



***Baseline study on students' perceptions and attitudes towards the HWSETA
Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme***

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August 2015

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Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to thank all HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary recipients who participated in this study, university co-ordinators, and the HWSETA research team (Sibusiso Miya, Lebo Thwala and Marcell Mathonsi) without whom this research project would not have been a success.

Executive Summary

The Health and Welfare Sector Training Authority (HWSETA) Postgraduate Bursary Programme was implemented in 2013. The postgraduate bursary programme has three principle aims. Firstly, to increase the volume of research conducted in health and welfare sector. Secondly, the programme seeks to increase the number of researchers in the health and welfare sector. Finally, the bursary programme aims to build academic and research partnerships with various universities. Through the bursary programme, postgraduate students are provided with financial assistance towards their research projects.

The HWSETA “entered into tri-party agreements” with learners and some South African public universities with the view to support academic research and support learners studying towards careers in the health and social development sector. This report covers the baseline study on the bursary programme which was initiated in 2012. The participants of the study included bursary recipients, and bursary programme implementers at the HWSETA and the respective universities. The study used a concurrent mixed methods approach (i.e. survey and in-depth interviews).

The report is situated within three broad bodies of literature covering (1) skills development literature in South Africa and internationally; (2) the changing role of SETAs in South African skills development policies; and (3) the literature on postgraduate education, enrolment and support. The report takes a cursory look at these literatures to illustrate the importance of research into the impact of postgraduate bursary programmes of this nature.

What the baseline study established was that the bursary programme was implemented according to the Discretionary Grant Policy of the HWSETA. However, there was no groundwork conducted to assess what the bursary programme aims to achieve and how best to implement and achieve the goals of the bursary programme. More effort needs to be made to achieve the equity and development imperatives. The advertising should continue at a national level using print media. However, the advertisement should also be released simultaneously to the universities.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) should be reworked so that it accommodates the university policy and processes while still adhering to the requirements of the bursary programme and the Discretionary Grant Policy.

There are basic communication problems which need to be addressed. Part of this has to do with rigid university procedures. In addition, the HWSETA has to ensure that students are kept informed about administration issues pertaining to the bursary.

On the other hand, there are very important positive findings. Students who participated in the study felt strongly that the bursary programme is one of the important contributions to addressing the skills and research gap, especially among the disadvantaged communities.

This baseline study and the bursary programme are a direct contribution to national policy and the strengthening of the link between SETAs, government policy objectives and the universities.

Students were asked how likely they were to recommend the HWSETA bursary programme to other students. Almost all (89%) students said it is likely they will recommend the bursary programme to other students. This is an important feedback, showing that students think that being part of the programme is a fruitful exercise.

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List of acronyms/abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APP	Annual Performance Plan
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DOL	Department of Labour
HRDC	Human Resources Development Council
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HWSETA	Health and Welfare SETA
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NDP	National Development Plan
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Fund
NSA	National Skills Authority
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF	National Skills Fund
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training

1. Background

The Health and Welfare SETA (HWSETA) established the HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme (referred to in the research study as the bursary programme) in 2012 and implemented it in 2013. The bursary programme is part of the HWSETA's contribution to developing research and skills for the health and welfare sector. It is envisaged that the programme will strengthen the links between students, universities and the HWSETA (HWSETA 2014a). An added benefit of the bursary programme is that it will financially assist eligible students enrolled for their postgraduate studies at any South African university. The bursary programme is thus to assist the HWSETA achieve its research agenda.

This baseline study uses the HWSETA Discretionary Grant Policy (referred to in the research study as the policy) to provide a richer context into the bursary programme. The importance of the policy is that it provides the legislative and policy background for the determination, implementation, administration and approval of the Discretionary Grant. Furthermore, it gives the framework within which the HWSETA management and the staff members and its constituent members should work (HWSETA 2014b). In summary, the policy gives guidelines in terms of how the Discretionary Grant should be allocated. The policy outlines how and why the HWSETA makes decisions to introduce new programmes, in this context the bursary programme. Secondly, the policy sets guidelines in terms of how programmes should be managed. This will shed some light on the operational procedures that the HWSETA used when implementing the bursary programme.

The policy requires the HWSETA to create a Sector Skills Plan (SSP) that is aligned to the national strategic goals as outlined in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and other government strategic plans such as the National Development Plan (NDP). The latter proposes that the number of PhD graduates per year - which was 1,421 in 2010 - be increased to 5,000 per year 2030 (The Presidency, 2011; HWSETA, 2015a). The performance indicators from the strategic plan are incorporated into the Annual Performance Plan (APP), as performance targets. More importantly the APP illustrates how the different learning programmes are prioritised by the HWSETA (ibid). In relation to the bursary programme, one of the targets in the APP requires the HWSETA to promote research within the health and welfare sectors. This is indicated by the number of researchers in the sector that are supported through "targeted funding" (HWSETA, 2015b). Targeted funding refers to "ring fenced funding aimed at increasing the pool of Masters and Doctoral candidates in the sector graduating and contributing to the sector" (ibid). Therefore, the bursary programme was developed in order to achieve the objectives as indicated in the APP.

Any programme implemented by the HWSETA, should aim to reach the transformation and equity imperatives. This requires the bursary programme to comprise of 80% black, 60% females, 5% people with disability, 70% should be the youth (age 35 years and less), 20% people from rural areas (HWSETA, 2014c) and in addition 60% should comprise of individuals from previously disadvantaged tertiary institutions (HWSETA, 2013a). Based on a 2014 report South Africa has an estimated 80% population of Black people, 8.8% Coloureds, 8.4% Whites and 2.5 Indians. However as discussed later in the report, we see that the enrolment of learners at an undergraduate level is not representative of the estimated population proportions (DHET, 2015).

In summary, the policy gives guidelines in terms of how the Discretionary Grant should be allocated. It outlines how and why the HWSETA makes decisions to introduce new

programmes, in this context the bursary programme, and provides guidelines on how programmes should be managed. This will shed some light on the operational procedures that the HWSETA used when implementing the bursary programme. The bursary was established with two main objectives, namely to increase the volume of postgraduate research at Masters and Doctoral level and secondly, to increase the number of researchers in the health and social development sector.

From the description above, two main issues have been identified. Firstly, the bursary programme was designed in line with the APP. Secondly, the manner in which the bursary programme should be executed is set out. At this point in time, the researcher will give a breakdown of how the bursary was implemented and the procedures that were followed.

2. The process

The first call for applications was advertised (annexure A and B) in various newspapers, and in some cases the HWSETA directly approached different universities requesting prospective students to submit their applications. For the purpose of this study, “students” refer to a recipient of the bursary programme. Once applications are received, prospective students are shortlisted in two phases based on pre-selected criteria as determined by the HWSETA. The first phase requires these students to submit their proof of registration and an approved research proposal. The proof of registration indicates that a potential student is currently registered with a South African university. The proposal is used to determine the relevance of the project and how it will contribute to the body of knowledge for the health and welfare sector. It is also used to assess the innovation of the project (HWSETA, 2014b).

The prospective students who have been shortlisted are requested to submit a budget (if not already included in the proposal) outlining how much money they require to conduct their research studies and for what purposes. From the information provided, a budget is then allocated to each prospective student (ibid). It should be noted that the amount awarded to students varies per year depending on budget availability and the number of applications received for bursaries annually.

It should also be mentioned that the bursary aims to pay for the research that will be conducted by a student and not for other matters such as student fees, accommodation on campus (though this excludes accommodation while travelling for research purposes), textbooks and etc. In addition, the bursary is not open to non-South African individuals who do not have permanent residency in South Africa.

Once a student had been shortlisted, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will be issued and has to be signed by the relevant university. The MOA, among other things, stipulates the conditions of the bursary programme such as the conditions under which payments will be made; that payments are only made in tranches; and that the HWSETA may conduct audits.

At this point of writing the report, the bursary programme was in its second year running and is still a fairly new programme. As it is known, challenges and success are anticipated with new programmes. Hence, this study hopes to identify and address challenges that may have emerged during the bursary programme implementation stage. Therefore, a need was identified to conduct a baseline study. This will help the HWSETA in developing a working model for future funding of postgraduate studies. A baseline study is defined as a basic information

gathering exercise (Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern Central Africa, 2010).

3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Gather and analyse basic information with an intent to provide a clear picture in relation to the bursary programme (from how the advertising was conducted, to the selection, awarding and how payments were handled).
2. Gain in-depth understanding of the students' perceptions and attitudes towards the bursary programme;
3. To strengthen student profile of students that have been awarded the bursary so far.

4. Benefits of the study

In addition to the above mentioned objectives, the baseline study will benefit the HWSETA in the following ways:

1. Examine whether the programme has been successful thus far;
2. Find out if there are challenges so that they can be addressed at this phase of the programme (Anyaegbunam et al., 2004);
3. Use this baseline study as a reference point from which monitoring and evaluation processes can be designed;
4. Address immediate concerns of students so that the quality of support can be improved;
5. Use the baseline study as a foundation for conducting impact studies after the completion of the bursary programme;
6. Utilise the baseline study as one of the tools for planning for bursary programmes in the future; and
7. Examine the link between the bursary programme and the developmental goals of government and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in particular.

5. Locating the baseline study within the national policy framework

This baseline study and the bursary programme are a direct contribution to national policy and the strengthening of the link between SETAs, government policy objectives and the universities. The NDP and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training are part of the literature which provides a clear policy guideline pertaining to the role of the SETAs and the HWSETA in this instance. The national policies seek to ensure that SETAs contribute to increasing the number of graduates and research capacity, and the creation of a mutually reinforcing relationship between universities and SETAs. The NDP wants to ensure that South Africa increases its enrolment of graduates "at universities by at least 70 percent by 2030 so that enrolments increase to about 1.62 million from 950 000 in 2010" (The Presidency, 2011:59). The NDP further asserts that "SETAs have a crucial role in building relationships between education institutions and the employers (The Presidency, 2011:61).

In its White Paper on the post-school system, DHET puts an emphasis on a need for articulation and co-operation between the post-school institutions, the universities in particular, and the SETAs. DHET outlines the new policy direction by stating that,

“The new configuration of the Department of Higher Education and Training enables tremendous possibilities for cooperation and mutual support among post-school institutions for the benefit of the system as a whole, and for its students and other stakeholders. Cooperation has begun in line with the vision set out in the third National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III), with SETAs working more closely with public institutions, especially TVET [Technical Vocational Education and Training] and universities, with a particular emphasis on universities of technology” (DHET, 2013: 5-6).

DHET also notes progress made by SETAs in implementing its proposal regarding working closely with post-school institutions: “The SETAs are beginning to help establish partnerships between these educational institutions and employers, especially to facilitate various forms of work-integrated learning. They are also beginning to assist with work placement of college graduates and, to a lesser extent, university graduates” (DHET 2013:6).

6. The HWSETA and the developmental goals of the state

The HWSETA understands and appreciates that its work is part of the national mandate and is located within the developmental agenda of the state. According to Mbane (2014:7), “[In the year 2013/2014] the HWSETA had to double its efforts of improving service delivery and ensuring that skills development initiatives in the sector [were] accelerated to address the national challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment”.

The recent Sector Skills Plan Update of the HWSETA indicates that “The formal partnerships already established with TVET colleges, universities of technology, universities, and other stakeholders to enable workplace-based training in mid-level skills and scarce high-level skills will continue and will be broadened” (HWSETA 2014:24).

In line with the NDSIII, the HWSETA prioritises support of students from social and economically disadvantaged learners, and working with post-school institutions like universities will definitely strengthen the development of health and social development skills in the country (HWSETA, 2014e). HWSETA recognises the need to increase the number of students participating in research by arguing that, “Given the substantial growth expected in admissions to universities and the TVET colleges, the HWSETA will have to increase its provision for scholarships” (HWSETA 2014e:6).

The Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Division of the HWSETA recognises that what it does is a critical pillar of the work of the HWSETA, enabling the SETA to note progress, recognise milestones, identify challenges with the view to address them in the shortest time possible, and to build research capacities in the health, welfare and social development sector. Although the bursary programme is not a large scale project, it does contribute to increasing the capacity for research and an articulation between government, HWSETA, students, and universities (HWSETA, 2013b). Articulation and the building of mutually reinforcing relationships in the skills sector are issues that have been emphasised by the DHET (DHET, 2013).

In the financial year 2012/2013, the HWSETA approved a research strategy which aims “to support a credible institutional mechanism for skills analysis and planning across the health and social development sector” (HWSETA, 2013b:108). The research agenda of HWSETA seeks to build stronger and more pointed collaborations with universities, and the firm belief

of the HWSETA is that it has to strengthen its research capacity and that of the sector so that cutting edge research facilitates the growth of the sector. Innovation and dynamism with the view to address skills and development challenges of the sector must inform research and information dissemination. Indeed, the research agenda of the HWSETA is able to strengthen the HWSETA internally while also building the research capacity of students and the universities.

In the annual report of 2013/2014, Gcabashe (2014) locates the bursary programme within the research agenda of the HWSETA which basically seeks to ensure that the HWSETA produces research of high quality and strengthens the research capacity in the health, welfare and social development sector. The agenda also entails building partnerships with the institutions of higher learning with the objective of ensuring mutual learning and support. This is his elaboration: “The Information, Monitoring, and Evaluation (RIME) division plays a pivotal role in managing knowledge generation, as well as packaging and presenting it in a way that influences policy and projects in the HWSETA. The division commenced with the implementation of the HWSETA research agenda by seeking approval for the awarding of bursaries to students doing Masters and Doctoral studies. One of the criteria for approval was that the area of research be reflected in the research agenda of the HWSETA” (Gcabashe, 2014:56). Having located the study within the policy framework, the report moves on and reviews the relevant literature.

7. Literature on skills development and pathway studies

This section looks at the recent trends in the relevant literature that speaks to the focus of this research paper. The decision to focus on three bodies of literature is informed by the need to locate the paper as a contribution to the broader scholarly and policy orientated research in South Africa and internationally. In the South African context, we see a growth in the literature on skills development and postgraduate education. The aim of this section is to provide a cursory look at the literature on skills development, the changing role of SETAs and postgraduate education with a focus on Masters and Doctoral levels. The trends within this literature demonstrate the existing challenges and future prospects of changes in the higher education landscape that will have a bearing on the bursary programme of the HWSETA.

6.1.Literature on skills development

There are many trends and tendencies in the skills development literature which have seen different emphases over different historical periods. Internationally and in South Africa skills development has traditionally focused on artisanal and intermediary level skills (Akoojee, 2010 & 2012; Meth, 1978; Webster, 1985; Webster and Leger, 1992; Leger, 1992). While the focus remains on the traditional artisanal type skills there has been a gradual loosening of the concept of skill to embrace a broader range of occupations including the services, finance, health and other sectors. As a result, the literature is shifting towards a broader concept of skill that also includes “high skills” such as postgraduate level education and higher levels of scientific knowledge areas which are generally also bound into the concept of skills.

A *first* trend, which arose during the height of globalisation and shifts in the global economy to more technological methods of economic activity, was an emerging focus on the notion of a “knowledge economy” which would shape human society in the 21st Century. As the idea of a knowledge economy started taking shape in academic discourse, some scholars started questioning its intellectual basis and implications for education (Lloyd and Payne, 2002;

Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2011; Livingstone and Guile, 2012 *a & b*; Baker, 2012; Collins, 2013). These critiques emphasised that the knowledge economy argument rests on two problematic foundations: (1) all economies in human society have been based on knowledge production and have within their development the centrality of knowledge in shaping the economy, meaning that the knowledge economy thesis is not new; (2) the knowledge economy thesis links closely to the neoliberal human capital theory approach which seeks to extend economic theory to explain the entirety of human behaviour.

A *second* trend in the literature relates to the critiques in both the South African and international literatures on the “skills shortages” question. South African scholars such as Allais (2012); Treat (2014); Ngcwangu (2014); Ngcwangu and Balwanz (2016); and Motala and Vally (2014) are beginning to question the notion of skills shortages on both conceptual and empirical grounds. The argument is that unemployment is a feature of capitalism, it is not “caused” by skills shortages, and that as a result attempts to make education respond to economic requirements invariably proves elusive since the logic of the capitalist economy is driven by the profit motives and shareholder value creation. For example, in the context of a declining textile industry, skills that were needed in that industry have become redundant (Vally and Motala, 2014).

A similar discourse can be seen in the international literature (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2011; Collins, 2013; Keep and Mayhew, 2014; Cappelli, 2015). In the USA context, for example, Cappelli argues that “Very little evidence is consistent with the complaints about skills shortage, and a wide range of evidence suggests the complaints are not warranted. Indeed, a reasonable conclusion is that overeducation remains the persistent and even growing condition of the US labour force with respect to skills. In fact, the evidence appears to be compelling that the United States is experiencing exactly the opposite problem - a substantial skills mismatch in the form of individuals with more education than their current jobs require and a surplus of educated and skilled workers who cannot find jobs at all, let alone jobs appropriate for their education and skill level” (Cappelli, 2013:1). The consequences of the problems associated with the faith in the knowledge economy reflect on the need for a nuanced discussion about economic change and prosperity through education. A seminal contribution in this regard, also focussing on the American economy, is a book by Brown, Lauder and Ashton titled *The Global Auction: The broken promises of education, incomes and jobs*. What is critical in this book is that the authors show how education has not been able to deliver on what they call the “neoliberal opportunity bargain” which basically relates to the middle class lifestyles that access to education has promised in America over the last 50 years.

“The demand for managerial and professional jobs in the United States is not only far less than commonly assumed, but the quality of working life and rewards associated with those jobs will not live up to expectations. The idea that learning equals earning fails to acknowledge that most of those with a University degree in America have not witnessed an increase in income since the early 1970s. The neoliberal opportunity bargain, which offered families a path to individual and national prosperity through education, has been torn up. If the American middle classes were created by industrial capitalism in the twentieth century, they are now being ripped apart by the global forces of knowledge capitalism” (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2011:5-6)

The upshot of this is that the conceptual approaches to the study of the labour market are invariably impacted by the different understandings of the skills question. The literature demonstrates that the interface between education, the economy and the labour market is more

complex than prescribed by mainstream economists and within the popular media. The development of conceptual approaches to skills and education and training therefore has implications for how individuals view their prospects of success in the labour market. Keep and Mayhew (2014) maintain:

“How policy makers choose to conceptualise the relationship between Education and Training (E&T) and the labour market and economy is of vital importance in determining how policy is shaped. This is not a simple choice as might at first appear to be the case. There are a variety of lenses or interpretive models available that can frame thinking about labour market change, and these have very different implications for how individuals’ prospects of entry into and progression within work are viewed, and also for how E&T might influence and be influenced by these developments” (Keep and Mayhew, 2014:769).

The implication of this literature is that skills are not just a preserve of the private sector and the economy. The public sector and the health and social welfare sector in particular have their own unique skills needs. This largely has to do with the fact that as people get unemployed, they tend to be largely dependent on the state in the form of health and welfare needs. There has to be some balance in terms of delivering skilled personnel in both private and public sectors. The HWSETA is well placed to contribute to the “balancing act”, as well as the building of research capacity and skills development in the health and social welfare sector of South Africa.

This brief assessment of the literature on skills as it relates to the education-economy relationship as well as the critique of mainstream economic rationales of skills training provides a critical basis for our understanding of the changes in approaches to skills and the global context of skills research. The next sub-section (3.2) builds on this section to briefly discuss the changing role of SETAs in supporting postgraduate education in South Africa as they are a critical interface between the economy and the state.

6.2. Changing role of SETAs in skills development

The promulgation of the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA) of 1999 ushered in a new era for the South African Skills Development system - an era which saw the institutional establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). The transition from the apartheid system’s Industry Training Boards to the new SETAs resulted in some changes in the bureaucratic framework and co-ordination of the Skills System from the perspective of the State. Kraak (2004) defines the NSDS as *a new institutional regime for skills formation in post-Apartheid South Africa* which he argues has some characteristics of high skills systems elsewhere in the world. The key driver of the National Skills Development Strategy has been the creation of institutions such as SETAs, the National Skills Fund (NSF) and the National Skills Authority (NSA) which are created as platforms for stakeholder engagement on skills development.

Since their promulgation in 2001 the SETAs have had uneven levels of success in skills development and have been undergoing a process defined by Marock, Harrison-Train, Soobrayan and Gunthorpe (2008) as “institution building with a focus on improved co-ordination and delivery”. The emphasis of SETA work has been largely around co-ordination rather than actual training because under the earlier phases of the NQF the actual training was outsourced to private training providers and the training system became a lucrative commercial

industry of training against unit standards and small parts of qualifications, many of which were irrelevant in the labour market and did not promote career mobility either. The SETA system itself has attracted negative publicity due to allegations of misappropriation of public funds and poor quality provision which has been mainly privately delivered, underpinned by an NQF system of unit standards which has been outcomes led.

The changes within the state which arose due to the African National Congress (ANC) Polokwane Conference in 2007 significantly shifted policy from a posture of austerity to a more expansionary economic policy approach that encouraged greater focus on directing fiscal resources to socio-economic development. In the period between 2001 and 2013/4 what we have seen are structural shifts at the level of state co-ordination of skills policy. The movement of responsibility for skills training from DoL to the DHET has been a significant shift, not only in terms of bureaucratic management but also in terms of policy emphasis. When skills were under the management of the Department of Labour, the policy thrust was more centred around “active” labour market policy as opposed to the emphasis of the DHET which is centred around an articulated Post School Education and Training system. It is within this context that SETAs are now playing a bigger role in supporting the financing of higher education through bursaries for postgraduate research. The bursaries are linked to the need for greater investment in producing the higher level research capacity within the country to support the “knowledge economy”. The SETAs (as stipulated in the White Paper) are now expected to have stronger relationships with Universities to support the throughput of Masters and PhD students to support the NDP targets of 5000 PhD’s per annum.

6.3. Postgraduate education (Masters and Doctoral)

One of the weaknesses of the NDP chapter (9) on *Improving Education, Training and Innovation* is its silence on the importance of Honours and Masters as a pipeline to reaching the goal of PhD’s. The NDP is also very weak in quantifying the trends in postgraduate enrolment in order to ensure that the analysis fits with the concrete realities on the ground. The NDP in this sense is woefully inadequate to explain what needs to be done and how it should be done, it tends to be more of a list of goals or desires without significant weight behind the set objectives. The NDP also ignores a significant body of literature on doctoral education (Maharasa and Hay, 2001; Cyranoski, Gilbert, Ledford, Nayar & Yahia, 2011; Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey, 2015). According to Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2015:75), internationally the importance of the doctorate has increased disproportionately in relation to its contribution to the overall graduate output. This heightened attention has not been predominantly concerned with the traditional role of the PhD, namely the provision of a future supply of academics. Rather, it has focused on the increasingly important role that higher education is perceived to play in the knowledge economy, specifically with regard to high-level skills.

A source that is helpful in gaining a measure of the size of Masters enrolments is the Department of Higher Education and Training’s (2014) *Statistics on post-school education and training in South Africa: 2012* report. This report puts Masters enrolments at 49 561 in 2012 which is then distributed across the public Universities in South Africa. The report further disaggregates this data by demographics and fields of study. As can be axiomatically assumed, the number of Masters enrolments would not neatly translate into the Doctoral numbers as various factors influence whether Masters graduates proceed to PhD study or whether they in the first instance complete the Masters degrees enrolled for. However, at a minimal level the

number of Masters enrolments is very low relative to the expectation within policy to produce more PhDs.

According to Cloete et al. (2015:83 & 87), overall, for the period 2000–2012, doctoral enrolments increased from 6 354 to 13 964, a growth of 7 610 (120%) (see Figure 5.2). South African enrolments increased from 5 117 to 9 152 (a growth of 79%). This compared to an increase from 975 to 4 698 (382%) among all international students and, within this, enrolments among students from the rest of Africa increased from 573 to 3 901 (581%). For South Africans, the annual growth rate of 5% for enrolments was slightly below the overall annual growth of 6.8% for the cohort. By comparison, the annual growth rate of 14% for all international students was almost two-and-a-half times that for South Africans and, within this, the growth rate of 17.3% for students from the rest of Africa was three-and-a-half times more than for South Africans. In 2000, the majority of graduates in both the South African (39.6%) and international (43%) groups were in the humanities. This was followed by the natural sciences with 20.9% South African and 27.8% international graduate groups in the same year. By 2012 these percentages had switched around: of the South African graduates, 31.7% were in the natural sciences compared to 28.8% in the humanities and social sciences, and for the international graduates, 39.9% were in the natural sciences and 27.7% in the humanities and social sciences. Both groups showed a decline in the percentage of graduates in the health sciences (South Africans from 12.3% to 11.1%, international from 13.9% to 8%) and in education (South Africans from 16.3% to 12.2%, international from 8.2% to 7.7%).

The literature on postgraduate education has two main tendencies. Firstly, there are those literatures which come from education planning and economics which prioritise the quantitative and systemic aspects of Doctoral output. The international trend seems to suggest that countries in Asia and South America have rapidly increased their Doctoral output. Cyranoski et al. (2011) reported that the number of PhD-holders has gone through the roof, with more than 50 000 graduates in 2009, and that by 2011, China was producing more PhDs than any other country. Brazil initiated the “Science Without Frontiers” programme to provide publicly funded grants to 75 000 students, with the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs aiming to raise financing from the private sector for a further 25 000 grants. Of the 100 000 fellowships in the four-year programme, around 10% are earmarked for doctoral studies. Another 10% allocated to post- doctoral fellowships will benefit young Brazilian professors spending a year on sabbatical at a university abroad. The number of PhD students in Malaysia has increased from about 4 000 in 2002 to almost 40 000 in 2012, and about half of these students are attached to the research universities.

A *second* set of literatures focuses on the more intensive aspects of postgraduate throughput which speak to the types of measures necessary to support students through postgraduate education (Ahern and Manathunga, 2004; Bitzer, 2011). These literatures are informative on the micro-aspects of how students navigate postgraduate study and particularly the PhD. A tension exists between quality and quantity in doctoral success, pressures for “minimum completion times”, and the challenge of part time versus full time studies. Bitzer (2011) posits eight factors related to doctoral success: Mode of study; finance; infrastructure; research dependence and research independence; student background; academic isolation; quality of supervision and institutional research and monitoring. These factors straddle the personal and institutional context required for success in a doctoral programme.

As part of building relationships with universities, supporting students and increasing the number of postgraduate students and PhDs, there seems to be an increase in the number of

bursaries and scholarships for Master's and PhD studies offered by SETAs since SETAs came under the authority of DHET. In 2015, the FoodBev SETA advertised scholarships for students who want to study towards obtaining Masters and PHD in food-related fields at South African universities (FoodBev SETA, 2015:1). The Wholesale and Retail SETA (W&RSETA) also advertised scholarships for Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and PhD/Doctoral postgraduate studies in the fields of Wholesale and Retail Sector (W&RSETA, 2015:1).

The increase in scholarships and bursaries offered by SETAs is justifiable because evidence does suggest that funding helps improve research outputs and the quality of research. According to Gordin (2003), research on the impact of funding on research indicates that funding of research projects contributes to success of research and increased outputs. Younger researchers who received funding are able to increase their productivity, quality of research and outputs and over time tend to compare favorably with established researchers.

In the same vein, Ross and MacGregor (2012) report on the success of Umthombo Youth Development Foundation (UYDF). They narrate a success story: "The pass rate over the last 13 years has exceeded 84%, with an overall drop-out rate of 13%. All graduates have returned to work in their area of origin, with the majority (apart from 4 students) honouring their work-back contract. Of the 35 graduates who have completed their contracts, over 75% have continued working in rurally situated hospitals," (Ross and MacGregor, 2012:288). They further outline reasons for success, "We believe that the following factors have contributed to the success of the scheme:

- (i) A strong emphasis on student initiative and responsibility (voluntary work exposure, obtaining university placement, work ethic, holiday work experience and peer support);
- (ii) Financial and social support from UYDF (comprehensive financial support, academic and social mentoring support and student accountability);
- (iii) A working partnership with the local community and hospital (open days, student selection and graduate employment)," (Ross and MacGregor, 2012:288).

This means that the HWSETA will have to develop a closer relationship with students and stronger monitoring tools. Of course, the relationship will somehow be supporting the work done by supervisors and universities.

The literature review has provided a cursory overview of issues relevant to the framing of this research paper. The three areas of skills development, SETAs and postgraduate education have provided the necessary context for locating the study. While the literature review has not been exhaustive, it has shown trends in the academic debates within which the study is situated and the policy discourses that are prevailing on the issue of reforms in the post graduate education level in South Africa. The HWSETA's bursary programme is one contribution to the already existing efforts. The next section deals with the theoretical context and framework of the study.

7. Theoretical framework

This study has examined attitudes and perceptions of students towards the HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme. Hence, attitudes and perceptions become key processes that shaped the fundamentals of this study. Attribution Theory and Self-Perception Theory appeared to provide the most relevant and meaningful theoretical perspectives. In

essence, Attribution Theory explains perceptions and Self-Perception Theory focuses on attitudes, forming the theoretical framework of this study.

Attribution Theory explains the processes by which people understand events in their subjective environment (Robertson and Rossiter, 1974). The focal point of Attribution Theory is that an individual is motivated to reach a cognitive mastery of the causal structure of his/her environment. In other words, Attribution Theory is a theory of perception from the lay observer's point of view, as he/she sorts and interprets inward information and infers causality rather than the analytical framework of the scientific observer (Heider, 1958). The attribution theory seeks to explain how individuals make sense of events and the world. It is about how individuals interpret and explain causes of events. Therefore, the baseline study sought to understand how the recipients of the bursaries make sense of the process of the scheme from the advertisement up to the delivery of bursary of funds.

According to Bem (1976), self-perception, rather than dissonance, explains why people at times believe their own lies. Bem's (1976) work demonstrated that people often infer their attitudes from their behavior unlike the traditional view that assumes that attitudes determine behavior. According to the Self-Perception Theory, subjects are engaged in ordinary attributional efforts to better understand their own behaviour (Bem 1976). The assumption is that students' perception of the bursary programme is critical because it can determine how they respond to their academic work. For example, if students feel that the programme is not being run smoothly and is a source of stress, they are likely to be discouraged from participating in it. They are also unlikely to recommend it to others. Thus, this demonstrates that perceptions are real as they influence behaviour and a course of action.

The Service Delivery Charter of the HWSETA is predicated on some of the key principles of *Batho Pele (People first)*, namely "consultation", "transparency", "service standards" and "value for money" (HWSETA, 2014f). Therefore, understanding the perceptions of students who are recipients of our bursaries is also about putting our people at the centre of our activities. In addition, the baseline study demonstrates that the HWSETA takes consultation and stakeholder engagements seriously. The suggestions made by students will help HWSETA improve the delivery of this programme, and it is hoped that other SETAs will also learn from this study so that they do not have to reinvent the wheel when implementing their bursary programmes. As the HWSETA, we recognise that this baseline study stands on the shoulders of those who have travelled this road.

8. Methodology

The study used a concurrent mixed method approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Harwell, 2011; Gray, 2009). According to Brannen (2005:4), "Mixed methods research means adopting a research strategy employing more than one type of research method. The methods may be a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, a mix of quantitative methods or a mix of qualitative methods".

Brannen (2005) further states that a mixed method enables a researcher not to be boxed within one research method, and this can also enhance innovation in the research process. It is mentioned that policy researchers tend to use a mixed methods approach, because it enables researchers to triangulate data and be able to compare findings with the view to arrive at an adequate understanding of an impact of a policy or a programme (Brannen, 2005). Greene (2007: xiii) asserts that the mixed methods research provides the "opportunity to compensate

for inherent method weaknesses, capitalise on inherent method strengths, and offset inevitable method biases”. A qualitative research method provides an opportunity to examine the depth of a phenomenon. On the other hand, the quantitative approach enables a researcher to study the breadth of a phenomenon by generating statistics. The two methods, if carefully executed, can compensate each other and produce findings that are credible.

The quantitative approach was used to obtain information on student profiles and it also included a set of questions regarding their attitudes and perceptions towards the bursary programme. This was achieved through the administration of surveys. The qualitative approach provided an in-depth understanding of student perceptions and attitudes towards the bursary programme. This was achieved through conducting in-depth interviews with the students.

8.1. Quantitative phase

Surveys were administered in the form of a questionnaire. The researcher used 100 questionnaires to provide information that can be quantified and generalised to a similar population (ibid). The information gathered from the questionnaires was able to provide insight into the profile of the students who were part of the bursary programme. The questionnaire was further able to provide a general overview of the attitudes and perceptions held by the students towards the bursary programme.

8.2. Qualitative phase

For the qualitative phase, the researcher conducted 14 in-depth interviews. The participants were students who have benefited from the programme and are registered in a number of South African universities. These interviews were semi-structured in a form of an in-depth discussion guide being comprised of open-ended questions. The information obtained through the in-depth interviews was rich and detailed. From the data the researcher was able to identify emerging themes from the transcripts.

8.3. Recruitment

Since this was a concurrent study, the research team recruited students to participate in either an in-depth interview or a survey simultaneously. Recruitment is when a researcher makes initial contact between the researcher and potential participant, thus it is important that the purpose of the study is communicated clearly. The research team had designed a recruitment questionnaire which included an introduction about the study and students were also asked a set of questions in relation to the bursary programme. These set of questions were used to ensure that the participant was a beneficiary of the bursary programme and to confirm the university and year of the bursary award.

All students were recruited telephonically at least two weeks before the interviews were scheduled. Upon acceptance by a student to participate, an e-mail was sent to confirm the date and venue of the interview. Students were sent a reminder by e-mail a day before the interview to remind them about their interviews. In addition, this was followed up telephonically.

All interviews were conducted at their respective universities. The venues at the universities were set up with the assistance of the bursary programme co-ordinators from the different universities, indicating that the HWSETA is developing a working relationship with the participating universities. This is part of articulation which is encouraged by the DHET.

Separate arrangements were made with the students if they were no longer at the university or if they were part-time students and not available on campus.

8.4. Sampling

First the researcher identified the target population for the study. The target population includes a group of people that are of interest to the researcher (Salkind, 2008). In this study, the target population comprised of all students who were awarded a bursary as part of the HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme. Based on the target population, a sample of respondents (which is a subset of the target population) was selected to participate in the study through a sampling technique.

The researcher used purposive sampling as the sampling technique. Purposive sampling is defined as a sampling technique whereby a researcher elects a sample based on a specific purpose that is aimed at answering a particular research question (Teddlie, 2007). A purposive or judgemental sampling technique is an example of non-probability sampling technique in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative (Babbie, 2013).

The sampling was conducted using a sample list. The sample list used was an HWSETA approved list that consisted of 114 students. The approved list consisted of students who have been approved and confirmed to have received the bursary. Furthermore, they would have contracts already signed by their respective universities whether or not any payment from the bursary programme had been received as yet.

The aim was to conduct 14 in-depth interviews and a minimum of 79 surveys. The sampling was conducted at two levels. Firstly, for the in-depth interviews it was important to select students who had been part of the bursary programme for longer than a year. Thus 14 students who were awarded the bursary in 2013 and 2014 were randomly selected to participate in the in-depth interviews. Initially, the researcher wanted to stratify the universities by some sort of profile. When the research team realised that the only profile possible was between what is referred to as traditional and comprehensive universities, it was realised that the stratification could not be achieved and as a result this idea was disregarded.

As for the quantitative component, the researcher did not sample, the questionnaire being administered to all remaining students. This was important if the researcher was to produce a profile of individuals as close to reality as possible. Consequently, the researcher attempted to complete a minimum of 79 surveys satisfactorily, to ensure that the results have a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error.

Table 1 below illustrates the sample breakdown which indicates that from an initial 14 only 9 in-depth interviews were achieved and 62 surveys from an initial 79 completed. Thus caution should also be applied when interpreting the data so as not to skew results in any particular direction. Reasons for the shortfall will be discussed as part of the limitations that were encountered in the study.

Table 1. Sample breakdown

	In-depth Interviews	Surveys
Target population	All students who were awarded a bursary as part of the HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme	
Total population	114	
Sample strategy	Purposive sampling	
	Purposely select students who were awarded the bursary in 2013 or 2014	All remaining students (no sampling)
Sample size	14	79 (100)*
Actual achieved	9	62

*For results to have a 95% confidence level a minimum of 79 surveys out of 100 must be achieved.

It should be noted as this was a baseline study and though the students were identified as the target population, where the researcher deemed it necessary questions of clarity and interviews were conducted with bursary programme implementers at the HWSETA and bursary programme co-ordinators at different universities.

8.5.Limitations of the study

The researcher was fairly impressed with the quality of the sample list received. However, at times challenges were encountered due to unforeseen circumstances. Most importantly, the strategies that were employed to minimise these limitations were vital if they were to be effective in mitigating any risks. When the research team contacted the students, at first attempt 37 numbers either went to voicemail, went unanswered or they were “currently not available”. Below is a list of the limitations and strategies utilised.

- Student details had changed, (though this was not a significant amount) and six had not provided their contact details. The research team sent e-mails requesting their participation. In some cases, this proved to be successful.
- Some students did not honour appointments. A few were willing to complete the survey and return to us by e-mail. However not all students did so.
- In cases where a student wasn't available, the research team sent the survey electronically. This had some success; however, not all students returned the completed survey.
- Surprisingly, there were students who refused to participate in the study. The general feeling observed here by the research team was that of apparent dissatisfaction with the HWSETA. Closer investigation revealed that this was due to dissatisfaction of how the bursary programme was handled, rather than disapproval of the SETA itself. Students were not required to give specific details for their refusal to participate, and this cannot be attributed to all students who declined. Overall 70 students refused to participate; however, 40 of these students were from the same university.

8.6.Data analysis

8.6.1. Quantitative analysis

Once all surveys were completed, they were each allocated unique identification numbers and captured by the research team. Once capturing was complete, a quality check was conducted on all surveys. The data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to provide simple descriptive statistics. Where applicable with the rating questions, the researcher reported on the top two and bottom two box percentages. The percentages were calculated by adding the percentages of the top two and bottom two boxes and not the two highest score or two lowest score respectively. This is applied with caution as the weight or value of the individual scores may differ (Thomas, 2015). The actual percentages are reflected in the graphs. The researcher has used frequency counts in reporting for the open-ended questions and not percentages.

8.6.2. Qualitative analysis

All students were required to sign a consent form that gave permission to the research team to record and conduct the interview. All in-depth interviews were recorded. These recorded interviews were transcribed and summarised. The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data” (Vaismoradi et al., 2013:340). These patterns that emerged were vital in helping the researcher to describe the phenomenon of the study. The researcher used the common themes that began to emerge and searched across all interviews for common threads (Fereday, Muir-Cochrane, 2006). These will be used to provide a richer understanding from the transcripts and tell a story. The approach to analysis of the data was based on thematic analysis. This is due to the research questions which are open-ended and meant to elicit a broad range of responses. The semi-structured interviews generated data which is more suitable to analyse thematically. The idea was to get data which would show meanings, attitudes and subjective factors that are critical in producing findings relevant to the research question. Thematic analysis allows for themes, patterns, convergences, paradoxes and contrasts to be identified.

Interviews were transcribed and a three step process of coding was followed of *open, axial and selective coding*. Open coding involves the researcher assigning initial codes in a first attempt to condense the data into categories. Axial coding is a second pass through the data whereby the focus is on the initial codes rather than the data. Selective coding involves scanning all the data and previous codes; major themes are then generated with this phase of the coding process (Neuman, 2006). The idea of the coding strategy was to reduce the large data into a manageable size which follows on the themes generated through the interviews.

9. Description of findings

9.1.Quantitative Analysis

In this section the researcher will provide descriptive results from the 62 respondents and provide a thorough analysis in conjunction with the qualitative data. This section will begin with the demographics, followed by the advertising, selection phase, the awarding of bursaries and the payment of bursaries. The researcher has also included a section with some general questions that were asked to students.

9.1.1. Demographics

The aim of this section is to create a profile of who the students are, starting with basic demographics such as age, race, and gender and so on. It includes other factors such as the programme they have or had enrolled for, the universities where they are studying and the nature of their studies (for instance, field of study), etc.

As illustrated below (Fig. 1), the majority of respondents (64.5%) were awarded the bursary in 2015. This is not surprising as more students were awarded the bursary in 2015.

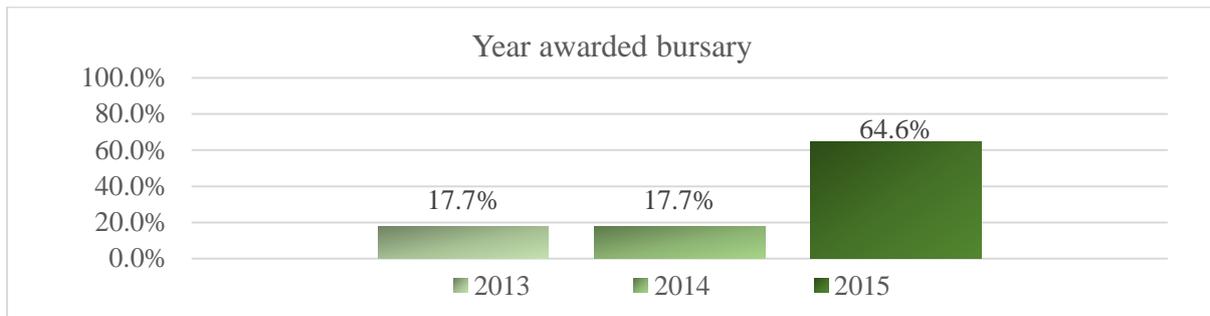


Figure 1. Year of bursary award

The largest age group (Fig. 2), with 53.2% is between the ages of 25-34, followed by the age group 35-54 at 27.4%. There are more females with 56.5% and males at 43.5% (Fig. 3). Of concern is that we have a total of 35.5% above the ages of 35 years. According to equity imperatives, this figure should be at 30%. The bursary programme is on track with regard the equity imperatives for gender. However, what may pose a challenge is that based on 2014 Masters enrolment statistics, females only comprised 58% (DHET, 2015). This figure would need to increase over the next coming years if the HWSETA is to meet the set target of 60%.

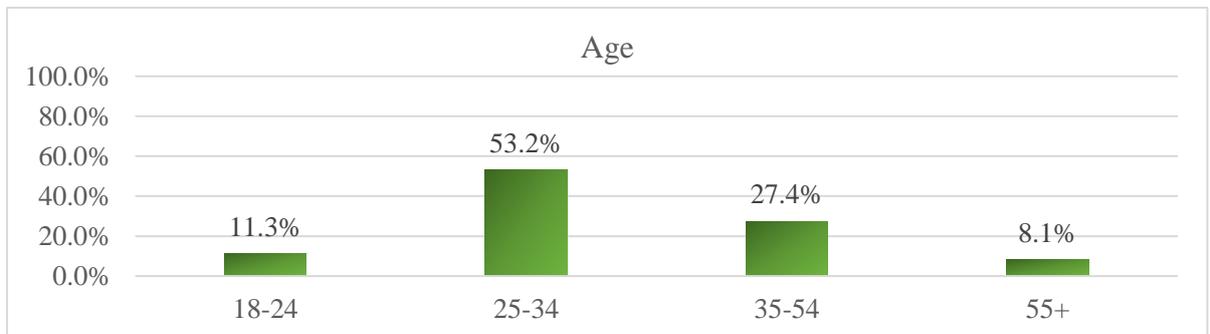


Figure 2. Age

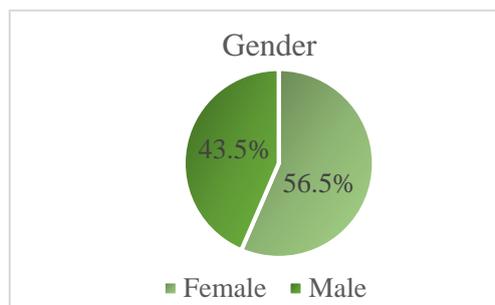


Figure 3. Gender

The majority of students are Black (59.7%), followed by White with 32.3%, Coloured with 4.8% and lastly Indian with 3.2% as shown in figure 4. Only 3.2% of the students have a disability (Fig. 6). Of concern is that the bursary programme is far behind on the 80% target of black people. The combined sum of blacks in the bursary programme is 67.7%. Furthermore when considering student enrolments, it was found that Africans comprised 67%, 7% Coloureds and 5% Indians which gives a total of 79% of black individuals of total enrolments at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) at undergraduate level¹.

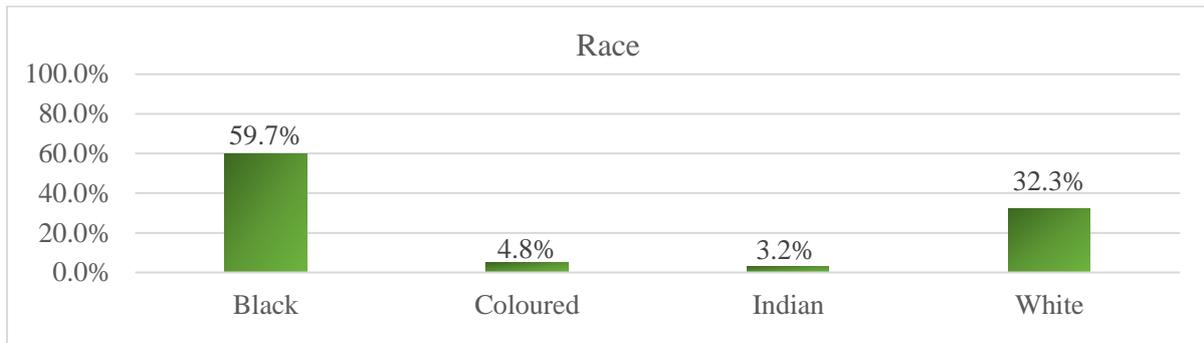


Figure 4. Race

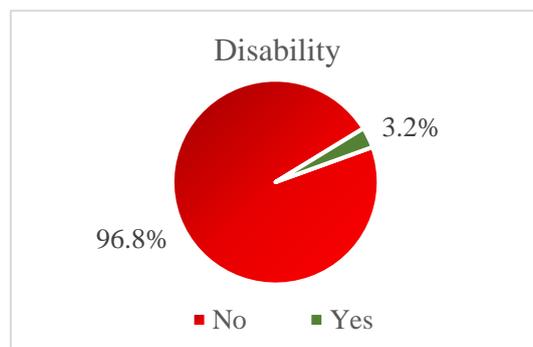


Figure 5. Students with disabilities

Most of the students said they were never married (55%), while 36.7% said they were married. This was followed by 3.3% of those who were either divorced or cohabitating (Fig 6).

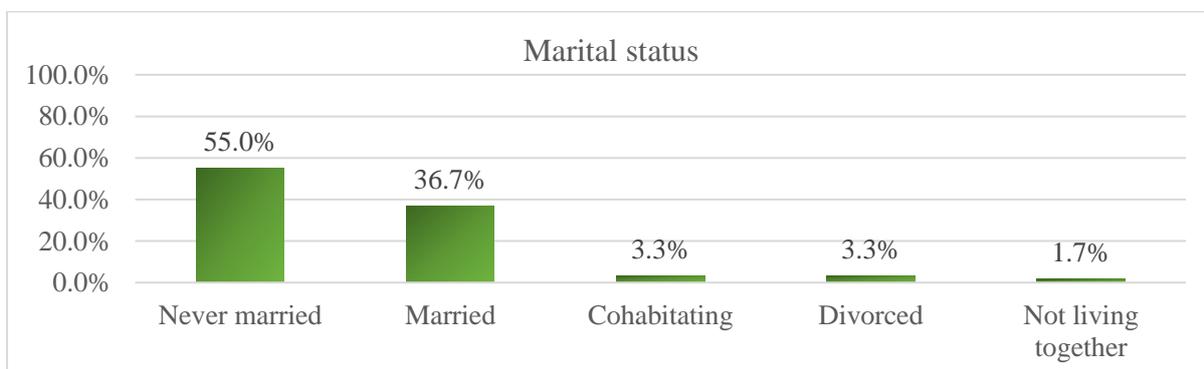


Figure 6. Marital Status

Interestingly, most of the students are employed with 61.3% stating that they are employed full-time, followed by 4.8% who are employed part-time and 1.6% who work as volunteers. Of those unemployed, 21% said they were looking for employment while 6.5% said they were not currently looking for employment (Fig. 7). Perhaps this is an issue that needs to be discussed as employed students tend to take longer to complete their qualification. To increase a cohort of full-time students could also help improve the throughput rate. This is not to say that employed students should be abandoned.

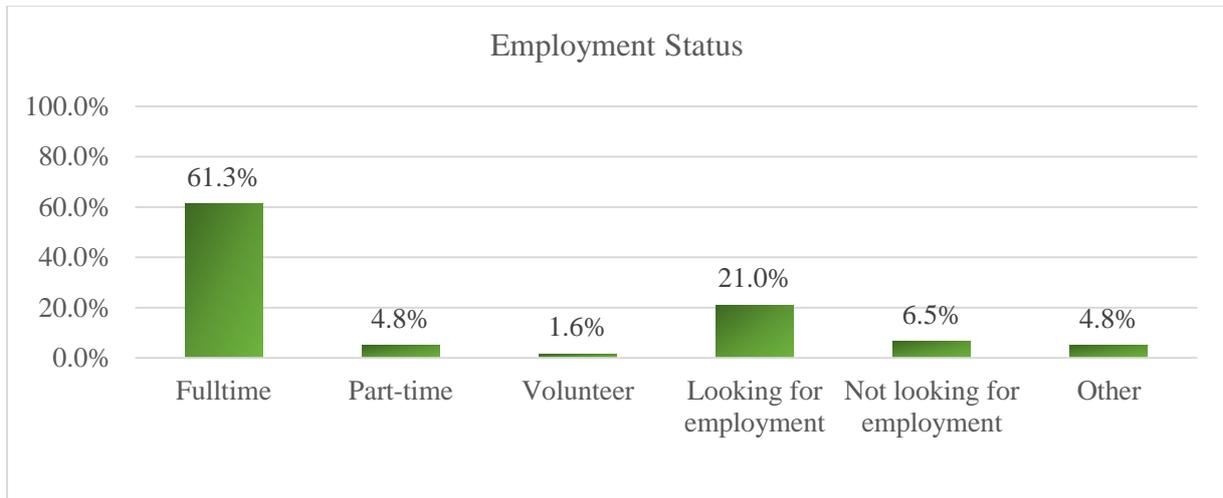


Figure 7. Employment Status

When comparing age and employment status, figure 8 below shows that the majority of those employed full-time are between 18-35 years and those looking for employment are between the same ages.

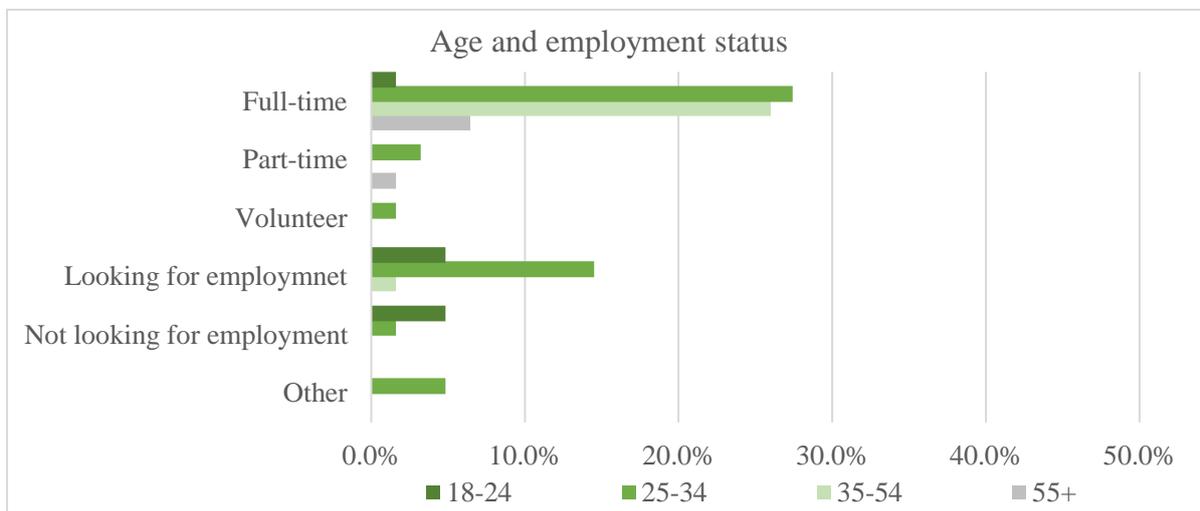


Figure 8. Age and employment status

Below is list of those individuals who selected “other” as an option when asked for employment status.

Table 2. Other: Employment status.

Other: Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Contract position	3	50.0%
Intern	1	16.7%
Post-Doctoral Researcher	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

Figure 9 below provides a breakdown of all the universities that were part of the bursary programme. The University of Pretoria had the most number of students at 27.4%. This was followed by the University of Free State with 22.6% and the North-West University (16.1%).

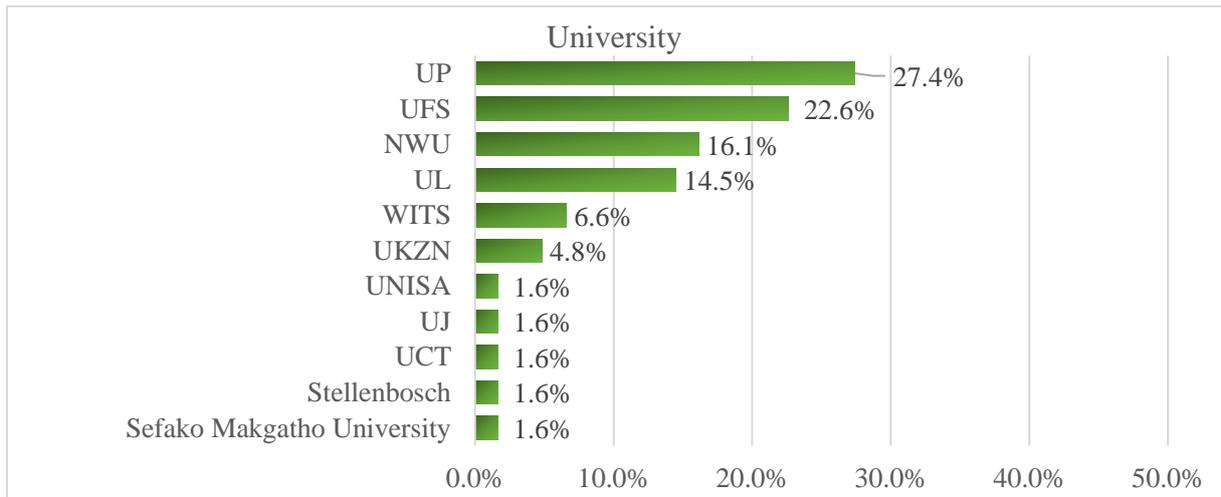


Figure 9. List of universities

The majority of students were from Gauteng (24.2%), and the Free State, Limpopo and North West each had 19.4%, while Kwa-Zulu Natal only accounted for 8.1% of the students in the bursary programme. In order to promote equity across provinces and universities, there has to be some discussions with the Historically Black Universities (HBUs) so that they can increase their participation. Maybe partnerships between HBUs and the Historically White Universities (HWI) which tend to be resourced have to be encouraged precisely because the developmental agenda must not leave behind the most disadvantaged students who tend to be part of the HBUs. The Limpopo Province tends to have low participation rates and that has to do with huge distances between towns of the province and poor infrastructure. In the next phase of the bursary programme students from this province have to be targeted.

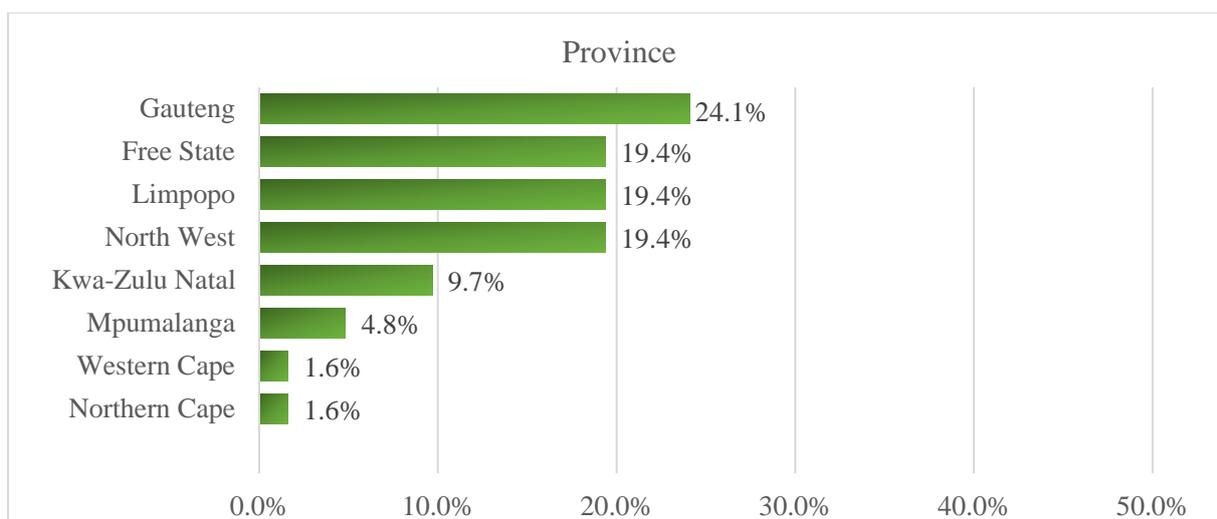


Figure 10. Provinces

Below is a breakdown of the municipalities where the students are from.

Table 3. Breakdown of municipalities

Municipality	Percentage
Tshwane	19.7%
Mangaung	19.7%
Ethekwini	8.2%
Ngaka Modiri Molema	8.2%
Greater Tzaneen	5.0%
Madibeng	5.0%
Polokwane	5.0%
Thulamela	3.3%
Bushbuckridge	1.6%
Dr JS Moroka	1.6%
Ekurhuleni	1.6%
Elias Motsoaledi	1.6%
Enhlanzeni	1.6%
Sol Plaatjie	1.6%
Greater Giyani	1.6%
Johannesburg	1.6%
Klienvlei	1.6%
Lekwa-Teemane	1.6%
Makhado	1.6%
Mandeni	1.6%
Maruleng	1.6%
Ramosthere Moiloa	1.6%
Rustenburg	1.6%
Tswaing	1.6%

The majority of students were in the field of veterinary sciences (21%), followed by the Health Professions Education (17.7%) and Animal Health (12.9%) (Table 4). At the present moment there is too much focus on the health sector and not enough on the social sector. Social work, Sociology, Psychology, HIV and Aids Management and Public Health only comprise 19.3% of programmes enrolled for. Going forward, that intervention is going to be critical so that there can be an equitable spread of resources.

Table 4. Field of study

Field of Study	Percentage
Veterinary Sciences	21.0%
Health Professions Education	17.7%
Animal Health	12.9%
Social Work	11.3%
Physiology	4.8%
Para clinical Sciences	3.2%
Pharmacology	3.2%
Sociology	3.2%
Animal Science	1.6%
Biological Sciences	1.6%
Clinical Imaging -Radiography	1.6%
Health Sciences	1.6%
Higher Education(Health)	1.6%
HIV and AIDS Management	1.6%
MBA	1.6%
Medical Sciences	1.6%
Molecular Medicine and Haematology	1.6%
Molecular Virology	1.6%
Phytomedicine	1.6%
Psychology	1.6%
Public Health	1.6%
Spatial Epidemiology	1.6%

Figure 11, is a graph of the different faculties from which the different fields of study stem. It is not surprising that most students are in programmes that are part of the Veterinary Sciences as the majority of students are enrolled in that area of study i.e. Veterinary sciences (Table 4). The Health and Environmental Science and the Environmental Science faculties are two different faculties; hence they have been separated in this report. The programmes offered within each faculty will vary depending on the institution.

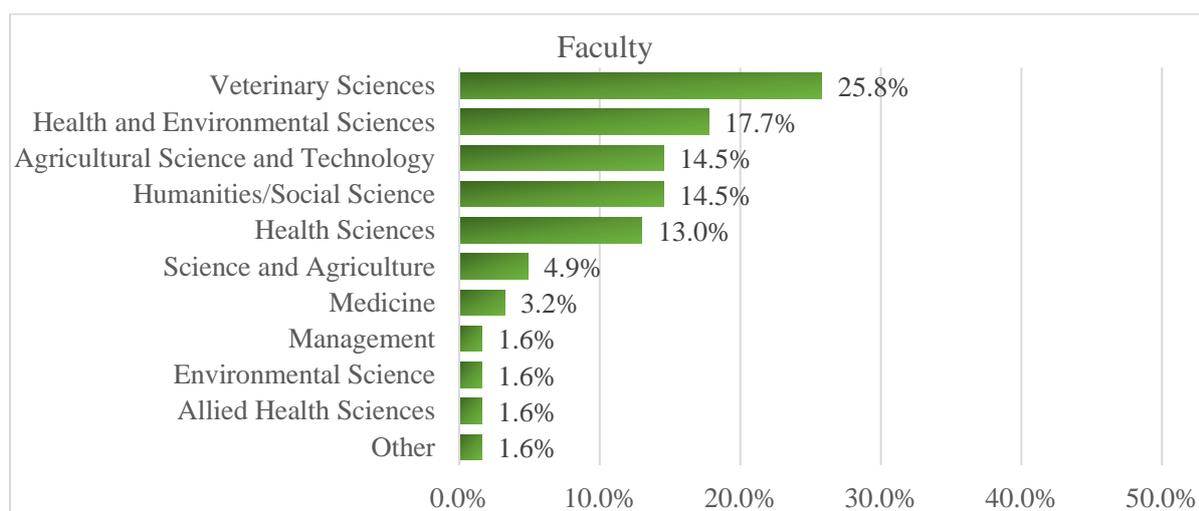


Figure 11. List of faculties

When asked, all students said they thought it was important to pursue a postgraduate degree. The following are some of the reasons why they felt this to be important. The majority mentioned that it is important for developmental purposes. From this theme, sub-themes such

as enabling growth, staying informed and professional growth were mentioned. The need to specialise in one's field of interest came up and of interest was that students also enrolled in postgraduate studies for the opportunities, better jobs or even for promotions (Table 5).

Table 5. The importance of pursuing a postgraduate degree

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Specialisation	Master/specialise in field of study	7	7.8
	Requirement to supervise students	3	3.3
	Increase level of expertise	9	10.0
	To be competitive	1	1.1
	Sub-total	20	22.2
Development	Country needs more researchers	4	4.4
	Enables growth	3	3.3
	Stay informed	2	2.2
	Professional growth	11	12.2
	Increase knowledge	13	14.4
	Sub-total	33	36.7
Opportunities	To be competitive	1	1.1
	Global competitive edge	2	2.2
	Better employment	9	10.0
	To be independent researchers	2	2.2
	Sub-total	14	15.6
Contribution	Contribute knowledge to profession	7	7.8
	Contribute to society	14	15.6
	Sub-total	21	23.3
Education	Improve quality of education	1	1.1
	Improve level of education	1	1.1
	Sub-total	2	2.2
	Total	90	100

More than half of the students were enrolled for their Masters degrees (69.4%), as shown in figure 12.



Figure 12. Level of qualification (linked to the HWSETA bursary programme)

Development was the major theme mentioned when the students were asked why they had selected to study for their respective programmes. It was mentioned at least 26 times. Specialisation also came up again and some even mentioned that they chose it out of keen interest.

Table 6. Reasons for choosing the degree

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Development	Registration as a professional	1	1.5
	Building a career	11	16.7
	Promotions	4	6
	Professional	10	15.2
	Sub-total	26	39.4
Specialise	Improve skills	5	7.6
	Increase knowledge	7	10.6
	Improve competency	8	12.1
	Sub-total	20	30.3
Contribution	To the community	3	4.5
	To the profession	3	4.5
	Sub-total	6	9
General	Keen interest	14	21.2
	Sub-total	14	21.2
Total		66	100

Only a small figure of 11.3% indicated that it was not their own individual decision to take the degree. Some mentioned that they undertook the programmes for reasons such as promotions or that it was a requirement for those employed within an academic environment such as the university (Table 6).

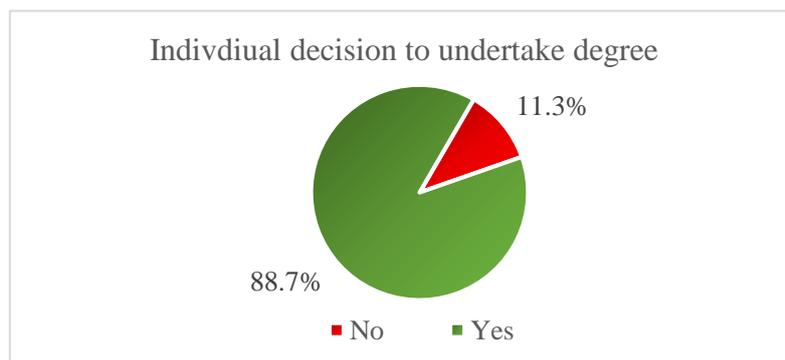


Figure 13. Individual decision to undertake degree

Table 7. Influence for undertaking the degree

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Specialise	Equip oneself with skills	4	9.5
	Benefit	1	2.4
	Develop skills	5	11.9
	Sub-total	10	23.8
Career progression	Promotions	7	16.7
	Better jobs	1	2.4
	Sub-total	8	19
Goals	Set goals	9	21.4
	Opportunity	2	4.8
	Sub-total	11	26.2
General	Keen interest	8	19
	Combined effort	5	11.9
	Sub-total	13	31
Total		42	100

Students were asked how likely would they be to recommend the programme in which they were enrolled to other students on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is very unlikely and 10 is very likely. Almost all students gave a score of 6 or higher. This is an important feedback, showing that students think that being part of the programme is a fruitful exercise. Only 1.6% selected option 1 (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Likelihood to recommend the course

To have an idea of who were the supervisors, the students were asked a few questions. The majority of students at 68.9% had supervisors with a PhD as their highest qualification. This was followed by 19% of supervisors who are in possession of post-doctorate degrees; 11.5% had Masters Degrees and only 1.6% had an external moderator.

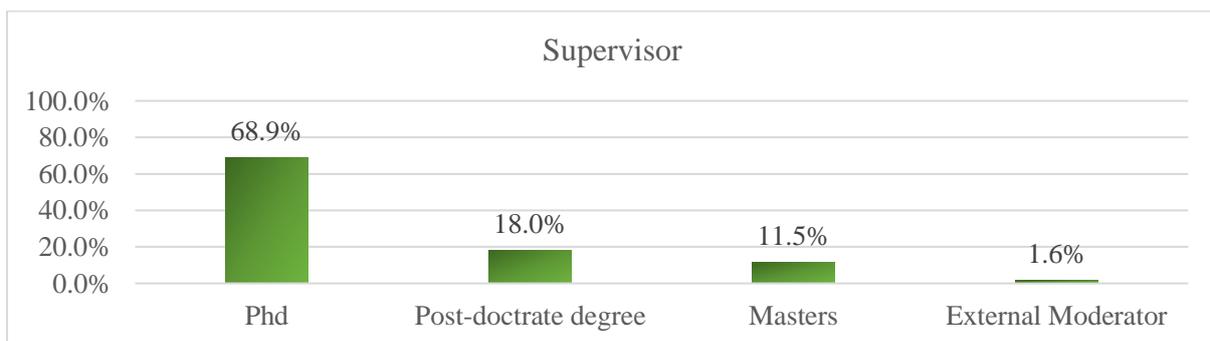


Figure 15. Supervisor profiles

Almost two-thirds (59.7%) of the students said they solely had had influence on their topic of choice for their research project, although 56.5% of the students also indicated that their supervisors had some influence on their choice of topic (Fig. 16). This could be that topics were selected and agreed upon together by a student and supervisor.

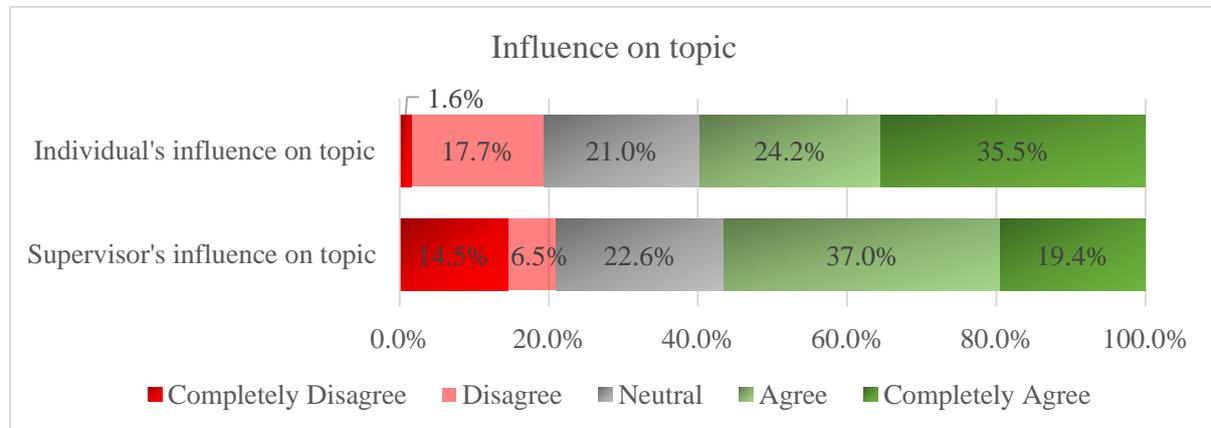


Figure 16. Influence on research topic

In terms of media usage, students had to rank from 1 to 5 which forms of media they used most frequently (with 1 been used most often and 5 used least often). So 1 would represent the form of media that was most important and 5 the least important. The most frequently used form of media by students is the internet (84.2%) as indicated in figure 17 below. Magazines with 10.5% were the second most used and least frequently used with 36.8%.

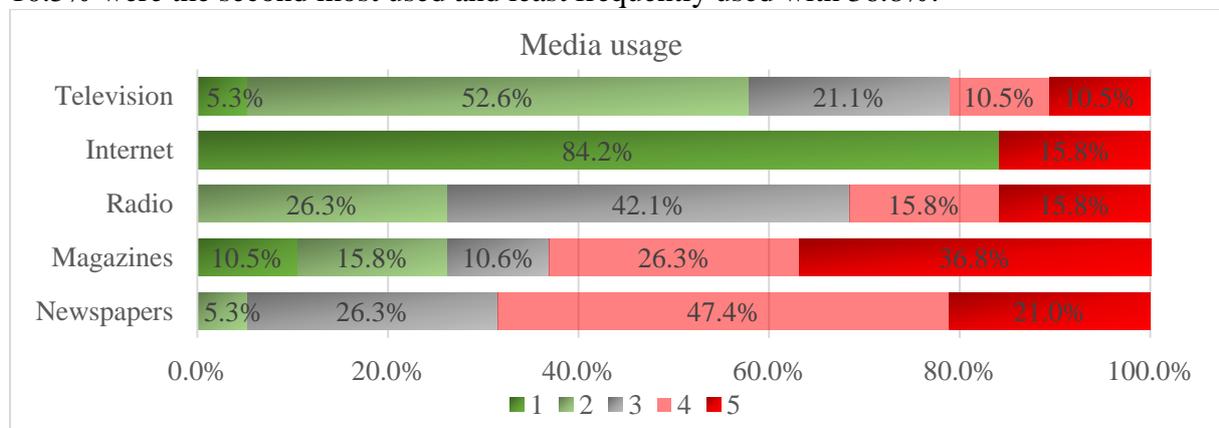


Figure 17. Forms of media used most
*Caution on small sample sizes (n=19).

Once again, most students selected the internet as the most used form of media when asked about the hours spent using media. Almost half at 45.8% said they spend more than 10 hours a week using the internet. With regard to magazines and newspapers, 88.1% and 67.8% respectively were spending less than two hours a week using them.

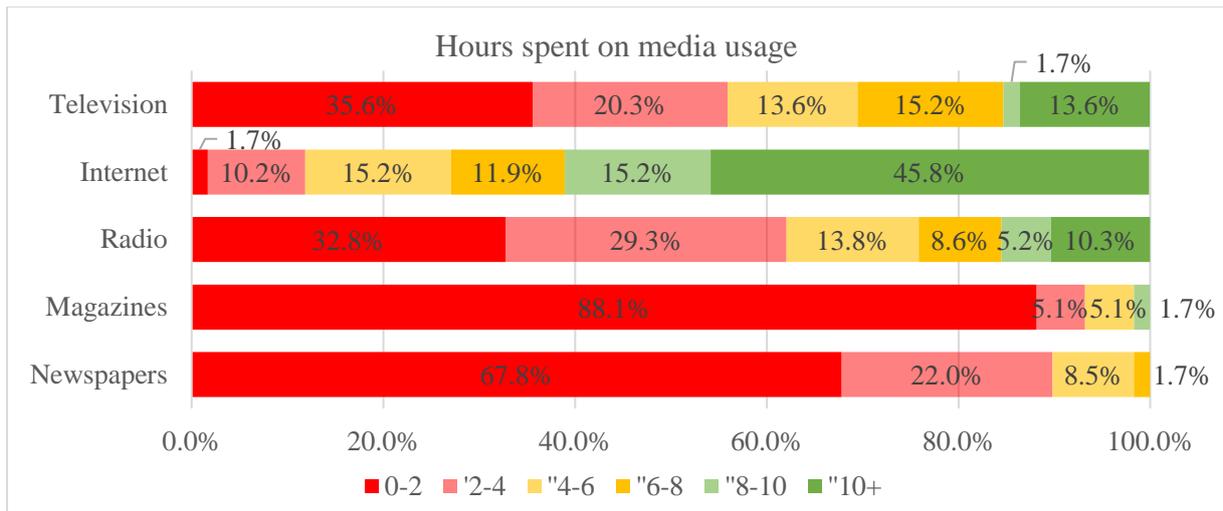


Figure 18. Hours spent using each form of media per week

In the next section the researcher will proceed with the quantitative findings, though focus will be on the different aspects of the bursary programme. We will begin with the advertising, the selection phase, awarding and payments of the bursary programme.

9.2. Perceptions and attitudes

9.2.1. Advertising

In this section the students were asked questions with regard to the advertising of the bursary programme. As a reminder, it is important the advertising of the bursary programme be at a national level thus to allow a fair chance for all individuals to participate.

In figure 19, 61.3% said they first heard about the bursary programme from the university, followed by word of mouth at 14.5% and the internet at 8.1%. This is disappointing as the first source of information should be the newspaper. This raises the question as to whether the newspaper is the right approach or, more importantly, whether the HWSETA is advertising in the right newspapers. Those who selected the option of “other (table 8) heard about the programme from an HWSETA representative, their supervisor and one student mentioned receiving a copy of the newspaper advert from parents.

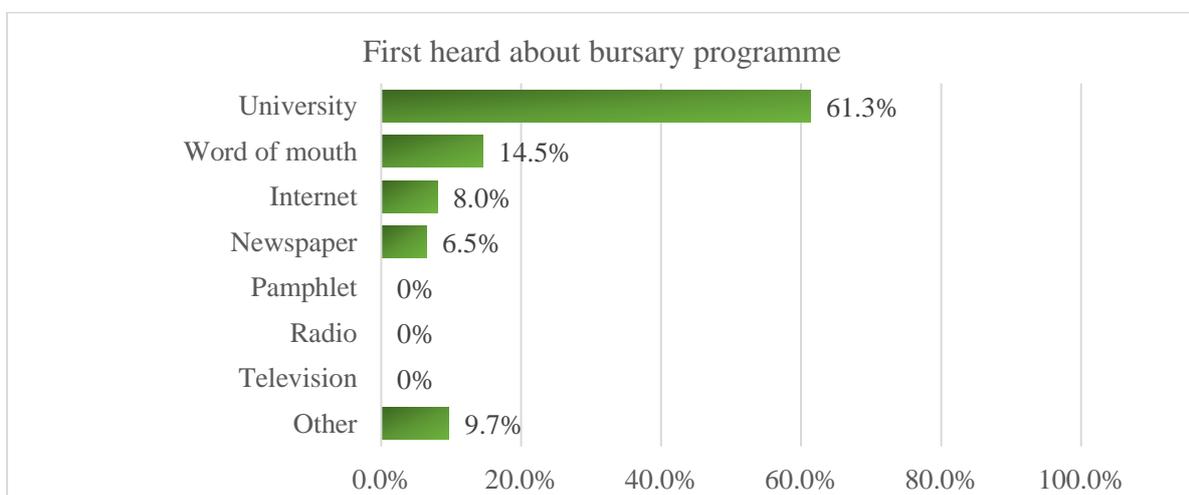


Figure 19. Where first heard about the bursary programme

Table 8. Other: Where first heard about the bursary programme

First heard about bursary programme	Frequency	Percentage
HWSETA Speaker	3	50.0%
Parents sent me a newspaper clipping	1	16.7%
Supervisor	2	33.3%
Total	6	100%

Participants had to state to what extent they agree or disagree with statements regarding the advertising of the bursary programme (Figure 20). When asked if they thought the programme was well advertised 30% said they agree and disagree respectively. Almost half with 48.3% agreed that the advert was clear and concise. However, 10.3% said they disagree with that statement.

Depending on one’s point of view, the percentage of students who select the neutral option could either be saying they are not sure or they have no opinion. The researcher’s own rule of thumb is that the higher the percentage of those selecting the option for neutral could be a cause for concern. When 40% of students don’t have an opinion about whether an advert was well advertised, then perhaps we need to ask why that is.

More than half (58.3%) agreed that the selection criteria was clear from the advert they heard or saw, while 13.4% disagreed with this statement. The majority with 68.4% agreed that it was clearly communicated who the sponsor was.

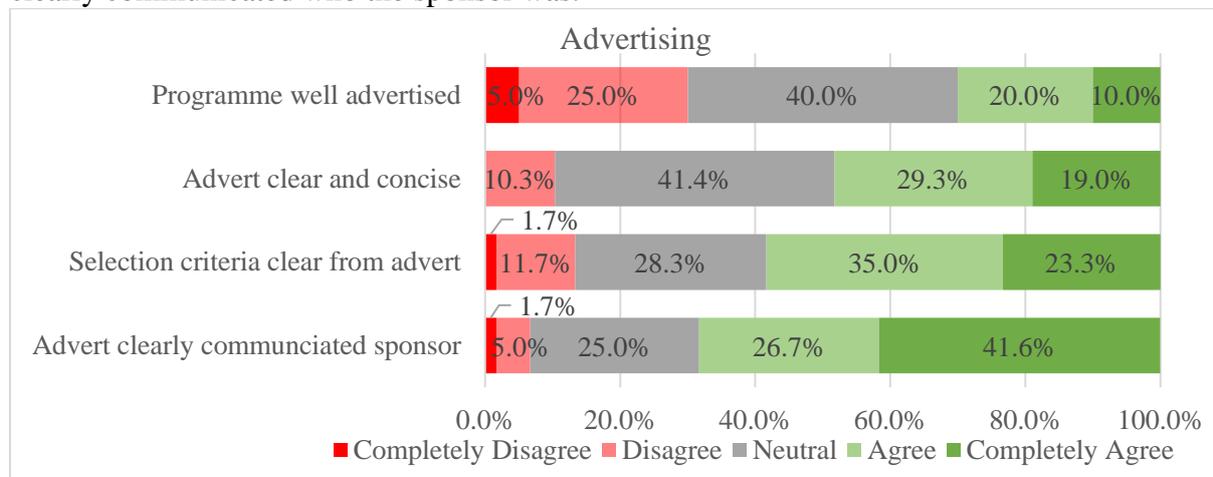


Figure 20. Advertising of the bursary programme

9.2.2. Selection phase

In this section students were asked about their opinions about how the selection phase for bursary recipients was conducted. Although this is more of an internal process, the researcher wanted to have some idea as to whether participants felt that it was conducted at an acceptable standard and if the HWSETA staff member were available to answer any questions regarding the bursary programme. Using figure 21 below, most individuals 55% said they agree that the HWSETA staff members were always available to answers their questions; 13.3% of participants disagreed with this statement. Although 13.3% is a small number and the HWSETA staff should always be available, let’s not forget that 31.7% did not have an opinion on this matter which could have meant that they never had a need to contact the HWSETA staff

members. The majority (65%) agreed that the selection was conducted in a professional manner.

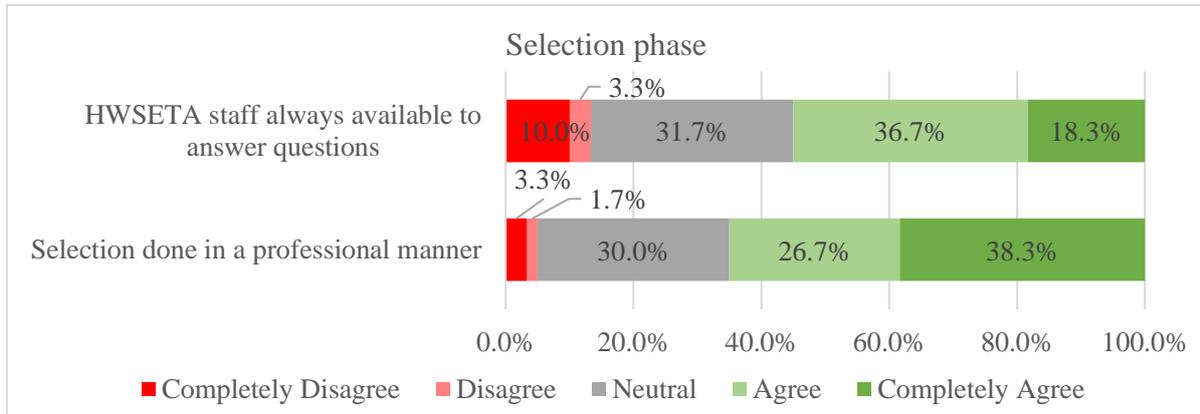


Figure 21. Selection phase of the Bursary Programme

Furthermore, respondents were asked if the selection was conducted in a timeous manner (Table 9). Most mentioned that it was conducted in a timely manner. Of those who noted that there were delays, they attributed these delays to the signing of the MOA’s. In some cases, no payments had been made when the data was collected in July and others indicated that it took so long they even forgot about the applications.

Table 9. Timely manner of selection process

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	Timeously	33	61.1
	Less than three months	1	1.9
	Sub-total	34	63
Delays	Signing of MOA	2	3.7
	Took long	9	16.6
	Forgot about application	1	1.9
	No official communication	4	7.4
	No payments made yet	2	3.7
	Incorrect details	2	3.7
	Sub-total	20	37
Total	54	100	

9.2.3. Awarding of bursaries

In this section students were asked about how they thought the awarding of bursaries was conducted by the HWSETA (Fig. 22). The majority (44.2%) said the awarding of the bursaries was timeous, this was closely followed by 40.3% who said it was not awarded timeously. More than half, (65.6%) were satisfied with the final amount that was awarded to them. Only 12.7% said they were not satisfied with final amount awarded. Most individuals at 59.3% said they were happy with the conditions of the bursary, while 10.2% were not satisfied with the conditions of the bursary. Interestingly, 39.6% of participants agreed that the university influenced the decision in awarding them the bursary. Although, it should be noted that only 24.6% said they selected the university due to the funding that was available from the university. The majority at 59%, disagreed that the university was selected because of the funding that was available.

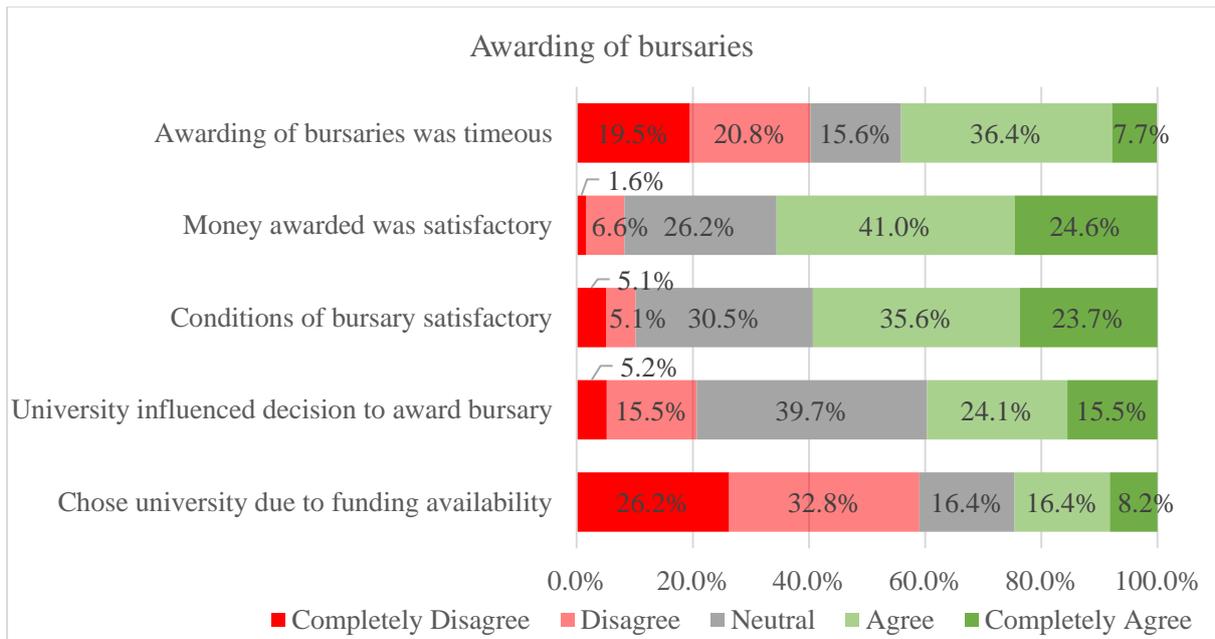


Figure 22. Awarding of bursaries

9.2.4. Payment of bursaries

In this section students were asked about the payments of the bursary to their respective universities and how they accessed these funds (Fig. 23). With regard to bursary payments, 42.4% agreed that they were made on time, while 33.9% disagreed and stated that it was not timeous. The majority at 60.7% agreed that the payment of the bursary money in tranches was fair. Most participants (47.4%) agreed that the process of accessing the money from the university is too bureaucratic. This is an issue that will need to be addressed with bursary coordinators at universities as it undermines the welfare of students.

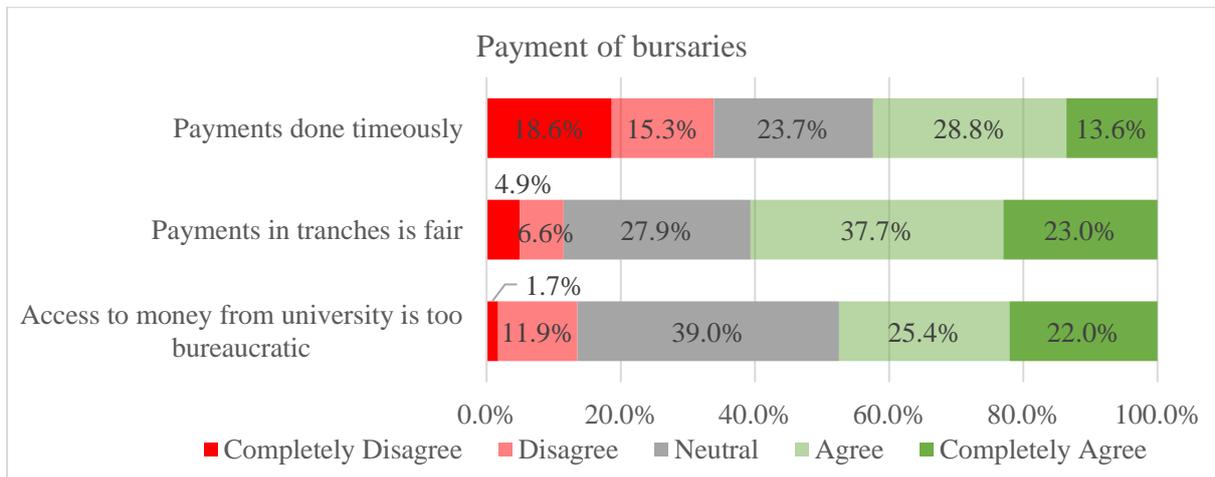


Figure 23. Payment of bursaries

9.2.5. General

In this section students were asked about their overall perceptions towards the bursary programme and their experiences while at the university.

First we asked about the overall experience with the bursary programme. Here most students had a positive attitude and stated that it was good programme and they were certainly thankful and expressed their gratitude. Many did however feel that there was a lack of communication from the HWSETA as they had not even received bursary award letters. Others felt the communication was unprofessional. HWSETA will have to develop an easy and a friendly mode of communication with students.

Table 10. Overall experience with the HWSETA bursary programme

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Good	Encourages research and development	1	2.2
	Helpful	3	6.7
	Effective	1	2.2
	Good experience	12	26.7
	Sub-total	17	37.8
Gratitude	Grateful	2	4.4
	Appreciate	2	4.4
	Beneficial	1	2.2
	Fortunate	1	2.2
	Sub-total	6	13.3
Communication	No award letter	3	6.7
	Helpful staff	5	11.1
	Unprofessional	4	8.9
	Reduced amount	1	2.2
	Sub-total	13	28.9
General	Tranches fair	1	2.2
	Extend funding	1	2.2
	Complicated contract	1	2.2
	Clarity on spending	2	4.4
	Painful	1	2.2
	Disheartened	1	2.2
	Lack of advertising	1	2.2
	Changes to budget made by hand	1	2.2
	Sub-total	9	20
Total	45	100	

Students were asked about the overall perception they had towards the bursary programme. Once again many mentioned that it was a good programme, saying it makes a difference and is helpful. In general others also mentioned that the programme should work more directly with the students. They raised the issue of delayed payments, the lack of communication again and that funding should be extended to cover student expenses.

Table 11. Overall perception towards the HWSETA bursary programme

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Good	Administration	4	7.2
	Beneficial	12	21.8
	Helpful	10	18.2
	Makes a difference	12	21.8
	Development	3	5.5
	Sub-total	41	74.5
General	Work with students	3	5.5
	Lack of communication	3	5.5
	Delayed payment	4	7.2
	Improve MOA	1	1.8
	Extend funding	1	1.8
	Staff availability	2	3.6
	Sub-total	14	25.5
	Total	55	100

Students were asked what they would do differently with regard to the HWSETA bursary programme. Three main themes emerged. The first was advertising, with suggestions such as improving the advertising, and reconsidering the timing of the adverts. The second theme was funding, with many mentioning that funding should be extended to cover other student expenses, that access to the funds should be made easier, and that tranches should be reduced to at least two. In general, many also mentioned again that the HWSETA should interact more with students and communicate clearly the conditions of the contract.

Table 12. Recommendations for the HWSETA bursary programme

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Advertising	Improve strategy	5	9.6
	Timing	2	3.8
	Clarity on partnerships	1	2
	Sub-total	8	15.4
Funding	Extend funding	6	11.5
	Ease access to funds	6	11.5
	Two tranches	2	3.8
	Sub-total	14	26.9
General	Nothing	13	25
	Communicate conditions of contract	7	13.5
	Interact more with students	9	17.3
	Adherence to contract by HWSETA	1	2
	Sub-total	30	57.7
	Total	52	100

Students were asked about their own overall experience at the university during their studies. All had good experiences and found the university, their supervisors and fellow students to be supportive.

Table 13. Perceptions towards studies at the university

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentage
Good	Good	8	22.9
	Inspiring	6	17.1
	Support from fellow students	2	5.7
	Support from supervisor	3	8.6
	Support from university	5	14.3
	Progressing well	4	11.4
	Acquired new skills	4	11.4
	Sub-total	32	91.4
General	Approval process	2	5.7
	University to improve administration	1	2.9
	Sub-total	3	8.6
	Total	35	100

Lastly participants were asked to state the likelihood of recommending the bursary programme to other students. Almost all at 89.1% said that it is very likely that they would recommend the bursary programme to others. This is a very positive response and indicates that the HWSETA is making a practical contribution to developing research capacity and skills within the sector.

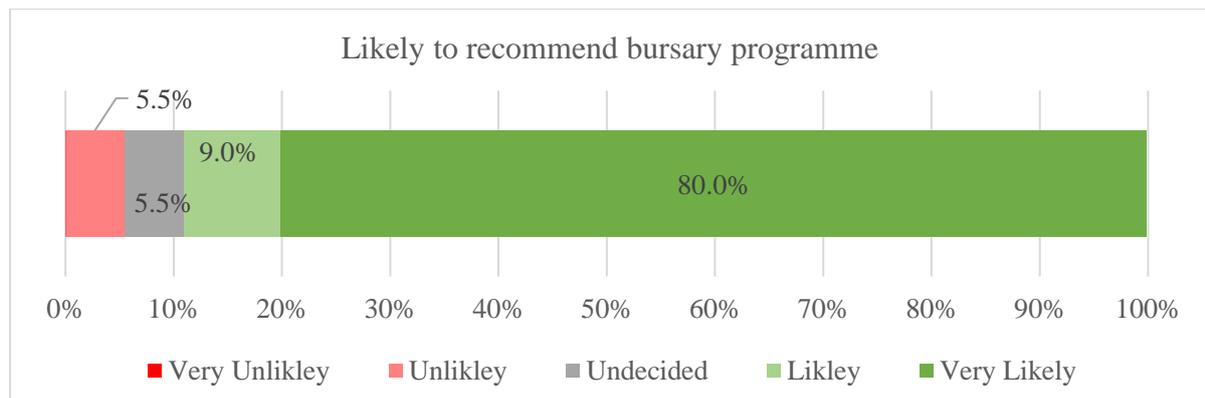


Figure 24. Likelihood to recommend HWSETA bursary programme

9.3. Qualitative analysis

In reporting the qualitative data, the researcher will provide detailed student experiences by comparing those students who were awarded the bursary in 2014 (referred to as year one) and 2015 (referred to as year two). The reason for this comparison is that for these years the programme was implemented differently. In year one the agreement was signed between the university, students and the HWSETA. In year two, the HWSETA worked with co-ordinators forum from the different universities and the agreement was signed between the university and the HWSETA. The co-ordinator is then responsible for communication between the HWSETA and the university.

To provide a comprehensive picture of the bursary programme, the researcher felt that by simply reporting on the qualitative data through identifying themes and reporting verbatim of participants account, the story would be incomplete.

The researcher deemed it necessary to use the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory in research “seeks to construct theory about issues of importance in people’s lives, where a

researcher had no preconceived ideas to prove or disprove” (Mills et al., 2006:26).ⁱⁱ This was not an attempt to include everything in the analysis, but rather as the students were telling their stories the researcher began to notice certain issues of importance that began to emerge from the students (ibid). At the end of the data collection the researcher had a few questions and had to search further to help find answers to these questions. In answering these questions, the researcher made use of document analysis. Firstly, the researcher will discuss the students’ experiences with the bursary programme and this will be followed by a document analysis.

The reader is reminded that the in-depth interviews were only conducted with students from year one. The comparison is made with discussions held with year two students and bursary programme implementers at the HWSETA and universities.

9.3.1. Advertising

The researcher will begin with the advertising. The advertising for the bursary programme was conducted through newspapers for year one and year two. All students except for those at one university applied using the advertisement. The one university was approached directly and an information session regarding the bursary programme was held at the university with the students. Furthermore, students either heard about the bursary programme from the newspaper or had family and friends who referred them to the newspaper advertisement. Some students did state that it was not well advertised as other prospective students were not aware of the programme.

When students applied directly using the newspaper advert, this did pose a few problems once the students were awarded the bursaries. The first was when no relationship had been established between their respective universities and the HWSETA. No awareness existed at the university that the HWSETA had a bursary programme and would like to fund students. Interestingly, students stated that although they saw the advert or heard about the bursary programme from family and friends and understood the bursary requirements and it was clear who the sponsor was, they had not heard about the HWSETA before this. They had to research as they were not aware of who or what the HWSETA is or does.

Furthermore, some students indicated that an amount was stated on the advert, but this was not the final amount awarded to the students. The contact person during the application process is not the individual responsible for the bursary programme. This did create some confusion and what is communicated from both parties may differ.

In year two, once the advertisement was placed in the newspapers, the universities were approached directly and encouraged to submit student applications. Presentations were not made directly to the students but rather the universities informed of the funding opportunity. The responsibility was then left to the university to inform the students about the bursary programme. The students would either submit the applications to the supervisor who would then forward it to the university co-ordinator, or students would submit the applications directly to the university co-ordinator. The co-ordinator would submit all student applications simultaneously to the HWSETA. The problem with this approach is that students do not see an actual advert nor are they party to the presentation. As a result, they are unaware of who the sponsor is and, more importantly at times, they are not informed accurately that it is a research bursary that may only be utilised towards their research project and the funds cannot be extended to include other expenses.

9.3.2. Selection Phase

Next we discuss the selection phase which is standard for all universities. Of importance is whether this was conducted in a professional manner, if the HWSETA staff members were available to answer questions and whether sufficient time was given for all aspects of the process. Though some students reported that the selection was timely, others have a different story to tell.

Certain students felt that the selection took long and what frustrated a lot of the students was the lack of communication during this phase. Even though the HWSETA staff members were available to answer questions, had the selection process been shorter or had there been a system in place to keep students updated there would have been no need to call and enquire about the progress of their applications. Whether it should be the responsibility of the student to follow up, is a factor that is open for discussion. We discuss awarding separately; however, many students felt that part of the delays in the selection phase was connected to the delays in getting the MOA signed.

Some students felt the process was transparent while others disagreed, feeling that it was the responsibility of the HWSETA to clarify with students how and why the decision was made to award final amounts. One comment made was that it was as if the HWSETA was learning as it went along and did not have proper procedures in place.

9.3.3. Awarding

Next the researcher discusses the awarding of bursaries. In year one the students were first sent a provisional approval letter. The student was required to read the letter and by signing they would accept the terms and conditions as stipulated in the approval letter. The letter gave a breakdown of how the amount would be paid out and most importantly, it stated that it was the student's responsibility to ensure that the MOA was signed by the relevant parties at their respective university. A flaw with the provisional approval letter was that it gave an example of how an amount of R60 000 would be paid out. However, after students had returned the signed provisional approval letter and were sent the MOA for signing, the amount had changed and in most cases the amount was less than what was indicated in the provisional approval letter. This left many disappointed and confused as to why the R60 000 was mentioned to begin with. What is the policy around this or should the paragraph not end with "the policy of the HWSETA is ..."? It needs to be clarified that R60 000 is the maximum amount but bursary funds are based on need. A question is whether it is comparable to the likes of those awarded by the National Research Foundation (NRF).

A few students did mention that the reduced amount was the actual amount they had requested and thus had no issues with this. However, students who were dissatisfied with the new reduced amount did not formally follow up with the HWSETA. Some students said they were deterred to follow up due to the lack of communication.

Still on year one, the next issue that arose were the delays in signing the MOA. The students had signed and agreed that they would take the responsibility to have the MOA signed by the relevant persons at the university, but then came the time for them to find these specific individuals. Some students reported that they did not even know where to begin and how to find these people which created problems. Many did not understand the need for this as most bursaries are signed by the bursary or student financial aid division within the university. There were requirements such as requesting the legal department to review the contract, which led to a back and forth between the university and the HWSETA and finding the persons that were

required to sign added to the delays. In some institutions the legal department is required to review the MOA depending on who must sign.

The terms and conditions requested record keeping for audits and as a result two universities did not want to sign the MOA. This meant the MOA had to be revised, and students had to open up separate accounts in which the money would be paid into.

In year two, the HWSETA had identified co-ordinators at each university, wanting one contract to be signed on behalf of all students. This process was quicker; however, depending on the university policy, some contracts were sent for review to the universities' legal department which created an additional back and forth between the university and the HWSETA. At this point students were unaware that they had been awarded the bursary and were not impacted or affected by this process in any way. Once the MOA was signed by the university, it was left at that - as if to say the bursary programme was now the responsibility of the university to co-ordinate. What the student understood about the bursary programme would depend on what was communicated to them by the university.

During the recruitment phase of this research study, the research team realised that the students were never informed of the award. Many complained that they did not receive letters or any form of communication from either their respective universities or the HWSETA. Another Doctoral student recommended a very close working relationship between universities and the HWSETA. This should ease an administrative burden on students (Participant XZ, interview, 4 August 2015). This was the first they were hearing of this award. Thus until such a time they do receive an award letter, it meant absolutely nothing to the students as they were still unsure of the award. Others were unaware that the HWSETA was a sponsor.

To complicate matters even more, students were not aware of the terms and conditions in the contract. As some did not know that this was a research bursary, they were not aware that the funding would not extend to cover student expenses such as school fees and student accommodation. Many only became aware of this fact when they mentioned to the research team that the amount awarded would not be sufficient to cover all costs and asked how the final amount was considered.

Depending on the outlook a student has and their understanding of the bursary programme, some stated that the amount was satisfactory because any funding is better than no funding at all. Some students even reported that they rely on more than one sponsor to cover all their expenses. Other students were disappointed and felt that a bursary should cover all student expenses or at least that they be given the amount of money requested by them.

The researcher would like to remind the reader that as part of the application students must submit a proposal with a budget. Any budget that is part of a research proposal ideally should only include costs that will be incurred during the research study. Certain expenses should not have been included in the budget as part of the proposal. Once again this stems from an individual's understanding about the bursary programme, put together from the information they received.

9.3.4. Payments and communication

Next we review the payments. The payment of the first tranche is paid once the MOA is signed and all documents required are submitted. The second is paid when a student submits a letter from their supervisor stating that they are ready for the next phase which is data collection. The

final and third tranche is paid when a student submits proof that his/her thesis has been assessed and approved by examiners.

The issue of payments in tranches was raised by most students as they did not understand the need for the money to be released in this way. Once the researcher explained the reasoning they then saw the logic behind it. You may find that the students agree that the payment in tranches is fair. Some even consider it a form of motivation. The only (real) issue raised with the payments is that they take too long.

As a researcher I can imagine what effect the delays would have on a project's progress. A simple example, if a researcher needs to print even a one or two-page questionnaire to administer to participants and has no money for this but is made to wait a few months Delays like this would greatly affect a student. The overall impact of this is that you might find a student now at the university longer than anticipated which would also add to student expenses which the bursary programme does not cover.

While students wait for payments nothing is communicated with regard to possible payment dates let alone the delays. Depending on the university procedure, some students are informed accordingly each time the payments are made while at other universities it is left to the student to enquire at the financial department.

In year one, students made individual requests for tranches to be released. Some report having to take loans and repaying them once the payments were made by the HWSETA. This is not what a bursary is about. Furthermore, what the researcher uncovered was that even though the bursary is intended for research purposes, when payments are made to the university, any outstanding fees are first deducted and what money remains paid into the student account. This is not a personal bank account but rather an account from which a student can withdraw money at any time to use towards other school expenses. It is rather disappointing that a student is made to wait a long time for payments to be made and once a payment is received the university first deducts some monies, which possibly does not leave the student with much to conduct their study. As the university was also transferring money to the students, it then became the responsibility of the student to keep individual records of any expenses.

In year two, the universities do made requests for tranches for all students simultaneously. The one reason for this is that often the Head of Department (HOD) would be required to sign and this would be time consuming thus one letter is written and signed by the HOD for all students.

Once the payment has been made to the university, a request is made to have the money paid to the specific departments. In this manner the students request money from the department and not the university, making it easier to keep records of student expenses. Some universities do require receipts and will then reimburse the student, or the student must have quotations for whatever it is he/she may need.

Another student who has completed Master's course work is facing challenges pertaining to completing her thesis. She indicated that the challenge was around funding (Participant XQ, interview 12 August 2015). Communication with this student will have to take place as soon as possible so that she can be assisted to complete her research.

Overall during the data collection, students were frequently mentioning the words communication and treatment. The students raised concern over the communication and

treatment received from the HWSETA staff. The researcher felt that these were of importance, because as an organisation you are a brand that people look up to. How you communicate or not has an overall impact on the brand image. The communication was not all bad; however, in certain cases it can greatly improve.

One of the recipients emphasized the need for constant communication regarding bursary processes and payment. She said,

“I think that HWSETA, first and foremost, must keep these grant recipients informed. Keep them in the loop, keep them informed as to what’s going on. You don’t even have to phone, you’ve got all our e-mail. Just email and say we are at this step of your application process. Now I am waiting for the next payment to come through because I am starting my study and stuff. I am going out into the field and I know already that is going to be a tedious process” (Participant XG, interview, 22 July 2015).

When you communicate with another individual, this can be seen as a reflection of how you see them and therefore treat them. The lack of communication which students were referring to, is the lack of feedback or the non-returning of phone calls. For instance, when making contact with the HWSETA telephonically, the students said that it seems like there is no one available to take their calls. Students stated that even the simplest response such as acknowledging an e-mail was not taking place. An e-mail to say we have received your e-mail and we will attend to your query or comment. Now if no one acknowledges that you have sent an e-mail, how will you even know if the e-mail was sent to the intended individual?

When it came to the treatment, some students went as far as stating that they felt like they were being treated like children simply because they were students. The attitude and approach from the HWSETA staff came across as belittling, there was a lack of enthusiasm and the communication was non-professional. The impression created was as if an attitude had already been formed towards the students.

9.3.5. Document analysis

To further create depth to the story and paint a clearer picture, the researcher will rely on the document analysis. Through the interaction with the students many questions were raised regarding some of the documents and how they should be interpreted. The researcher thought it would be fitting to conduct a document analysis of the adverts that were posted in newspapers, the provisional approval letter and the MOA that was signed by students and the universities. The review of the advert is the first information regarding the bursary programme and therefore it is important to assess the message communicated through it. The provisional approval letter and the MOA are probably important as they will guide students through the terms and condition on what is required from them while they are part of the bursary programme.

In year one, the advert was placed in the *Sunday Times* newspaper and in year two it was placed in the *City Press* and *Mail and Guardian* newspapers. Firstly, there should some consistence with the newspapers used. Secondly, the decision to use a particular newspaper requires some informed process. When selection is made to use a specific newspaper this should be informed by the newspapers footprint and circulation. To put things into perspective, based on a report from January to March 2013 the *Sunday Times* had a circulation of 442 108; the *City Press* a

circulation 118 547 and the *Mail and Guardian* a circulation of 45 279 (South African Info, 2013). Circulation is in no way a reflection of readership but if readership is calculated based on those individuals who read the newspapers only, they would still not be able to see the advert. Furthermore, looking at a newspaper such as the *Mail and Guardian* which is aimed at a particular audience, the affordability of the newspaper comes into question. If the HWSETA chooses a newspaper like the *Mail and Guardian*, there must be some reasoning behind this. Does the HWSETA have data which indicates that the target audience of the newspaper is the same as that which they are looking for in the bursary programme?

Both adverts are similar and the difference did not change the overall message conveyed. The titles of the bursaries differ and the purpose of the programme indicates that this is a programme aimed at increasing research capacity. What this will translate into for the individual is not stated. It could be interpreted as meaning that any student doing research will be funded or that only research projects will be funded through the bursary programme.

It further states that the funding is for research based Masters, Doctoral and Post-doctoral studies. The researcher's interpretation of this is that the funding will pay towards any post-graduate programme that includes a research component where a research project would have to be completed.

As you proceed with reading the advert, it lists the documents required to be submitted as part of the application in order to be considered for a bursary. What was different with year two, the advert does request that a student include a budget required to complete a project. It may be easy to make the assumption that a student will take from this that only project related costs will be covered by the bursary. However, what about other indirect costs expenses that will be incurred as part of the project? This could be the student fees required at the university where a student will be registered or the student accommodation. This would also make sense in a student's mind.

Although the advert gives an outline of the themes that are currently of importance in the sector, the advert encourages students specifically within the veterinary and or animal health sector. This could be discouraging to prospective applicants from other fields. The question is whether this was done to increase the numbers based on analysis of year one or was a need identified from a report or it was part of a strategy?

It should be noted that in both adverts, universities are also encouraged to apply for funding, but it is not clear how they should go about performing this action. Should the university submit one application to request funding for students? Or does the university submit all individual student applications for consideration at the same time?

The next document of analysis is the "letter of provisional approval of bursary". The main purpose of the letter was to inform students that they are being considered for a bursary. What was required from them was to sign the letter and submit any outstanding documentation as requested. The letter provides a breakdown of how the funds will be released to prospective recipients and the required documents which must be submitted in order for the HWETA to make payments. It further makes mention that it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the relevant signatures and letters are submitted to the HWSETA. A student must sign and return the letter with any documentation. Once these have been received they will receive a MOA.

The first critique is the use of the phrase “provisional approval”. In the researcher’s mind and those of students this creates the impression that you are definitely being considered, which was the first intention of the letter. However, as a provisional letter, it also creates the impression that students are provisionally being awarded the set amount as indicated. There is no mention that the amount serves as an illustration of how the tranches will be released. There is no mention that the amount stated is a maximum amount that could be possibly awarded to a student, whereas in actual fact a student could be awarded R60 000 - or less. Why would the HWSETA approve and release this letter to students? Is it possible that this letter served as a template and it was intended that each student should receive a copy of the amount that they were actually awarded?

As mentioned before, the reduced amounts left the students confused. Some weren’t sure if the remaining money was perhaps paid to the university as student fees (or whatever the reason may be). It just did not make sense to students. One challenge is that if students do not follow up on such matters, it leaves a bitter taste and generally could lead to a negative perception been held towards the HWSETA.

The researcher now reviews the MOA which all students and universities were required to sign before the first tranche of the funds can be released.

Under clause 2, the MOA states clearly how the funds must be used by all students, how the funds will be released and other terms and conditions which must be adhered to. As in the case of the provisional approval letter, a university signs on behalf of its students who will not have access to the MOA and thus will not know how the funds are released or how they could be utilised. One shortcoming which emerged from the interviews is that the students are not informed of the awarding of the bursary or the conditions under which the tranches will be released by the HWSETA. This responsibility was left to the university. The MOA does not specify either with whom this responsibility should lie. Some universities are more proactive than others. Some universities leave this responsibility to the supervisor to inform the students. Is it fair to expect supervisors to be the ones informing students of the conditions of the bursary?

The contract lists the names of all students who have been awarded the bursary. The MOA does not state how long the bursary is valid for. In other words, should this only cover a student for a year? Or till they complete their studies? Under clause 6, the terms under which the payments can be released does provide some indication that the money will be released over the duration of the studies. This does not necessarily mean that students are not left wondering why the payments have been carried over to the following year. Ambiguity can also arise from the previous delays in payments. A student could assume a payment is late but intended for use in the one year when the money should in fact be used for the year following.

As the MOA does not state the funds are for the duration of the studies till a student completes them, many students do become disappointed to learn that the bursary will only pay for expenses towards their research projects. To complicate this matter further, students who have an identified topic and not an approved proposal will be at the university for a longer period as well and thus will require more financial resources.

Students had also mentioned that three tranches may be too many and that two may be more appropriate. Under the issue of funding, how the tranches are calculated is of interest. The percentages paid out vary for each tranche. However, the question the researcher asks is whether the percentages should not rather be increased for the first two tranches which is where

the bulk of the work is being conducted by the students? To illustrate this point, imagine a student who is awarded R150 000. The third tranche is 17% of the total amount. This would mean that a student will receive an amount of R25 500 after the thesis has been approved by examiners. Surely this amount would be more than enough to print and bind a thesis.

The MOA states that for all tranches funds must be released within 30 days upon receipt of the necessary documentation. At the present moment the HWSETA is failing to meet this obligation. One student did request in an interview that the HWSETA should take it upon themselves to honour their own contracts. In fairness, if we are unable to meet this requirement, students should duly be notified of any possible delay in payments.

Furthermore, under clause 6, the MOA states that funds may be disbursed in accordance with the University's rules and policies. Does this clause then permit a university to make deductions in situations where a student has outstanding fees? Should a university policy state that before any bursary or funding is paid directly to a student, it should ensure that no money is owed to the university? How do we then as the HWSETA prevent incidents such as this from happening? Perhaps the need to have co-ordinators within each university and separate accounts will counter this effect. However, what will happen when the money is unspent and the university would like to use it to pay the outstanding fees.

All expenses need to be documented as stated under clause 7. Some students are unclear on this process and how they are to access the money from the university. The MOA does not give an indication of how students should access the money. Unless stated in the MOA some universities are not sure of how they are to release the funds to the students.

Still on the issue of record keeping, students reported that as a result of this they were now more aware of how the money was being spent and had learnt to account and adopt more appropriate strategies for record keeping.

Though universities were required to inform the HWSETA of any termination of studies for whatever reason by a student under clause 8, the MOA does not provide guidelines in terms of whether the funding should then be returned. The only requirement made is to return the funds upon termination of the Agreement should a request be made by the HWSETA.

One deterring factor in the MOA under clause 9, was that the universities would have to allow the HWSETA to conduct audits or inspections of the universities' financial records. As mentioned, two universities had refused to sign as this process would prove tedious. One student stated when contacting the financial aid department, she was told that it would be difficult and too tiresome to keep records for one student when there are so many students receiving financial aid. This would require that every receipt, no matter how small the amount, be kept for record keeping. What would happen if neither the student nor the university could account for the expenses? The university may be held accountable for this and they could not take on this responsibility.

Finally, also under clause 9, the MOA does make request that should any employee of the HWSETA wish to interview or speak to them with regard to the bursary programme or the Agreement, they have the right to do so. Though the research team does appreciate the time taken by students to participate in this study, it would have been interesting to see student responses had they been made aware of this clause. Would this have influenced and persuaded more students to participate in the study?

10. Success of the HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme

There has been a reported increase in the number of research outputs that may be attributed to initiatives by government, private sector and others such as the HWSETA postgraduate research bursary programme. This success is reflected in the number of journal publications, book publications and conference proceedings (DHET, 2015). One specific university had 17 students that were part of the bursary programme since 2013/14 financial year. By the end of 2014 all students had submitted their final proposals and ethical clearance to start receiving funding from the HWSETA. From this number, a total 12 students obtained their postgraduate degrees by 2015. The remaining five are set to complete in 2016. This is one example of how through targeted funding the number of research outputs increase. Another recipient of the bursary who is doing a Doctorate in public health had this to say,

“I think the bursary programme is very helpful to people who are coming from disadvantaged provinces. ... there are students who are failing to complete their studies because of funding issues,” (Participant XG, interview, 27 July 2015).

A postgraduate student spoke in detail about the significance of the bursary scheme. She stated that,

“What you are doing is good. I have got younger social workers who are not studying ... They can't study because of funds. For me, I remember when I received the funds I was so excited ... I am married. I've got children. I've got my own expenses. So getting a bursary means a lot not just for you but even for your family”, (Participant XZ, interview 21 July 2015).

This shows that the bursary programme is making a positive impact in supporting the students who have been funded both academically and personally. The reality is that many postgraduate students are of an adult age and also have families who support them through their studies. This is different to undergraduate funding which largely supports the youth who have minimal family responsibilities. While it is not stated openly, implicit in the responses is the importance of recognizing the family structure of the students and making means to support them. The mode of study (part time or full time), as shown in the literature review is a critical issue in determining the success of a student at postgraduate level.

11. Recommendations

In concluding, the researcher will make a few comments with regard to the bursary programme and overall on how it was implemented. The impression created was that there was no ground work conducted to inform the implementation of the bursary programme. The researcher agrees and acknowledges that the HWSETA is guided by the Discretionary Grant policy. However, this should not mean that the HWSETA should not have taken the time to properly identify the best way to implement the bursary programme. The bursary programme was implemented under the assumption that all programmes are the same. However, a post-graduate degree programme cannot be compared to a learnerships or an internship and be regarded as similar. The treatment of each should also be different. Let us not forget that this programme was managed between two divisions within the HWSETA and it was learning curve for all.

11.1. Advertising

In the advertising the use of the word “bursary” can create certain expectations in a student’s minds. Students had raised the issue with the research team that the HWSETA bursary programme is more of a grant. At first one could argue that the use of the word “bursary” could be used interchangeably with the word “grant”. However, one of the students mentioned that the university made a request for the bursary to be converted to a grant. This would mean that the university would approach the bursary programme differently. A quick look at the dictionary and a few websites on the internet and there is somewhat a general consensus that states that a grant is more a sum of money awarded for a particular purpose, whereas a bursary is more financial assistance provided to a student towards paying their fees.

The bursary programme is advertised at a national level through the newspapers, though this method has not proven to be fully successful. As mentioned, 61.3% of students heard about the bursary first from the university. This could be credited to the type of newspapers used. Another possibility is the timing of the adverts. You may find students’ looking for funding at certain times in a year. Bearing this in mind, a student should by a certain period in a year know whether or not they have funding for the following year. Should funding from sponsors not be enough then what measures will they put in place to accommodate the shortfall in funding?

In addition, the advert should clearly communicate how the bursary will be utilised by students. Although students were asked if they understood all criteria, in hindsight they were not asked if they understood what expenses the bursary would cover. Many were surprised when they realised the bursary was only for research purposes.

Though approaching universities directly does help to increase the amount of students who apply for the bursary programme, this could also possibly leave the universities with the impression that they are favoured by the HWSETA. As much as 39.6% of students thought the university carried some influence in the awarding of the bursary. In approaching universities directly, care should be made to ensure that students understand the purpose of the bursary programme.

11.2. Selection phase

Although this is more of an internal issue, the selection criteria are the focus for this section. The critical question to ask is how important the key transformation and equity imperatives as indicated in the NSDS are. If the HWSETA gives preference and prioritises students because they fall within the equity imperatives, would this not leave some universities overlooked? This will create a certain bias towards certain universities or result in a focus in particular areas while others get overlooked. At the same time the HWSETA cannot influence which students a university selects and admits into a postgraduate programme.

Does the HWSETA have the luxury and opportunity to be selective in favour of the key transformation and key imperatives? Does the HWSETA want to increase researchers or black researchers within the health and welfare sectors? It could prove difficult for the HWSETA to only select individuals within the key imperatives. Some attempt should at least be made to select the right individuals while reaching the set targets.

At present there are only 67.7% black students and 29% black females. The target to reach is 85% black students and 60% black females. The HWSETA is far behind with regard to meeting

the race and gender quota. Moving forward it should become important to review where the HWSETA is short of meeting the quotas.

11.3. Awarding

A lesson learnt from this is that students should receive an award letter or some form of official communication to notify students of this award. This could be conducted by the HWSETA or the universities themselves. However, this should be clearly communicated between both parties. Of more importance is the timing of the award. At present, the HWSETA is failing to make payments in the 30-day period as indicated in the MOA. A student is approved in March or April but payment is only made in August. The issue of delay has been raised before with other programmes. If the timing of the award is changed it may be of better benefit to the student.

It is easy to argue that students make the decision to pursue their postgraduate studies on their own and thus should not treat the HWSETA as though it owes them something. It relates to the issue raised earlier where some students view the bursary as some form of financial assistance and state that the amounts awarded are better than no amount. Since you make the decision alone to further your studies, through this you acknowledge that any costs that may arise will be for your own account. However, that does not imply that as the HWSETA we should treat students as we please. If a student is solely relying on this funding, then as an organisation we have failed the people we want to assist.

11.4. Payments

One of the stated requirements for the bursary is that students must already have an identified research topic or approved research proposal. At this phase in a research process a researcher would be ready to conduct fieldwork. A proposal already indicates that funding is now required with urgency. The proposal is approved and therefore the data collection should commence. It would make no sense to request a research proposal and yet payments are not made on time, so the research is delayed.

Payments could be aligned with the university calendar, such that all payments are made at the beginning of each semester. A student knows when they are receiving payment and are able to plan accordingly. Some universities do pay the students money and when the payment is received from the HWSETA, the money is then used to reimburse the university.

Another student is about to complete his Doctoral studies, and has just been employed as a lecturer at a university. This is an indication that the bursary scheme has been able to help some students advance in their careers as researchers and academics (Participant XA, interview, 21 July 2015).

12. The following recommendations are proposed by this research:

- A standard operating procedure should be developed that is tailor made for the bursary programme.
- Amend the administrative processes to make more suitable towards the bursary programme.
- The HWSETA should work with both universities and students.

- From the study, it can be seen that experiences vary depending on how the bursary programme is approached. What this will allow is an opportunity to focus and align processes more appropriately.
- Working with universities is the preferred option, because they have the administration machineries and procedures.
- Another line of communication with students has to be established so that challenges can be anticipated and avoided. This can be through establishing a very closed facebook group, email group, or visits to universities and students. HWSETA has to create a community of its students so that they can identify themselves as part of the sector.
- Changing the name of the bursary programme should be given some consideration. The scheme should be called a research grant. This will enable students to understand that the money must only be used for their research projects.
- The advertising should continue at a national level. Given the decline of newspapers, more emphasis should be put on online adverts, and university faculties, research offices, bursary and scholarship units, and health and social welfare related departments.
- Consideration should be given with regard to the newspapers that are used, with a particular focus on the footprint and readership of the newspaper.
- The information communicated from the advert should communicate to a prospective student that this bursary is intended to fund the research project and no other student expenses.
- The HWSETA should continue making presentations at the various universities with regard to the bursary programme. However, this should be applied fairly across all universities.
- The advertisement must be released simultaneously to the universities when the advert is publicised.
- Universities should be requested to distribute the advert to students.
- Specific selection criteria must be put in place each year so that the HWSETA will be able to reach the key developmental and transformation imperatives. This will mean that in the selection process certain biographical data must be captured. From this we will be able to assess progress on meeting the key imperatives.
- The MOA should be reworked.
- Each university should be treated individually but the MOA should still remain in line with the Discretionary Grant Policy. Through this each university will have an opportunity to explain their current process and how it can possibly accommodate the requirements of the bursary programme as stipulated in the MOA.
- Students should sign a learner agreement to acknowledge the award and to have an awareness of the conditions of the bursary.
- Develop a communication strategy where the students are updated throughout the bursary programme.

13. Conclusion

Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches the research has been able to provide the HWSETA with baseline information to use for assessing the bursary programme. Specific challenges such as communication have been identified. These concerns will have to be addressed as soon as possible so that the programme can be able to register additional

achievements. Despite all the challenges which are normal for any new programme, the intervention has helped a number of postgraduate students from disadvantaged communities to access funding for research. Relations with participating universities have been established. Going forward, a communication strategy, and the strengthening of ties with universities will have to be pursued with rigour.

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1 Appendix A: HWSETA Post-Graduate Research Bursary Programme Questionnaire



HWSETA Post-Graduate Research Bursary Programme

Survey Questionnaire

Introduction

My name is (insert name) from the Health and Welfare SETA offices in Johannesburg. As stated before we contacted you because you were a recipient of the HWSETA Post-Graduate Bursary. We as the Research and Information sub-division are conducting a study on the HWSETA post graduate research bursary programme. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding on perceptions and attitudes toward the bursary programme.

Since the study seeks your perception of the bursary your names and any other identifiers will not be included in any of the reports. Your responses will only be observed by the research team during the analysis and write up phases of the research study. Your name or any personal identifiers will not be included in the report thus confidentiality is assured. Should you wish to not answer a question or stop at any time, you are free to do so.

Please remember to be honest and sincere.

Instructions

- Please select (tick) one applicable answer unless stated differently in the question.
- When selecting the option for 'other' please remember to specify what 'other' means.

***Bursary Programme** refers to the HWSETA Postgraduate Research Bursary Programme

1. Demographics

1.1 Please state in which year you were awarded the bursary.

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1.2 Indicate the age category you belong to:

1	18-24	
2	25-34	
3	35-54	
4	55+	

1.3 Gender

1	Female	
2	Male	

1.4 Race

1	Black	
2	Coloured	
3	Indian	
4	White	

1.5 Do you have a disability?

1	No	
2	Yes	

If yes, specify:

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1.6 Marital status?

1	Never married	
2	Married	
3	Cohabiting	
4	Widowed	
5	Divorced	

6	Not living together	
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1.7 Employment Status

1	Employed – full time	
2	Employed – part time	
3	Employed – Volunteer	
4	Unemployed- looking	
5	Unemployed- not looking	
6	Other (e.g. self-employed)	

If other, specify:

1.8 Please confirm university

1.9 Which province are you from?

1.10 Which municipality are you from?

1.11 Field of study (Veterinary Sciences, Social Work, etc.)

1.12 Please state your Faculty.

1.13 Do you think it is important to pursue a post-graduate degree?

1	No	
2	Yes	

1.12.1 Why do you say so?

1.12.2 Level of qualification currently being pursued or previously pursued (if studies are completed) linked to the HWSETA bursary programme.

1	MA	
2	MSc	
3	MBA	
4	PhD	
5	Other	

Other, specify:

1.12.2 Why did you choose this degree?

1.12.3 Was it an individual decision to undertake the degree?

1	No	
2	Yes	

1.12.4 Why do you say so?

1.12.5 How likely are you, (on a scale of 1-10), to recommend your course/completed course to other students? Where 1 is very unlikely and 10 very likely. **Please tick applicable box.**

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	----	--

1.13 Which is applicable to your supervisor?

1	Has a post doctorate degree and is employed by the university	
2	Has a PhD and is employed by the university	

3	Has a Masters and is employed at the university	
4	An external moderator not employed by the university	

Please state on a scale of 1 to 5 how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Where 1 is completely agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neutral, 4 is disagree and 5 is completely disagree.

Please tick applicable box.

1.12.1 My supervisor had an influence on my choice of topic.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

1.12.2 I, solely, influenced my choice of topic.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

1.13 Please **rank**, from 1 to 5, which forms of media do you use the most. Where 1 is used most frequently and 5 is used less frequently.

1	Newspaper	
2	Magazines	
3	Radio	
4	Internet (including social media)	
5	Television	

1.13.1 Please indicate how much time you spend using each form of media **per week**?

#	Media forms	0-2 hrs	2-4 hrs	4-6 hrs	6-8 hrs	8-10 hrs	>10 hrs
1	Newspaper						
2	Magazines						
3	Radio						
4	Internet						
5	Television						

2 Views on the Bursary Programme

2.1 Advertising

2.1.1 Where did you first hear about the bursary programme? (first source)

Please tick applicable box.

1	Newspaper	
2	Television	
3	Radio	
4	Pamphlet	
5	University	
6	Internet	
7	Word of mouth	
8	Other, specify	

Please state on a scale of 1 to 5, how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Where 1 is completely agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neutral, 4 is disagree and 5 is completely disagree.

Please tick applicable box.

2.1.2 The bursary programme was well advertised. (In other words, the advert appeared in most media sources)

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.1.3 The advert was clear and concise.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.1.4 The selection criteria was clearly communicated from the advert I read/heard.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.1.5 The advert clearly communicated who the sponsor was.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.2 Selection Phase

Please state on a scale of 1 to 5, how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Where 1 is completely agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neutral, 4 is disagree and 5 is completely disagree.

Please tick applicable box.

2.2.1 The selection phase was done in a professional manner. (Conducted using a good and acceptable standard)

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.2.2 The HWSETA staff were always available to answer my questions.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.2.3 Based on your experience, would you say the selection was conducted in a timeous manner? (From closing date to the awarding of the bursary)

2.3 Awarding of bursaries

Please state on a scale of 1 to 5, how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Where 1 is completely agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neutral, 4 is disagree and 5 is completely disagree.

Please tick applicable box.

2.3.1 I was informed about awarding of the bursary in a timeous manner.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.3.2 The amount of money awarded to me was satisfactory.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.3.3 The conditions of bursary were satisfactory.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.3.4 The university I am registered with influenced the decision to award me the bursary. (In other words, the name of the university carries a lot of influence within society)

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.3.5 I chose this university because of funding availability.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.4 Payment of bursaries

Please state on a scale of 1 to 5, how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Where 1 is completely agree, 2 is agree, 3 is neutral, 4 is disagree and 5 is completely disagree.

Please tick applicable box.

2.4.1 The payments of the bursary are done timeously.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.4.2 The payment of the bursary in tranches (three tranches) is fair.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.4.3 The process of accessing the money from the university is too bureaucratic.

1	Completely Agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neutral	
4	Disagree	
5	Completely Disagree	

2.5 Tell us about your overall experience with the HWSETA bursary programme.

2.6 What is your overall perception towards the HWSETA bursary programme?

2.7 What you do differently with regard to the HWSETA bursary programme?

2.8 Tell us about your perceptions towards your studies at the university.

Please state on a scale from 1 to 5 how likely you are to act on the following statement. Where 1 is very likely, 2 is likely, 3 is undecided, 4 is unlikely and 5 is very unlikely.

Please tick applicable box.

2.9 How likely, are you to recommend the bursary programme to other students?

1	Very likely	
2	Likely	
3	Undecided	
4	Unlikely	
5	Very unlikely	

Thank you for participating.

The HWSETA values your input and feedback.



HWSETA Post-graduate Research Bursary Programme In-depth Guide

My name is (insert name) from the Health and Welfare SETA. The Research and Information sub-division are conducting a study on the HWSETA Post Graduate Research Bursary Programme. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding on perceptions and attitudes toward the bursary programme. As mentioned before, the interview seeks to gain insight into some of your perceptions and attitudes with regard to the bursary programme.

All information shared during this interview will be kept confidential and only the research team will observe your responses. No mention of your name will be cited in the report. Please remember that participation is voluntary and should you wish to not answer any question or stop at any time you may do so. Please try to provide responses that are honest as possible because we really want to hear your experiences with the programme.

Introduction

1. Please tell me a bit about yourself and what you do? (*Probe: course studying, level of qualification, length of study, topic and purpose of the research study they are conducting?*)
2. So would you say that it was an individual decision to pursue the degree? (referring to current post-graduate degree) (*Probe: why do you say so? Why did you choose this field of study?*)
3. Please take me through the process and how you selected the topic. (*Probe: did you know who the supervisor would be beforehand, how much influence did the supervisor have on topic selection*)
4. Tell me about the relationship you have with your supervisor. (*Probe: supervisor qualification, provides support, availability, confidence in supervisor*)
5. How are you finding the course thus far? (*Probe: experience with university*)
6. So tell me what forms of media do you use? (*Probe: frequency, what the different types of media is used for*)

Advertising

I will now ask you a few questions with regard to advertising of the HWSETA bursary programme.

7. Where did you hear about the HWSETA Bursary Programme? (*Probe: was it well advertised*)
8. The advert you read or heard of was it clear and concise as to what where the requirements? (*Probe: if understood all criteria and requirements for the bursary programme*)
9. From the information that you heard or read regarding the bursary, was it clear to you who the sponsor is?

Selection phase

10. Please describe the bursary application process?
11. In your opinion, was the process transparent? (*Probe: whether they thought the process was fair, were they informed at every stage, HWSETA staff availability to answer questions*)
12. Would you say the application process was completed in a timely manner?
13. What would you do differently with regard to the application process?

Awarding of the bursary

14. Do you remember how long after the application closing date did you receive confirmation of the award?
15. How were you informed about the success of your application? *Probe: could they have used a different method to inform you?*
16. Were the terms and conditions of the bursary satisfactory to you? *Probe: did they think the contract was fair?*
17. Do you think the university you are currently enrolled in had any influence with the awarding of the bursary? (In other words do you think that the name of university carries some effect?)
18. When selecting this university were you aware of any funding opportunities? (*Probe: Was choice of course influenced by the availability of funding?*)

Payments

19. Are you satisfied with the amount that was awarded to you? (*Probe: did you follow up with the HWSETA how the amount was determined?*)
20. Is the money paid directly to you or the university?
21. (*If paid to the university*) Please describe how you access the funds from the university? (*Probe: describe the process within the university, is it easy to access the money? how do you know when payment has been made by the HWSETA?*)
22. What is your opinion on payments being made in tranches?
23. Do you think the process of accessing the funds is adequate? (*Probe: reasons why*)

General

24. Please tell me about your overall experience with the bursary programme.
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