Postgraduate students perceptions on institutional support during research supervision process at a university in KZN

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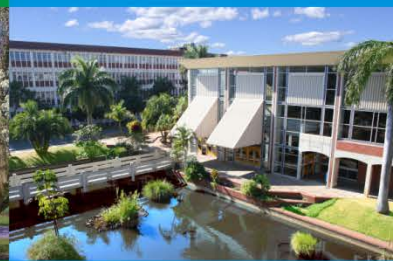2014 TEACHING AND LEARNING CONFERENCE

EDGEWOOD CAMPUS   HOWARD COLLEGE CAMPUS   NELSON R MANDELA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE   PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS   WESTVILLE CAMPUS

UKZN INSPIRING GREATNESS

1. Introduction and background

❑ University is expected to support PG students in research supervision process: logistic and intellectual climate

❑ Good intellectual climate prevents isolation, enhances student progress and facilitate the supervisor (Oxford Learning Institute, 2012).

❑ Inadequate support : too many students fail to complete their degrees, with many dropping out at an early stage (Thompson, Kirkman, Watson and Stewart, 2005; Ismail, Abiddin and Hassan, 2011).

Introduction ...cont'

❑ South African context: PG students increase, mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds and lack sufficient experience in research (Lekalakala-Mokgele, 2008; Mugarura and Mtshali, 2010).

❑ UNISA, among 75 masters students, 29% felt adequately prepared while a third of them had had no previous training in research methods (Lessing and Schulze, 2003).

Introduction ...cont'

❑ In Philippines: insufficiency of journal subscriptions in most of the universities (Calma, 2011).

❑ Due to poor quality of research projects, many are kept without being published.

❑ Deakin University in Australia, 51.1% (n=1200) of PGS was satisfied with the provision of computing resources and facilities (Abdullah and Evans, 2012).

Introduction ...cont'

- Many PGS prefer free online resources, such as Google and Wikipedia as they are unaware of universities subscription's to academic online databases (Green, Segrott, Priest, Rout, McIvor, Douglas et al., 2007).

- CHE (2007) in SA encourages universities: funding for student research, and guide students on how to make their research results public .

Introduction …cont'

❏ In UK, 57.4% of their respondents had appropriate financial support for research activities, while at University of Sydney in Australia, only 31% of the respondents having appropriate financial support

❏ In SA, 68.2% of the respondents were not aware that the university had a responsibility for assisting them with finances (Lekalakala-Mokgele,2008).

Introduction …cont'

❑ Intellectual climate: PGS, academic staff, administrators are becoming increasingly fragmented (Rowland, 2002) due to obsession with accountability, standardisation and managerial control in a competitive society (CHE, 2007).

❑ 40% (n= 213) agreed that they were integrated into their departments/schools (University of Sydney, 2010).

❑ 58.2% of postgraduate students agree that there was ambiance in their department which stimulates their work (Hodsdon and Buckley, 2011).

Introduction …cont'

❑ Despite the extensive growth of the coursework master's degree in nursing, little is known about students' experiences (Drennan and Clarke, 2009).

❑ Many dropping out at an early stage due to problems related to their research and the supervision process (Thompson et al., 2005).

❑ Chikoko (2010):the part-time masters students seem to be inadequately engaged and integrated into the academic culture of the university and therefore frequently drop-out.

Introduction …cont'

❑ The high drop-out rate, poor graduation and retention rates are unacceptable and represent a huge waste of resources, both financial and human (Ministry of Education, 2001).

❑ Between 2000 and 2006, the CHS/UKZN noted a high dropout rate of 56% for thesis based work at masters level (Tettey, 2010). This motivated the researchers to explore perceptions of coursework masters nursing students on the way the university support

2. Methodology

- Positivist paradigm, quantitative and descriptive approach. A non-convenience sampling method: 56/80 coursework masters nursing students

- Tool: Borrowed instrument from HEA in UK: Reliability: Resources ($\alpha=0.74$) and Intellectual climate ($\alpha=0.80$).

- Ethic: approved by university ethical committee, permission from dean and head of school. SPSS: 19 version and descriptive statistics were used in data analysis.

3. Findings: Socio-demographics

❑ The minimum age of respondents was 28 years and maximum age was 61 years, with a mean of 43.02 years.

Socio-demographic variables	Attributes	Freq.	%
Gender	Female	47	83.9%
	Male	9	16.1%
Mode of attendance	Full time	11	19.6%
	Part time	45	80.4%
Status within university	National	46	82%)
	International	10	18%

Perceptions on availability of resources

	SD	MD	MA	SA	Total	Mean	SD
Adequate access to equipment necessary for my research		1.8% (1)	32.1 (18)	66.1% (37)	100% (56)	3.64	0.52
Suitable working space		8.9% (5)	33.9% (19)	57.2% (32)	100% (56)	3.48	0.66
Appropriate financial support for research activities	33.9 % (19)	19.6 % (11)	25.0% (14)	21.5% (12)	100% (56)	2.34	1.16
Adequate provision of computing resources and facilities		5.4 % (3)	28.5% (16)	66.1% (37)	100% (56)	3.61	0.59
Adequate provision of library facilities		1.8% (1)	28.6% (16)	69.6% (39)	100% (56)	3.68	0.50
I have the technical support I need		8.9% (5)	58.9% (33)	32.2% (18)	100% (56)	3.23	0.60
Overall perceptions on resources						3.33	

Perceptions on intellectual climate

	SD	MD	MA	SA	Total	Mean	S. Dev
My school provides opportunities for social contact with other research students	7.1% (4)	21.4% (12)	53.6 (30)	17.9% (10)	100% (56)	2.82	0.81
My school provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture	12.5 % (7)	25.0% (14)	50.0% (28)	12.5% (7)	100% (56)	2.62	0.86
The research ambience in my school stimulates my work	12.5% (7)	21.4% (12)	53.6%(30)	12.5% (7)	100% (56)	2.66	0.85
I feel integrated into my school's community	8.9% (5)	32.2% (18)	50.0%(28)	8.9% (5)	100% (56)	2.59	0.78
My school provides a good seminar programme for research students	5.4 % (3)	21.4% (12)	53.6%(30)	19.6% (11)	100% (56)	2.87	0.79
Overall mean						2.71	

Discussion

❑ Research inform the practice: support by HEI

❑ Equipment necessary for their research: 66.1% strongly agreed; 32.1% moderately agreed : mean of 3.64 out of 4=91% . In Malaysia, it was mean was 83% (Abdullah and Evans, 2012).

❑ Computer resources and facilities: 66.1% strongly agreed; 28.5% moderately agreed, with a mean of 3.61, meaning 90.25%.

❑ Adequate library facilities: 69.6% strongly agreed and 28.6% MA; mean of 3.68= 92%

Discussion cont'

❑ University is well equipped to support research for PGS.

❑ However, in most developing countries, HEIs are not able afford to subscribe to electronic academic journals, use of open access for free of charge, inadequate scholarly online communication skills and slow internet (Priest, Segrott, Green and Rout, 2007).

❑ Further, despite the availability of resources, PGS prefer to use free online resources from Google and Wikipedia (Green et al., 2007). Need for further investigation on this topic.

Discussion cont'

- Finance: 53.5%; n=30) disagreed to have sufficient finance for research activities. In UK, 57.4% agree; In Malaysia 50.4% agree.

- Overall the mean perception was 83.3% about the availability of resources in general: Research lead-university.

- Opportunities for social contact with fellow student researchers: 53.6%: MA; only 17.9% SA. In University of Sydney, 58% agreed. Need to increase strategies used in the school concerned

Discussion

❑ Suggested strategies: timetable workshops and student-led research seminars, programs on publishing and disseminating student research, journal clubs and conferences (Drennan and Clarke, 2009; Oxford Learning Institute, 2012).

❑ only 58.9% (MA and SA) felt integrated into their school community. Total agreement was 52.10% in Malaysia and 54% in UK. Low level of integration of masters students weaken their coping strategies (Chikoko, 2010).

Discussion cont'

❑ Overall mean: 67.8% on students' perceptions of the intellectual climate. Sharing knowledge, experience and problems are important aspects of developing a research team (Priest et al., 2007).

❑ Due to fragmentation in schools, the intellectual climate has been scored lower than other areas of postgraduate research supervision (Australian National University, 2012).

Conclusion and acknowledgement

❏ PGs were generally satisfied with the availability of resources provided by the university, except the aspect of financial support.

❏ Perceptions on intellectual climate scored lower, highlighting the need to look for strategies that might enhance the research culture within the school

❏ **High Education Academy** is acknowledged: permission to use the postgraduate research supervision questionnaire

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Thank you