagtinge van die student-supervisor verhouding*

- **Impact of the student-supervisor relationship on their studies**
 - *Impak van die student-supervisor verhouding op jou studies*

- **General role of the institution in their experience of the M-programme**
 - *Algemene rol van die univesiteit in jou ervaring van die M-program*

- **Reasons for success (completing studies within two year residency period) delayed success or failure to complete studies**
 - *Redes vir sukses, uitgestelde sukses of onsukses om studies te voltooi*

- **Details of suggestions made to the Division of Occupational Therapy**
 - *Details van voorstelle wat jy aan AT Divisie maak*