



**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ACADEMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF: A CASE STUDY AT
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

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DECLARATION

I, Leigh Anne Meyers, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and findings except where indicated, and that the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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ABSTRACT

Previous research on the working relationship between academic and administrative support staff has shown that this relationship is an important one which impacts on the academic environment at Higher Education Institutions which would include Durban University of Technology. The literature indicates the pertinent factors which appear to have an effect on this relationship such as how universities have changed significantly over the years, the power dynamics in HEIs, disciplining of administrative support staff, collaboration and staff workloads, tensions within HEIs and attitudes, motivation and job satisfaction.

The purpose of this case study was therefore to determine the factors that influence the working relationship between these two sectors and the effect this has at DUT.

This study used a mixed methods approach utilizing a questionnaire administered to academic and administrative support staff in two faculties at DUT. In addition, interviews were conducted with senior and middle management representatives of both administrative and academic staff.

The results indicate that the majority of the academic staff believe that the administrative support staff are an integral part of any department and the administrative staff also feel strongly that the work they do in a department is important. Just under fifty percent of both the academic and administrative support staff respondents believe that the academic staff are cautious of the manner in which they treat administrative support staff in order to avoid any backlash or lack of assistance.

Ninety four percent of the academic staff believed that academic staff appreciate the efforts and assistance of the administrative support staff in their departments while only fifty two percent of the administrative staff believed this to be the case. Individual comments by the administrative support staff indicated that they are not happy as they

do not receive credit for the work they do and they are not acknowledged nor appreciated by the academic staff.

The results also revealed that while two thirds of the academic staff respondents believed that the administrative support staff wield power in their departments, less than half of the administrative support staff respondents believed this. These findings point to the fact that the administrative support staff may be completely unaware of the power, albeit informal, they hold in their departments and indeed in the university.

Following an in-depth analysis of the results, this study recommends that DUT Management introduces new titles for administrative support staff that do not include the term 'non-academic'; that the Human Resources Department revise their Staff Induction Policy which appears to be old and outdated (DUT CHED: March 2007) and that more effective selection methods and interviewing techniques may possibly be utilized by the DUT Human Resources Department if they are not presently using them. This study further suggests that Management consider making better provision for administrative support staff to share more equally in study leave benefits and conference and workshop attendance; a further recommendation is that a new DUT policy for highly skilled and knowledgeable subject specialists such as in the IT field, be created and that workshops and teambuilding exercises be offered by faculties and departments for all staff members to attend as these could aid in further discussion of the relationship between the two sectors and hopefully improve on this. Finally, staff recognition for good work in the form of non-monetary rewards or simply a letter or certificate of recognition might also be considered.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEOs	-	Chief Executive Officers
CHE	-	Council of Higher Education
DIT	-	Durban Institute of Technology
DUT	-	Durban University of Technology
FOAD	-	Faculty of Arts and Design
FOHS	-	Faculty of Health Sciences
HEIs	-	Higher Education Institutions
HR	-	Human Resources
IREC	-	Institutional Research Ethics Committee
IT	-	Information Technology
NZTEU	-	New Zealand Tertiary Education Union
HODs	-	Heads of Department
UOT	-	University of Technology

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the topic and context of the study. It further outlines the research problem, aims and objectives of the study, research methodology, significance and scope of the study. The theoretical framework and the contents of the chapters are also discussed.

This study was conducted at Durban University of Technology, a Higher Education Institution that evolved from the merger of Technikon Natal and ML Sultan Technikon in 2002. Durban Institute of Technology then changed its name to Durban University of Technology (DUT) in March 2006, to align DIT with the rest of the HEI technology sector. (<http://www.dut.ac.za/about/:2015>). According to Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013: 285), HEIs went through major changes due to restructuring which included mergers.

The researcher feels that the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff in an academic environment need to be investigated. According to Conway (2012: 37) the relationship between academic and administrative staff members in universities has become increasingly strained, causing a rift between them.

Within this research problem, one of the objectives of this study is to investigate issues of power in the academic environment at DUT. According to Thompson (2014: 2), research indicates that administrative support staff have considerable power in universities and can even influence “long-term goals and the direction the university takes”.

However, there seems to be a gap in understanding the extent of the power and how line managers react. Administrative support staff also have marked knowledge in their departments which gives them immense power. Lower level employees and their supervisors manage documents in the workplace as well as their relationship with each other and the power that the lower level employees hold is a very important factor in how these documents are dealt with (Latham, 2006: 2).

1.2 CONTEXT

Taylor and Underwood (2015: 11) point out that over the last few decades, globally, there has been a lot of movement in Higher Education, particularly in administrative staffing. Administrative support staff are no longer just typing and filing. Not only has the volume of their work increased but they now frequently hold a role as personal assistants, often with a wide range of significant duties such as performing a public relations function, involving increased responsibilities and decision-making powers. “As faculty administrative roles have evolved beyond the basic secretarial and administrative support positions of past years, the affiliation between academics and administrators has also evolved”, (Taylor and Underwood, 2015:11).

Globally, universities have changed dramatically from the 1980s to the present time. Staff and student numbers have increased enormously and so has the administrative function. Dobson (2011) states that due to the increase in student numbers, administrative duties have increased. This is also due to government policy in terms of quality assessment and performance management, which tertiary institutions have to implement these policies in order to get government funding, also leading to an increase in the administrative workload.

The researcher has been an administrative support staff member in tertiary education for approximately 28 years and has observed the power wielded by the

administrative support staff which can possibly have an adverse effect on the relationship between these two sectors.

Previous research has stressed the importance of the relationship between the two groups of staff, either in a positive or negative light, as well as noting that lower level staff have power in organizations although it is informal power (Mechanic, 1962: 350).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The researcher, after many years in an administrative support position at an HEI, is of the view that administrative support staff are often overlooked and given less opportunities than their academic counterparts. This motivated the researcher to investigate the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff in an academic environment.

Administrative support staff have many social associations with both academic and other administrative staff members in HEIs. This makes academics in their departments exceedingly dependent on them which in turn gives the support staff greater power. Administrative support staff thus have considerable power in HEIs which can affect, amongst other issues, timetable preference and ordering of supplies for academic staff members (Cenk Sozen, 2012: 490).

According to Pitman (2000: 165) not much research has been done on administrative staff in higher education institutions and according to Lau (2010), non-academic staff in HEIs are the backbone of universities, while van Straaten, du Plessis and van Tonder (2016: 1) point out that there is still a paucity of research into the well-being of support staff.

According to Conway (2012), due to the changes that have taken place in tertiary education, administrative staff roles have changed considerably from a role of support to a role of co-ordination and management of tasks. Conway's research shows that there has not been any discussion between administrative and academic staff about how these changes affect all staff, leading to a situation where often administrative staff do not know what their core function is.

Some administrative support staff members believe that they do not receive the necessary respect and thanks from academic staff members and are often taken for granted while there is a tendency for administrative staff to feel inferior to academic staff and also feel that academics have greater power than themselves (Pitman, 2000: 171).

1.4 AIM, OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research was to determine the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and the administrative support staff and the impact this may have in the academic environment at DUT.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were established:

- To identify and explore the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff at DUT;
- To identify the views of the academics and the administrative support staff on the issues of power in the academic environment at DUT;
- To explore the relationship that exists between the two sectors;
- To examine to what extent the support staff are appreciated by their academic colleagues;
- To make recommendations to improve the situation should the findings suggest that improvement is necessary

Key Research Questions:

- What are the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff at DUT?
- What are the views of the academics and the administrative support staff on the issues of power in the academic environment at DUT?
- What kind of relationship exists between the two sectors?
- To what extent are the support staff appreciated by their academic colleagues?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the situation should the findings suggest that improvement is necessary?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study, through means of a survey, in the form of a questionnaire, and through interviews with key role players, aimed to explore the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff.

A mixed methods methodology was employed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were gathered in the closed questions of the survey which was distributed to the academic and administrative support staff in the Faculties of Health Sciences and Arts & Design. Qualitative data was gathered from the open-ended questions of the survey, in the form of a questionnaire, and from the interviews which were conducted with selected members of academic and administrative support staff who the researcher believed would offer important and valuable information to the study. The questionnaire comprised eight statements which required a response on a Likert Scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and a further nine questions requiring a Yes or No answer. An 'additional comments/remarks' question was added at the end of the questionnaire. The target population of the study is discussed and the use of purposive sampling is described as the means chosen to select the respondents to participate in the study.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will assist the university to have a better understanding of the relationship between academics and administrative support staff and may also assist in channeling the power that is held by administrative support staff in a constructive manner to the benefit of students and other stakeholders. It is hoped that the findings, suggestions and recommendations of this study will provide awareness amongst all staff at DUT on their relationships.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted at Durban University of Technology. It covered two of the six faculties, namely Arts & Design and Health Sciences at all of the campuses, namely, City, Ritson, Steve Biko, M.L. Sultan, Pietermaritzburg and Wentworth. It was a case study of DUT which focused on the academic and administrative support staff at this one university of technology. However, the similarities with other universities of technology are great and therefore this study is likely to be of interest and relevance to them.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is broadly constructivist because it is interpreting what people are thinking. More specifically this topic has been informed by the ideas of David Mechanic (currently 86 years old) on the topic of power relations within complex organization environments. He was the first known researcher to explore this field.

Constructivism is the way of looking at the world which says we are not finding definite scientific truths, we are finding a human picture which we construct from our own background and our own experiences. According to Richards and Morse (2007:

64), “a constructivist grounded theory is interpretative – both the data and the analysis are created from shared experiences and relationships with participants”.

The researcher employed an interpretivist research approach to underpin this study as the respondents shared their views, feelings and perceptions regarding the relationship that exists between the academic and administrative support staff. According to Maree (2016: 21) “since behaviour is constituted by social conventions, interpretation (hence interpretivism) is required; the facts do not speak for themselves”.

Mechanic (1962) points out that lower participants have considerable power in an organization as they have access and control over people, information and equipment. However, they do not wield authority. He further states that the more time lower participants spend in an organization, the more power they accrue. “Organizations, in a sense, are continuously at the mercy of their lower participants who make higher-ranking participants dependent upon them. This is the key to their power”, (Mechanic: 1962). He also states that the more central a person’s position is in an organization, the greater access they have to people and information and therefore, the greater their power.

1.9 CONTENT OF CHAPTERS

This study consists of six chapters:

Chapter One presents a brief introduction to the study. The research problem, research methodology, and significance and scope of the study are outlined. The aim and objectives of the study are explained along with the theoretical framework.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the literature linked to the study. The chapter illustrates literature in a global and national context. The DUT's policies and procedures are also featured in the literature review.

Chapter Three discusses the research methodology applied in the study.

Chapter Four provides a detailed analysis of the data for the academic staff. The results and findings of the survey and interviews are interpreted and reported.

Chapter Five provides a detailed analysis of the data for the administrative support staff. The results and findings of the survey and interviews are interpreted and reported.

Chapter Six is the final chapter and contains the conclusion and suggestions and recommendations that are drawn from the findings in Chapters Four and Five, and from the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. Suggestions for further research and the limitations of the study are also discussed.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter explained the topic and context of the study. It outlined the research problem, aims and objectives of the study, research methodology, significance and scope of the study and the theoretical framework. The next chapter is the literature review which presents and discusses secondary literature sources linked to this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one discussed the need for the study and stated the context, aim, objectives, content of chapters, significance and scope of the research and the theoretical framework. A literature review is conducted to explain the importance of the research and to “show research that has already happened and research that needs to be conducted in order to justify your research aims or hypotheses” (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 60). The purpose of a literature review is therefore to discuss studies of a similar kind, to identify gaps that exist in the literature, and to contextualize how the literature aids in understanding the research problem being explored (<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/literaturereview>).

The chapter focuses on investigating and providing a wide overview of the relevant literature to understand the factors influencing the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff. It further discusses the pertinent factors which appear to have an effect on this relationship such as how universities have changed significantly over the years, the power dynamics in HEIs, disciplining of administrative support staff, collaboration and staff workloads, tensions within HEIs and how attitudes, motivation and job satisfaction are important elements which aid in identifying and exploring the factors that influence the working relationship between these two groups.

There are a number of gaps in the literature, namely, a paucity of research into the well-being of support staff, “a literature search for studies on the well-being of support staff of higher education institutions (HEIs) produced very little results” (van Straaten, du Plessis and van Tonder, 2016: 1). A further gap is that not much research had been done on administrative staff in higher education institutions: “the

role of administrative staff in the educational experience of students has been generally ignored in academic research”, (Pitman, 2000: 165), and very little research has been carried out internationally in reference to administrative staff being the backbone of universities and carrying out the daily running of their respective departments. According to Lau (2010: 6), non-academic staff in HEIs are the backbone of universities and carry out the daily running of their respective departments. However, there has been very little research carried out in this area to date.

2.2 THE CHANGING FACE OF UNIVERSITIES

Biggs (2012: 189-206) points out that universities have changed in almost all aspects over the years and today’s universities have become financially responsible for themselves. Due to this fact, universities are now run as commercial organizations and are solely set on preparing students for the workforce in a wide array of professions. He explained how he has worked at many different universities in different countries over a sixty year period and is of the view that universities do not get as much funding from governments as they once did and indicates how the standards of certain professions have increased; where once diplomas were sufficient, students are now earning degrees. Biggs confirms that universities are now driven to earn business revenue, staff are extremely overworked and there is now a lot more research conducted than there was in the past.

In universities today, the duties of secretaries and technical staff are far more complex and involved than they were fifty years ago. Support staff in HEIs play an important role as they need to provide good quality service to all their customers: students, academics, parents and other staff members, and their attitudes and behaviour can have a substantial effect on customer satisfaction (Barkhuizen, Mogwere and Schutte, 2014: 69-77). Support staff also take on the daily tasks in HEIs and face endless demands from their academic counterparts and in return, do

not always get the necessary support in terms of “career development, opportunities, unrealistic deadlines, lack of participation in decision making and poor compensation” (Barkhuizen, Mogwere and Schutte, 2014: 69-77). These authors point out that “talent management of support staff” in HEIs is still limited despite the fact that it would not be possible to achieve the faculty or department’s goals without the assistance of support staff.

Universities have thus become money-oriented institutions and are being run as commercial corporations which affects administrative support staff (both secretaries and technical staff) in today’s modern office as it has become a lot more stressful. According to Szekeres (2006: 133) administrative positions in Australian universities have grown due to external funding and the need for more administrative departments/units at universities which are run like corporate businesses now and not educational institutions as in the past, when all funding was provided by the government. Information technology has grown over the years and universities appear to be more productive and efficient because of this, administrative/general staff seem to now be very professional and have the power to make decisions (Szekeres, 2006: 133).

Dobson (2011: 1-5) looked at data provided by the Australian Government from 2002 to 2010 in order to do a numbers comparison. The number of students increased by 37%, academic staff only increased by 13%, administrative staff increased by 27.5% and research academic staff increased by 87.4%. The explanation for these numbers is that the administrative duties have increased due to government policy in terms of quality assessment and performance management in order for tertiary institutions to get government funding and therefore the administrative workload has increased.

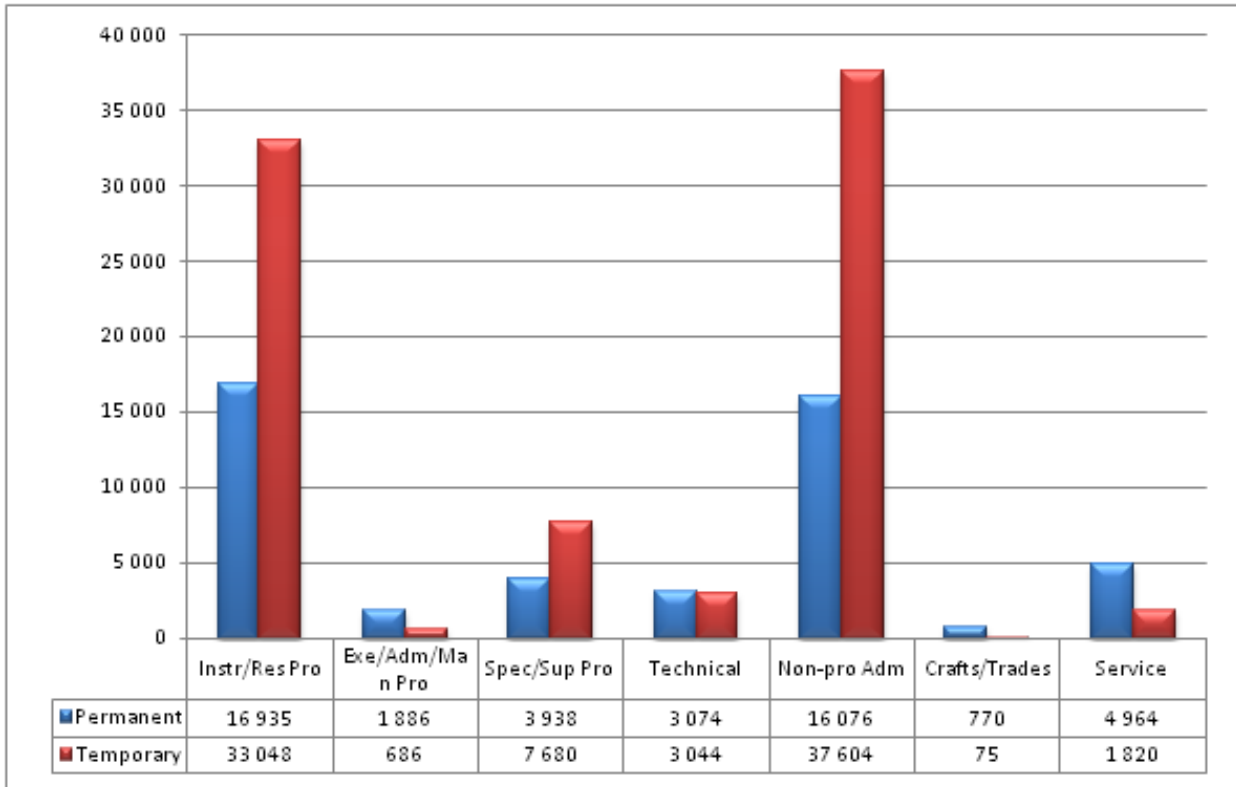
Sally Hunt (General Secretary of University and College Union in the UK) was interviewed by K. Catcheside in 2011, and is of the opinion that one of the major

reasons for a divide between administrative and academic staff, is due to the changes that are happening in terms of the financing of universities. Hunt believes that in the past, the university senate and council had a strong academic voice but this is no longer the case. In the interview, Hunt spoke about one institution closing down their physics department because of a government funding delay. This same institution had already closed their social work department in spite of there being a huge demand for qualified social workers. She believes that these types of decisions are being made without the support or views of the academic community and are having a negative effect on staff and students alike. She also believes that staff are losing confidence in management and that all staff – academic and administrative – should have representation on the university council/ governing body in order to be able to communicate constructively with each other.

Clare and Sivil (2014: 61) point out that in 2007, of 43,717 full-time employees in South African public universities, only 15,589 were academics and that research has been prioritized over teaching in HEIs in South Africa. This focus of HEIs could be seen by academics as an inordinate expenditure on non-academic posts at the expense of academic posts which represent the core work of the university.

On the Council of Higher Education (CHE) website, in 2011, it was noted that out of a total of 47,643 full-time employees in the South African higher education sector, only 16,935 were academics while 28,052 were administrative support staff, technical staff and service staff, 1,886 were senior management and 770 were tradespeople (Higher Education Data: Staffing 2011).

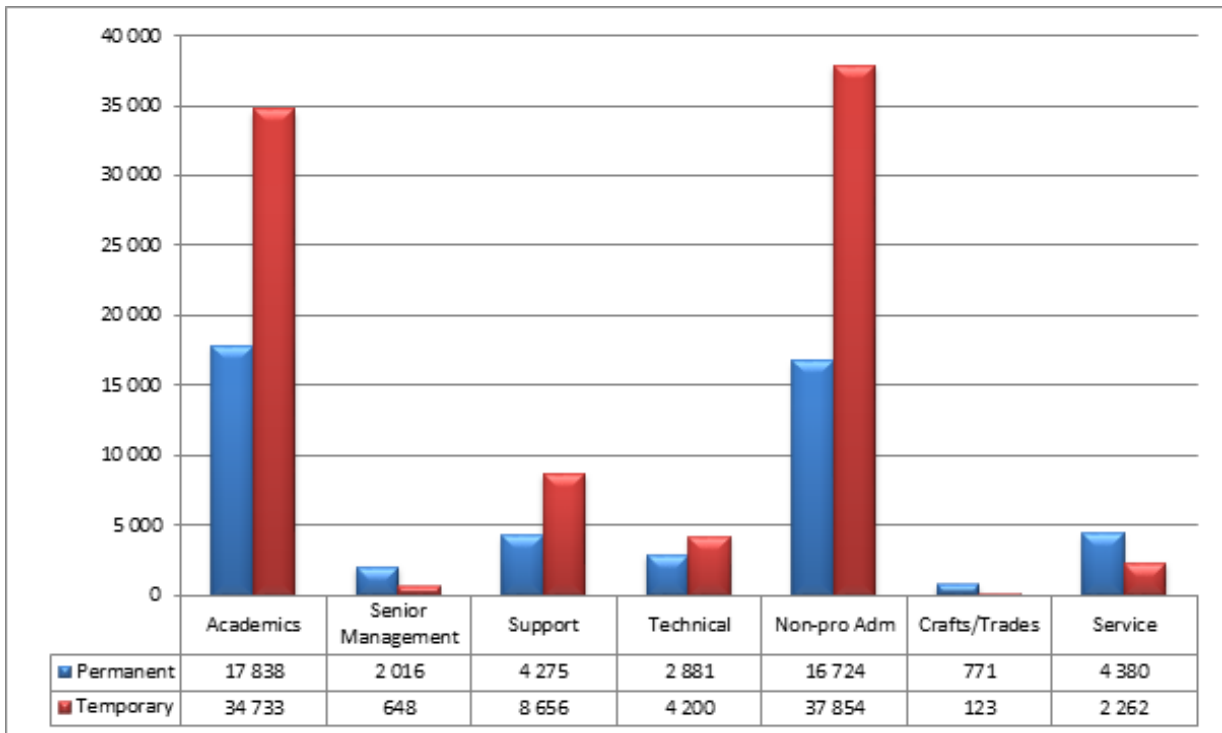
Figure 1: Overall staff employment status by personnel category for 2011



Source: Council on Higher Education S.A. 2011

On the CHE website, in 2013, out of a total of 48,885 full-time employees in the South African higher education sector, only 17,838 were academics while 28,260 were administrative support staff, technical staff and service staff (inclusive), 2,016 were senior management and 771 were tradespeople (Higher Education Data: Staffing 2013).

Figure 2: Overall Staff Employment Status by Personnel Category for 2013



Source: Council on Higher Education S.A. 2013

It can be seen from the two graphs above that there appears to be a trend that the administrative support staff numbers are significantly higher than those of the academic staff members.

Grey (2012: 1) argues that administrative staff numbers have increased in New Zealand tertiary institutions due to the fact that there are more students and the fact that the roles of administrative staff are changing dramatically and these staff members have a lot more responsibility in order to free up academics from administrative duties. The fact that the New Zealand government has increased the number of general staff in higher educational institutions has caused a discord between academic and administrative staff in that country. As part of a research project undertaken in Australia by Conway (2012: 46), an academic staff member commented that more than 60% of the university budget is spent on administrative

support staff. Therefore, this appears to be a global trend although New Zealand and Australia are much better resourced than South Africa. South Africa faces additional challenges – however it appears that, globally, added administrative responsibilities are true in all contexts. Rothmann and Esskenko (2007: 135-152) state that the challenges for support staff include “stress and burnout.”

According to Armstrong, Thompson and Brown (2012: 1-2), universities everywhere have changed considerably over the past fifteen years. This is due to a number of factors including the expansion of university systems to include bigger and more diverse student populations, the introduction of new and more advanced technology, and the fact that it appears as if students now only study to prepare for the job market and not for the student experience as in the past. This has had an impact on the courses offered at universities as they are now more career oriented than in the past. The funding system has also changed completely and is now run as a business and is more reliant on student performance. This article refers to research done in the United Kingdom but the authors mention how these changes have similarly taken place worldwide and include countries like Australia, United States, South Africa and New Zealand. Therefore it can be seen that certain aspects of education as it was in the past are no longer relevant. “Employers now want their workforce to be flexible and innovative, expecting them to be capable of learning new things” (Armstrong, Thompson and Brown, 2012: 2).

Grey (2012: 4) presented a report at a general (administrative) staff day for the New Zealand Tertiary Education Union, and stated that finances and cost-cutting of educational budgets is having a negative effect on general staff. He believes that general staff are often invisible, their views are not given the attention they deserve, and they do not receive the resources they need to do their jobs properly.

It must be pointed out that not only secretarial responsibilities but also academic ones have developed and changed considerably in recent decades. According to

Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013: 286) one of the dilemmas/challenges of the South African tertiary education system is “the changing roles of academics”, particularly with reference to the merging of higher education institutions. Ntshoe and de Villiers (2008 cited in Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013: 291) state that “student enrolments have increased drastically over the past years and it would appear that academics are also expected to take on more administration and management responsibility as well as meet set research outputs”. They further stated that “academics are expected to fulfill the roles of administrator, manager, support staff and academic – without incentives or assistance of additional staff”.

Thus it can be concluded that overall universities have dramatically changed in the past twenty years, non-academic posts have increased, and the roles of staff have become more blended thus entailing that there is now a blur between academic and administrative roles (Simpson and Fitzgerald, 2014: 1929).

According to Armstrong, Thompson and Brown (2012: 1-2) along with all the changes that have taken place in HEIs, comes a new set of problems as knowledge is becoming obsolete much more quickly, mainly due to rapidly changing technology, and the workforce has to keep up and also jobs are not as secure as they once were. Taylor and Underwood (2015: 2) are of the view that administrative support staff are employed to provide minor assistance to academic staff. They further state that universities have changed from the 1980s where the work context was small and personal, as all staff knew each other.

According to Chaudhry (2015: 5), higher education worldwide keeps changing in many ways, including a decrease in funding, and universities being unable to accommodate a rising number of students and with these changes, come difficulties. These difficulties include space, finances and large student numbers.

Clare and Sivil (2014: 62) also claim that higher education has been corporatized worldwide, including South Africa, and describe this term as “universities have become, or aspire to become, more business-like, adopting industrial practices and discourse with an increasing emphasis on efficiency and the bottom line”.

According to Conway (2012: 39), due to the changes that have taken place in tertiary education, administrative support staff roles have changed considerably from a role of support to a role of co-ordination and management of tasks – and this means that the power has shifted. This power can be used either in a positive or negative way. However, this research indicates that it appears there has not been any discussion between administrative and academic staff in regard to these changes – and this appears to have created an underlying tension between the two groups, reinforcing the divide which has always existed to some extent.

2.3 POSITIVE POWER

“Although administrative staff are almost invisible in universities, their positions of power, importance and centrality to the operation of their organizations has changed markedly over the last 10 years” (Szekeres, 2006: 144). These staff members have become instrumental in running universities as businesses. Despite this, support staff are not given any formal power but only the responsibility for carrying out these tasks, they were compelled to learn many new functions, generally without any form of training, and are being held accountable for these extra duties which include strategic planning and keeping up to date with ever changing information technology.

Administrative duties have become much more involved and “it’s now the secretary who has the knowledge, the academic doesn’t have that knowledge” which gives the support staff power. Administrative staff now have more responsibility as their knowledge of administration surpasses that of academic staff. Administrative staff actually have the role of delivering rather than supporting higher education which

gives them superior knowledge and hence power in their departments. Therefore administrative staff are increasingly assuming a central role in higher education (Dearing, 2014: 6).

Jones and George (2015: 246) argue that if managers decentralize authority and give administrative support staff the right to make vital decisions, empowering their staff to make strategic decisions for the good of the organization. This increases the growth of the organization as well as decreases the need for more management staff. The management staff then become more like facilitators to administrative support staff. Authority does need to achieve a fine balance between being centralized and decentralized in organizations where these changes are taking place.

According to Latham (2006: 2-9), managers have power over administrative support staff as well as the authority to discipline them if they break any rules but administrative support staff also have power in the information they have, especially that of documents and persons inside and outside their organization. This gives them additional insight into key issues - often beyond those of academic staff. Managers do not have this power because they do not have the same information. Knowledge and power co-exist, a person cannot have one without the other. Managers and administrative support staff have specific knowledge in their specific areas which creates different kinds of power in an organization. It should be noted that staff members who have power can possibly use it for self-gain.

According to Cenk Sozen (2012: 489), secretaries can also build bridges for managers/bosses in an organization as it is much easier for administrative support staff to build relationships than academics. Secretaries are centrally situated and therefore have more access to information which makes their managers increasingly dependent on them. If managers do not want to be involved in certain areas of administration, their secretaries then have the power to make their own decisions

which has the potential for giving more power to the secretary. Although staff members in an organization are different from each other in terms of culture, gender and age, they still forge relationships with each other. The secretaries engage with other staff members either on the same or different levels as themselves on a daily basis and these interactions become social relationships in the workplace. Secretaries have the opportunity to deal with other employees more frequently than their managers do. Cenk Sozen concluded that secretaries have the power to speed up or slow down processes in their departments and this is dependent on the kind of relationship they have. Managers also expect their secretaries to form a good relationship with staff from other departments for their own department's benefit (Cenk Sozen, 2012: 489).

Thompson (2014: 2) supports Cenk Sozen by stating that administrative support staff have considerable power in universities and can even influence "long-term goals and the direction the university takes". She also concludes that administrative staff have informal power and that they are the people who have all the knowledge and information pertinent to a department. Administrative staff have the power to either share or block information from whoever they decide. "The nature of some administrative staff members' positions makes it possible for them to influence decisions by framing the way they share information with university administrators and other decision-makers, or by withholding information altogether". The length of service of administrative support staff is also an important factor as more people trust these established staff members and they have accrued a wealth of knowledge and technical skills. Presently universities are running on tight budgets and every department is competing with others for funds. Therefore, having administrative support staff who will fight for their departments is very important. Overall administrative support staff have both formal and informal power and can have an important impact on departmental decisions.

Robbins and Judge (2012: 412-420) indicate how times have changed and nowadays administrative support staff can access information that was previously only available to management staff. This gives these staff members the power and authority to make decisions that were formerly only made by management. They point out that this shift in power and authority in an organization ultimately negates the traditional chain of command.

Power influences members of an organization to behave in a certain way. Power exists in relationships within organizations and can either be horizontal (on the same level) or vertical (on a higher or lower level). The person in the organization with the resources is going to be the person who has the greater power. A secretary may have power because he/she always has access to her boss, as well as access to materials and information which are also sources of power (Daft, 2004: 493-502).

2.4 NEGATIVE POWER

Mechanic (1962: 350) points out in his seminal article entitled 'Sources of Power of Lower Participants in Complex Organizations', how secretaries have informal power. This article prompted people to think about this topic. He indicates that the secretary may even be more familiar than her manager with certain aspects of the organization, especially if he/she has been in the organization for a long time. Thus the longer the secretary is at the organization, the more his/her power increases. Mechanic was one of the first authorities to point out the power that secretaries and administrative staff hold in an organization and he indicates that secretaries had power and influence, when he was writing in the 1960s, but no authority. This power is informal power and the factors that influence the extent of this power include what position these staff members hold in a university, who they know, and what they know, as well as their attitudes and personalities.

Ullrich and Wieland (1980: 264) state that power is when one person has control over another, and they explain the different types of power, namely, 'legitimate power' which is the power linked to a position of authority; 'reward power' which is when positive rewards are given to influence others; 'coercive power' which is when threats or punishment are used; 'expert power' which is the power of knowledge, and 'referent power' which is the power a person with attractive personal characteristics has, which may influence others to imitate that person. The authors touch on the paper written by Mechanic in 1962 and explain how lower participants can use illegitimate power in a non-formal way as they control resources that other staff depend upon. The secretary also controls access to his/her boss as well as having power over staff use of equipment. Staff are therefore subject to this lower participant power and the person holding this power can make other staff members dependent on him/her in an organization.

Klein and Ritti (1984: 338) express a similar idea to Mechanic when they explain how a manager relies on his secretary for all the administration in his office and this gives him/her great power. Normally if a secretary is in a post for a long period of time, this increases his/her knowledge on how an organization works and the number of his/her contacts in an organization. Cenk Sozen (2012: 489), agrees that secretaries can very easily gain and use power in organizations and the more time a secretary spends in an organization, the more contacts he/she makes, the more power he/she gains. Klein and Ritti (1984: 339) note that there is a large quantity of accumulated wisdom in a secretary's head and not necessarily down on paper, which gives him/her a tremendous amount of power. Another source of power for a secretary is having the option of selecting when, and for whom, he/she will carry out tasks as well as having his/her own network of friends/contacts in the organization. Therefore, the manager will be careful not to upset his secretary in order to get the work completed. Secretaries also have access to confidential information and meetings which is not available to all staff in an organization, and the higher the boss in the organization, the more potent this informal power.

In contradiction to other articles, McMaster (1999: 4) is of the view that one of the main differences between academic and administrative staff in higher education is their authority and power. She believes that an administrative staff member will have less power in the organization than their manager even if they have skills, personal qualities and networks that give them power and influence, while academics all automatically hold a level of power.

According to Latham (2006: 2-9), administrative support staff have informal power as they get on and do the tasks required of them which they know how to do, while their managers are often unaware of what the administrative support staff are doing or how they are completing these tasks. "Documents may be mishandled, phone calls may be misdirected, or processes and procedures may not be completed as thoroughly as they should".

According to Robbins and Judge (2012: 412-420), if people are dependent on someone, that person holds great power and the more dependence – the greater the power. If someone has something which is important, scarce and cannot be substituted, there is even greater dependency. That knowledge is becoming more and more important and creates power but so does "who you know" and "being in the right place in an organization". People need to make good contacts in an organization in order to gain this priceless power. Administrative support staff would have personal power (expert and referent) which is often more effective than formal power. Expert power is dependent on the special skill/knowledge the administrative support staff member would acquire over the years and referent power is acquired due to the individual's emotional hold over people and thus allows them to exert influence over these people.

According to Quick and Nelson (2013: 367), people employed in a company with years of experience have the most power because they have accumulated a wealth of knowledge in all aspects of the company. They further discuss the power a CEO's

secretary holds as he/she has access to all the CEO's information such as appointments, calendar and contacts. They question if people with power act ethically and treat all persons in their charge equally and whether people who have power in organizations make decisions for the organization, for certain people or for themselves. They believe that some individuals have a selfish agenda. According to Thompson (2014: 2), it is very easy for administrative support staff to use their power negatively which can influence the outcomes of decisions in a department.

2.4.1 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can be perceived as a negative power dynamic in the workplace. According to Botes (2015: 1) it is unfair to discriminate against anybody in terms of sex, gender and sexual orientation. There is a link between women in the workplace, their dress code and any form of sexual harassment. This could be verbal or physical advances or even gestures. It was stated in the Protection from Harassment Act (Republic of South Africa 2010: 4) that sexual harassment is defined as: "any unwelcome sexual attention from a person who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that such attention is unwelcome; unwelcome explicit or implicit behavior, suggestions, messages or remarks of a sexual nature that have the effect of offending, intimidating or humiliating the complainant; implied or expressed promise of reward for complying with a sexually-oriented request; or implied or expressed threat of reprisal or actual reprisal, for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request".

Zalesne (2000: 535) indicates that employers are allowed to request female employees to follow a dress code of skirts, dresses, high-heels and make-up. However, employers will be deemed gender discriminatory if the dress code they enforce could possibly invite sexual harassment. The American courts permit dress regulations provided that the burden on men and women is equal while it "prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression".

2.4.2 Gender Issues

According to Simpson and Fitzgerald (2014: 1929), in their article on gender issues, they explain how administrative staff have “significant organizational power” as they make decisions on their own about matters relating to resources and other organizational affairs. They further spoke about how females dominate certain areas in universities, mainly administrative positions at lower levels, and that they do not hold much [formal] power either in education or in business. The article concludes that females have fewer opportunities of powerful positions in universities in Australia than males.

Mechanic (1962: 360) indicated that even fifty years ago, he believed that the prettier a secretary is, the easier it is for her to gain access to people and control. Hillman (2013: 157-158) claims that women are forced to dress in a specific way (to wear high heels and cosmetics, as stated above) in order to earn the approval of men and meet certain beauty standards but she quotes Liza Cowan (a lesbian feminist in New York) : “The clothes I wear help me to know my own power”, while another feminist, Robin Morgan said: “Secretaries cannot go to work in blue jeans or slacks without arousing hostility and often dismissal”.

2.5 DISCIPLINING OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF

Rules can be substituted for surveillance of secretaries by the manager who would hand out punishment if and when needed (Mechanic, 1962: 362). According to Latham (2006: 3), managers have the power to discipline administrative support staff. This discipline can be seen as either a form of punishment or a learning opportunity with a positive outcome. However, the disciplining of administrative support staff who themselves hold power in the form of knowledge of documents, processes and procedures, can possibly cause them to retaliate against their manager and possibly sabotage the organization. Disciplinary action would depend

on different factors, one of which would be the relationship between manager and employee.

DUT has a Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Code and its purpose is “to provide a fair procedure for the application of discipline”. This procedure is applicable to all employees of DUT, irrespective of their position, and advises of the acts of misconduct for which they could be disciplined. It states that it is DUT Management’s duty to maintain discipline. Two forms of discipline are mentioned in this document: informal and formal processes. Misconduct can be either minor (for example to work slowly) and progresses up to very serious (for example the negligent/intentional disclosure of privileged or confidential information or documentation) which is grounds for instant dismissal. Therefore, this policy would be applicable to all administrative support staff and in fact could be applied to academic staff too, at DUT and would be upheld by their heads of Department (<http://staffportal/DUT%20Approved%20Policies/Forms>). The researcher, during her years of service at DUT, has seen the disciplinary policy applied to both academic and administrative support staff.

2.5.1 Deviant workplace behaviour

According to Muafi (2011: 123), deviant workplace behaviour can be very disruptive and costly to a company and can include serious misconduct such as fraud and internal theft. The causes of such behaviour could be “dissatisfaction, company contempt and absenteeism”. This behaviour can take its toll on the individual employee’s behaviour and performance which can result in decreased production and loss of work time. If employees do not have job satisfaction in their jobs, this can lead to deviant workplace behaviour.

Syaebani and Sobri (2011: 37-38) state that “deviant workplace behaviour is not something unusual and is prevalent in organizational dynamics”. It is found on all

levels in different types of organizations. It is costly to companies financially, socially and psychologically. There are four categories of this behaviour: production (for example, working slowly), political (for example, favouritism or gossiping), property (for example, stealing or sabotage) and personal aggression (for example, sexual harassment).

Mechanic (1962: 364) recognized fifty years ago, that responsibility is given to secretaries on many fronts and if the secretary feels the need to sabotage his/her manager, this is achievable. If a staff member complains that other staff get preferential secretarial services, the manager can set a rule and allocate services in order of requests, but if power is given to the secretary, very often there will not be time to survey this system and therefore it is easier for the manager to allow the secretary to make decisions and for staff to co-operate. This still applies today, fifty years later (Robbins and Judge, 2012: 412-420).

The administrative support staff member has workplace power because they can “go slow” or “lose” documents as they see fit, and the Manager may never even know this is happening. For example the administrative support staff member can misfile documents which may only be discovered if someone is looking for a specific document and cannot find it (Latham, 2006: 10).

2.6 COLLABORATION

According to Pham and Tanner (2015: 2), it appears that administrative and academic staff at HEIs in Australia have realized they need to cooperate with each other (recent research has shown this can work well) to ensure students are getting appropriate curriculum content in their chosen courses. “Collaboration” is a very complicated issue which deals mainly with the associations of staff members involved and there are often many barriers to successful relationships. One of the key factors mentioned in this article is the power held by different groups of staff members.

Fowler (2015: 2) comments that many academics who do work closely and collegially with professional service staff recognize how demanding and complex the service staff's job is. Pham and Tanner (2015: 9) state that if groups of staff spend more time together, this can hopefully improve their relationship. They further state that "collaboration is an advanced form of social structure that takes time to develop". Pitt and Koufopoulous (2012: 316) mention how a power relationship becomes asymmetrical as subordinates (secretaries) can gather information and contacts, and gain advice and funding, far more easily than their bosses would. They further state that leaders must have respect from their subordinates in order to have authority which in turn, is derived from power.

Pham and Tanner (2015: 9) indicate that as higher education has evolved over the years, academic and other staff have had to team up and work together. The finding of this research included the fact that professional staff felt research was increasing while actual lecturing was decreasing and that their workload had increased significantly. The staff also felt the pressure of constantly having to think about financial implications of research including grant money and research of post graduate students. Academic staff have gone from being lecturers to now having to also be a specialist in research and administrative duties.

In her blog, Fowler (2015: 2) is of the view that there has been growth in quality assurance and accountability of academic staff in HEIs which is one factor that could explain the need for a body of professional service staff. In her experience, students and academic staff appreciate administrative staff and what they do for the university as administrative staff "are a constant in the organization, holding a wealth of useful and practical knowledge".

Van Straaten *et al.* (2016: 11) point out that support staff are an important component of HEIs and have an impact on the productivity of their institutions. As the support

staff are “the gears that keep the machine running”, HEIs should nurture and do whatever they can to improve the well-being of their support staff. Their findings show that the HEI chosen for their study has certain strengths such as “its innovations, the remuneration and benefits offered to staff; the culture of openness and transparency that exists; positive relations among colleagues; and quality education offered, quality of its staff and more”. They further indicate that there is a paucity of research into the well-being of support staff and their study could possibly benefit South African HEIs and their staff. They conclude that their study may also help to improve the well-being of all HEI staff, not only support staff.

2.7 LIBRARY AND TECHNICAL STAFF

With the advancement of the computer age over the years, the number of technical staff has increased significantly. With the rapidly progressing technology in universities, there appears to be an overlap in the duties of library and technical staff as they frequently tutor and even teach students how to use new software, computer programmes and equipment. This seems to be a grey area in their job description as in the past, these staff members were employed solely to help students find books or set up laboratories for them.

Technical staff reported how they have now been tasked with carrying out tutorials and even lectures with students so they can give academics more time to do other tasks (Dearing, 2014: 9). According to Pham and Tanner (2015: 12) the perceptions staff have of each other included: academics thinking of library staff as “professional staff” who worked to set rules, and were ‘predictable’, stable and attended a lot of meetings. Library (professional) staff felt that academics did not realize that they are well qualified in their field and are not just knowledgeable about books but also au fait in the teaching, learning and research environment.

Bagga and Khanna (2014: 7) indicate the importance of technical staff having certain skills such as being technically knowledgeable and up-to-date, having a positive attitude, excellent communication skills, loyalty to the organization, patience and adaptability. These skills would also be applicable to the technical staff employed at HEIs where the customers would be academic staff and students.

2.8 STAFF WORKLOADS

According to Rothmann and Essenko (2007: 135-137), HEIs are more frequently becoming very stressful workplaces. All support staff in HEIs, both technical and administrative, are extremely important as they aid the HEIs in achieving their main goal which is teaching and research. Support staff in HEIs are under extreme pressure as the duties and work of academic staff are passed on to them. This pressure can ultimately impact on the quality of service provided by the support staff. According to an online article on the UK Leeds University database, over the years the roles of staff in HEIs have changed dramatically due to changing technology as well as HEIs being run as businesses, this has in turn increased workloads (Dearing, 2014: 6).

Qwabe (2016: 92) states that the findings of his research indicate that both academic and administrative support staff at DUT feel that they are doing more work than they originally expected to when they were appointed. Many of the staff members (both academic and administrative support) also highlighted that “there is a lack of transparency and equity between different workloads performed by different individuals”. His research further highlights that the majority of staff thought a workload model would be most useful in determining a balance in work distribution, providing all parties were kept up to date with the progress of this procedure.

2.9 CURRENT TENSIONS WITHIN UNIVERSITIES AS CORPORATE ENTITIES

Pitman (2000: 171) reports on how administrative staff perceive academics as customers in Australian universities. In the year 2000, as noted above, not much research had been done on administrative staff in higher education institutions but focused more on teaching and only recently has more research been carried out on the administrative sector. Pitman's article is still relevant in today's HEIs. Thirteen staff members (five management and eight administrative respondents) were interviewed by Pitman and six of the administrative respondents commented that they felt inferior to academic staff and felt that the academics had more power than they did. Eleven of the thirteen respondents felt that the administrative staff believed that the academics are superior to themselves and held negative views about administrative staff. Twelve of the thirteen respondents thought that the administrative staff showed respect towards the academic staff but this respect was not two fold i.e. academic staff showed no respect towards the administrative staff and in fact looked down upon them. One of the Administrative staff respondents commented that academics did not think paperwork was that important and did not appreciate the role that administrative staff plays in HEIs.

As previously discussed, according to Lau (2010: 6-10), non-academic staff in HEIs are the backbone of universities and carry out the daily running of their respective departments. However, there has been very little research carried out in this area to date. When the relationship between the non-academic staff and the organization shows trust and encouragement and support of new ideas, this could have a positive effect on the "empowerment of non-academic staff". Lau concludes that HEIs need to be competent in their administration in "today's highly competitive environment".

Dobson (2011: 1-6) indicates that universities' general/professional staff play an important role in releasing academics from administrative tasks. Often administrative

staff are portrayed as being a problem instead of as a “dedicated workforce with a key role to play in universities”. He further comments on the importance of administrative staff in tertiary institutions and how the term ‘non-academic’ can be a negative descriptive term. While the main business of a university is academic and the general staff are therefore necessarily ‘support staff’, their key role needs to be acknowledged and their new enhanced position highlighted. The reality is that universities’ general/professional staff are at HEIs to support the academic programmes. He is of the view that forty years ago, administration at tertiary institutions was a totally separate entity to the academic duties, but this has changed significantly. Today, all staff need to work together in order to offer good service delivery to their customers. He further states that administrative staff are here to stay and that their services are vital in HEIs. He concludes that all staff at universities need to work together for the benefit of students and staff (Dobson: 2011).

Grey (2012: 5-15) states that “when general staff are made visible in the tertiary education sector, they become the subject of attack”. At times academic staff tend to blame general staff for all the problems emanating in universities and even go as far as to say that they should just employ casual staff and privatize the general workforce. Overall his findings were that general staff are not given credit for how important they are in the education system.

Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke (2012: 463) point out that there is a lot of tension in universities due to the fact that the titles given to “non-academic” staff have been described as negative and degrading to them. Non-academic staff members have been described as ‘the invisible workers’ by Szekeres (2011: 1). Since the mid-2000s, many Australian and British universities have now adopted the term ‘professional staff’ to describe their ‘non-academic’ staff members. South Africa appears to be lagging in changing this title. Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke (2012: 464) found that different groups of non-academic staff members do have differing opinions on this subject. However, the findings of this research indicate that this is a

very complex issue and the role of 'non-academic' staff in HEIs has changed dramatically over recent years. The title 'non-academic staff' does suggest that these staff members are less important than their academic colleagues.

As discussed above, Taylor and Underwood (2015: 2) indicate that now in the 21st century, staff and student numbers have increased and the administrative function has also grown. Their view is that the relationship between administrative staff and academics has deteriorated over the years as the academics perceived administrative staff who carried out subject review inspections as intruders into their world. They contend that a "harmonious university with good working relations between academics and administrative staff is more likely to be an effective university".

Chaudhry (2015: 5) indicates that "administrative power dominated all institutional operations and processes in universities". The article discusses how higher education needs effective governance in order to work and that administrative staff play a large role in this. They question how the different parties perceive this power-sharing role. Chaudhry's study shows how all parties agreed about their perceived roles in higher education. However, academic staff felt they could not easily access certain information that administrative support staff could.

It was interesting to note in Qwabe's findings at DUT that certain of the administrative staff respondents commented that they were taken for granted by academic staff in their departments, their workload increased with the increase in number of staff and they thought they would only provide administrative support to their HODs and not all staff in their departments (Qwabe: 2016: 92).

Küskü (2003: 347) indicates that in higher education, most of the budget is spent on staff which is vital to ensure employee satisfaction. He also confirms that staff in higher education are split into two groups, academic and administrative staff. The

findings of his research showed that although the administrative staff were satisfied with the relationship with their academic colleagues, they were worried about the competitive power of these colleagues.

According to Conway (2012: 46), some administrative staff view their role as less important than that of academic staff and therefore harbor a grudge against academic staff. One participant commented that “Administrative staff are inclined to consider themselves less important than academic staff and that their role is secondary to the role of academics”. The participant also thought that academic staff feel that their role is the most important one in HEIs. Administrative support staff have the perception that academic staff can be patronizing towards them. The research shows that administrative staff have feelings of inferiority and that they are not understood by the academic staff. McMaster (1999: 1), states in her research that there is definite tension between academic and administrative staff members. Although this research was done long ago, it is still applicable in HEIs today. As there is more of an evolution of universities/colleges, staff need to develop an understanding of each other’s ways of working and both groups must strive to have a new outlook on tertiary education. “Administrators and academics need to be open to learn about each other’s ways of working today so that administrators are no longer viewed as a ‘necessary evil” (Conway: 2012).

Szekeres (2011: 1) published a paper (“Invisible Workers”) in 2004 and reviewed the literature published since then to see if the position of professional staff in higher education changed at all. In her 2004 paper, she pointed out that professional staff were discouraged with the relationships with academic staff in HEIs. Szekeres finds that there are still issues surrounding the titles relating to professional staff whereby they are still dissatisfied with the titles ‘non-academic, support and assistant’. They feel degraded by these titles. Szekeres concludes that although there have been many changes in HEIs over the past ten years, the relationship between academic and professional staff is still a troubled one and that a number of professional staff

still feel their work at HEIs is 'invisible'. Smith and Hughey (2006) (cited in Szekeres: 2011) point out that universities have become "extremely complex organizations" while Bassnett (2005: 101) (cited in Szekeres: 2011) indicates that HEIs are "custom-driven, fee-paying environments" in which academic and professional staff need to work together and hopefully, over time, professional staff will get more credit for the work they do and will no longer be the 'invisible workers'.

2.10 ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

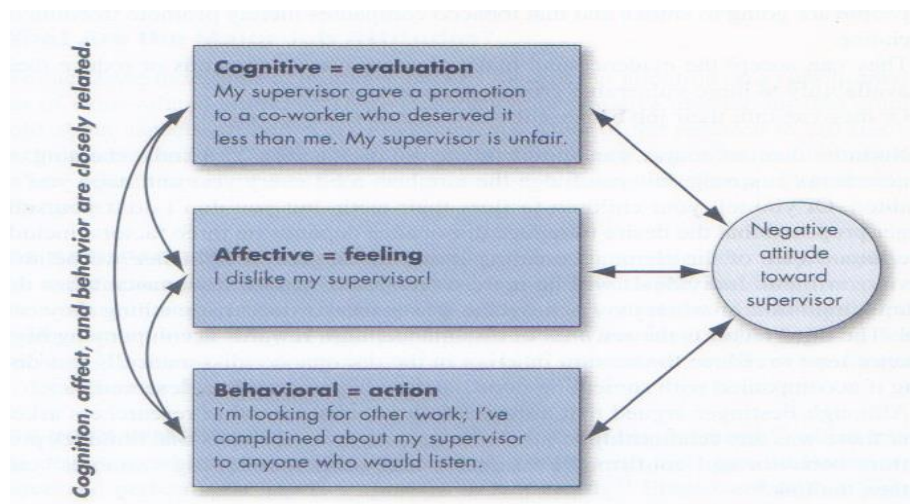
Attitude, motivation and job satisfaction are important elements to aid in identifying and exploring the factors that influence the working relationship between academic and administrative support staff in HEIs.

Pickens (2005: 44) states that "when we refer to a person's attitudes, we are trying to explain his/her behaviour". Our attitudes are what make us behave as we do and how we act towards our jobs and other people. Perception is how a person interprets a situation which is not always the same as reality, while social perception describes how a person perceives others and how he/she is perceived by others. Attribution refers to why people do what they do and why they need to control an environment. People tend to prefer to do tasks they are good at and avoid the difficult ones. In conclusion, people believe that if they have control, they can then have the power to control events and situations in an organization.

The attitude and personality of an administrative support staff member is very important because if they make others feel comfortable and at ease, they will definitely gain access to more knowledge and people in the organization. This can be used positively or negatively as noted above, as it can influence others to openly share knowledge with other staff in the organization. The administrative support staff member has tremendous power in deciding whether to share knowledge or not, as well as being able to control access to their boss (Latham, 2006: 8).

Robbins and Judge (2012: 70) confirm that “attitudes have three factors, namely: cognition, affect and behaviour”. They go on to describe each factor; cognition describes a person’s belief, affective is a person’s reaction to their belief and behaviour is the manner in which a person will react to their belief. These three factors are closely related and show the outcome of any given attitude. This is important in an organization where there are many different people and personalities working together.

Figure 3: The Components of an Attitude



Adapted from: Organizational Behavior (Robbins and Judge: 2012: 59)

Phillips and Gully (2012: 140) indicate that people’s attitudes are shaped by many different aspects such as family and experiences, values, personality, culture and religion. Therefore, everybody has their own attitude. However, people can adjust their attitudes if they are not getting a positive response and need to change their behaviour. Attitude is one of the key factors when considering job satisfaction.

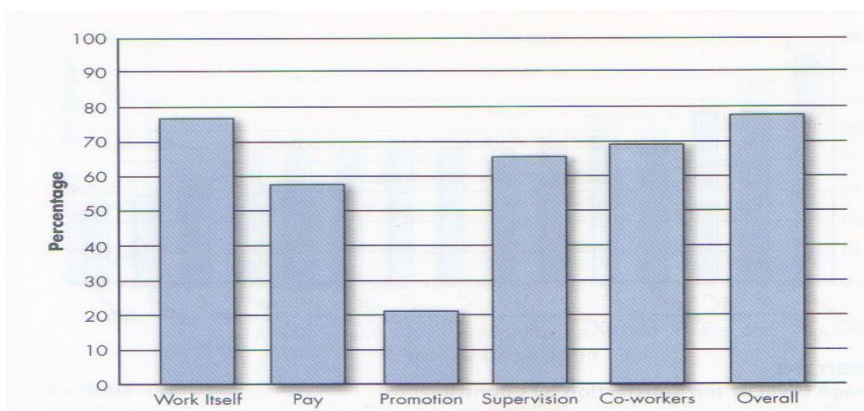
Robbins and Judge (2012: 202-208) define motivation as “the processes that account for an individual’s intensity, direction and persistence of effort towards

attaining a goal”. They point out that there are many motivation theories and claim that motivation differs from one individual to another and that each individual sets very different goals for themselves. According to Phillips and Gully (2012: 209), no two people are the same and this is why motivation comes from within each individual and it is very hard to pinpoint exactly what motivates people. They point out that there are many factors which influence motivation in an organization – “the job is challenging, interesting, keeps one busy, provides social contact, provides an income and allows the development of new skills”.

Jones and George (2015: 299) point out that motivation is a dynamic that decides what a person does in an organization, which controls how much effort and persistence that person places into their job. They indicate that when people are motivated, really enjoy their jobs, are happy with their colleagues, are satisfied with their pay and find their tasks interesting, they have attained job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction has a huge impact on whether staff are content in their workplace or not. There are many factors which influence job satisfaction and these include: remuneration, attitude towards the organization, support from the organization, interaction with colleagues and the possibility of promotion (Robbins & Judge: 2012: 79-82).

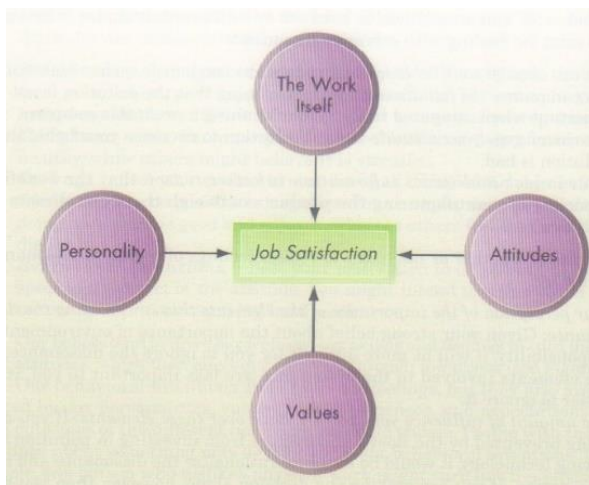
Figure 4: Average Job Satisfaction Levels by Facet



Adapted from: Organizational Behavior (Robbins and Judge: 2012: 65)

Phillips and Gully (2012: 143) indicate that the most important aspect of job satisfaction is enjoying doing the actual job you are employed to do. Without that, a person is never going to be satisfied. Being employed in a job that pushes a person to challenge themselves as well as to have a positive attitude towards a job also makes for job satisfaction. However, there will always be those people who will be satisfied with their jobs no matter what and those who will never be satisfied.

Figure 5: Influences on Job Satisfaction



**Adapted from: Organizational Behavior Tools for Success
(Phillips and Gully: 2012: 144)**

2.11 CONCLUSION

To summarize, the body of literature shows that administrative support staff have power and to some degree authority, mostly of an informal nature, in an organization. The literature dates back to 1962, but recently, this topic has come to the forefront of research again internationally.

This power can be used either in a positive or negative way, this is dependent on various factors as the relationship between academics and administrative support staff is a very complex one and is not always openly discussed at HEIs. This power

can put a strain on the relationship between academic and administrative support staff as the two groups jostle for power in their respective departments.

The literature confirms that HEIs are now being run as commercial businesses and that there is a shortage of funding. It also substantiates that there has been enormous growth in the numbers of students and in turn, the number of staff, particularly administrative support staff. As technology advances, HEIs appear to be more productive and efficient and in turn, administrative support staff have gained the power to make more and more decisions.

In conclusion, power, collaboration, attitude, motivation and job satisfaction are key factors that influence the behaviour of both academic and administrative support staff in an organization.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

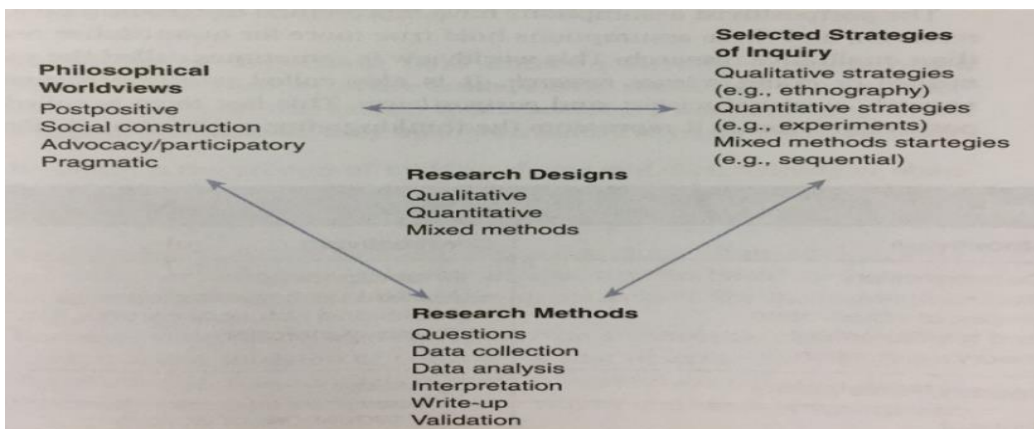
3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the body of literature which supports the study. This chapter will illustrate the design and methodology used to collect and analyze the required data, the population targeted, the sampling method used, the instruments used to collect the data, a brief account of the pilot study conducted, and the ethical considerations and requirements for the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2009: 5) refers to research design as “the plan or proposal to conduct research which involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods”. This spoke to the researcher in terms of what research approach to use, whether to employ quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach and finally the data analysis, interpretation and write-up of collected data.

Figure 6: A Framework for Design – the Interconnection of Worldviews, Strategies of Enquiry, and Research Methods



Adapted from: Research Design (Creswell: 2009: 5)

Cresswell (2009: 8-9) discusses how all humans draw on their own experiences, culture and history as well as day to day interactions and circumstances in which people live, and how researchers can use this knowledge to interpret qualitative views in their studies to make sense of the data collected. According to Maree (2016: 21) “since behaviour is constituted by social conventions, interpretation (hence interpretivism) is required; the facts do not speak for themselves”.

The researcher employed an interpretivist research approach to underpin this study as the respondents shared their views, feelings and perceptions regarding the relationship that exists between the academic and administrative support staff.

Nine interviews were conducted with senior and middle management representatives of both administrative and academic staff. A survey was also conducted to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from academic and administrative support staff members.

3.3 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

McEvoy and Richards (2006: 67) describe a quantitative approach as one which includes standardized, numerical statistics. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012: 162) define quantitative research as that which “examines relationships between variables, which are measured numerically and analyzed using a range of statistical techniques” and is mainly associated with survey strategies which normally use questionnaires to gather the data required.

A quantitative approach would therefore be used by the researcher for analyzing and reporting on data obtained from respondents in the form of a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The researcher used this method to gather standard data from the respondents such as demographic data - including gender, age and years of experience and research data from seven questions with standard answers

displayed on a Likert scale and eight questions requiring a yes/no answer. Additional quantitative data was gathered from pertinent questions in the survey.

3.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A qualitative approach has been described as a situation involving “going out into the field where the individuals live, gathering their stories and writing a persuasive, literary account of their experiences” (Maree: 2016: 265).

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012: 163), qualitative research is interpretive as the researcher needs to interpret the data expressed by the participants. The collection of this data is non-standardized as questions and procedures may change during the process.

The researcher used a qualitative approach in the form of interviews as well as pertinent open-ended questions in the survey. The interviews were conducted with nine DUT staff members, two of whom were Senior Academic staff (one Deputy Executive Dean and one Acting Executive Dean of the selected faculties), six who were central administrative staff from the departments of Finance, Human Resources, Student Admissions, Registrar and both of the faculty officers of the two selected faculties along with one technical staff member. The open-ended survey questions were also directed at the academic and administrative support staff from the two selected faculties. These questions were used to allow the participants the freedom to provide whatever information they felt was pertinent to the study. The range of questions also requested further comment from the participants which allowed them to expand on their initial answer.

3.5 MIXED METHODS

According to Maree (2016: 268), when using mixed methods, the researcher gathers both numeric and text data simultaneously as, if using either the qualitative or quantitative method alone, this might not provide a complete understanding of the research problem. Cresswell (2009: 203) describes mixed methods as a method which combines and uses the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative procedures which makes a study stronger.

Consequently, the researcher elected to use both quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed methods) in order to gather both statistical data as well as personal information from interviewees which would describe respondents' individual experiences and perspectives on the research topic and contribute data to the study.

3.6 TRIANGULATION

Maree (2016: 274) describes "triangulation" as: "the most well-known and popular of the four mixed methods designs" and explains how it is "the design in which the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to best understand the phenomenon of interest".

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012: 179) refer to triangulation as: "the use of different data collection techniques within one study in order to ensure that the data are telling you what you think they are telling you. For example, qualitative data collected using semi-structured group interviews may be a valuable way of triangulating quantitative data collected by other means such as a questionnaire".

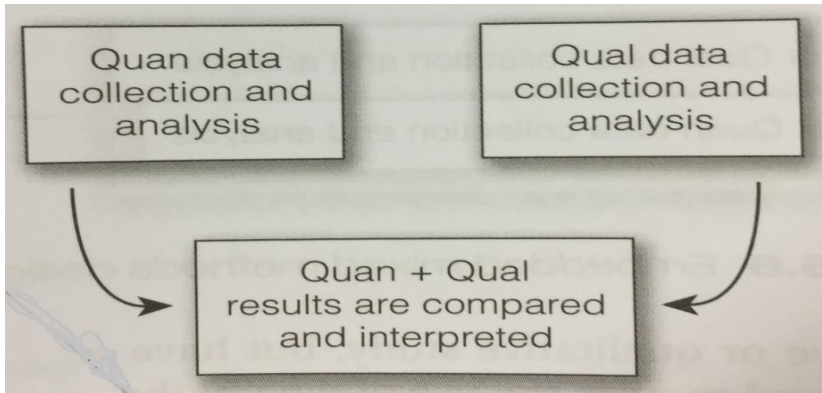
Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 385) state that "triangulation requires that research is addressed from multiple perspectives" and that the researcher "can be more confident in a result if the use of different methods or sources leads to the same

results". They continue by mentioning several different types of triangulation: Method triangulation, Data triangulation, Research triangulation and Theory triangulation. Method triangulation is when multiple methods of data collection and analysis are used; Data triangulation is the collection of data from several sources at either the same or different time periods; Research triangulation is the collection and analysis of data by more than one researcher and Theory triangulation is when multiple theories are used to interpret and clarify the data.

Wilson (2014: 1) states that triangulation aids in obtaining "richer, fuller data and/or to help confirm the results of the research". Cresswell (2009: 213) mentions that as quantitative and qualitative data is collected simultaneously when using triangulation, it does result in a shorter time frame for collection as both sets of data are "gathered at one time at the research site".

The researcher collected both types of data at the same time about the same topic so that the results could be compared and contrasted to ensure the conclusion was well-validated. She was able to draw on the literature as well as on her extensive experience and observation working with both academic and administrative support staff in different faculties at DUT over many years. Three techniques from differing views in data gathering were applied: qualitative data was collected from interviews and open-ended questions, quantitative data was collected from closed-ended questions and life experience and observation was gathered from the researcher's experience working in an HEI.

Figure 7: Triangulation mixed methods design



Adapted from: First Steps in Research (Maree: 2016: 274)

3.7 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA

Primary data is data which is collected by the researcher and is specific to the study while secondary data is that which is gathered from sources that already exist (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013: 113).

According to Struwig and Stead (2013: 82-90), secondary data is any data which has already been written up and reported and can be found in books, journal articles, internet articles and websites as well as government gazettes. Primary data is that which is gained by “observing people and situations and asking questions” but a set procedure must be used so as to standardize the data collected.

The researcher used both Primary and Secondary data for this research project. The researcher sourced related articles and books in order to gather and discuss relevant secondary data which was then reported on in Chapter Two, the literature review. Primary data was gathered by the researcher from the survey in the form of the questionnaire and the information obtained from the nine interviews that were conducted.

3.8 TARGET POPULATION

“A population is the combined total (aggregate) of all the elements you are focusing on”, (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 114). Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 262) define population as: “the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate”. While Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012: 260) state that “the full set of cases from which a sample is taken is called the population”.

The researcher therefore identified the target population for this study as the full quota of academic staff (1191) and administrative support staff (317) in all six faculties at DUT, a total of 1508 persons.

3.9 SAMPLING

According to Acharya et al, (2013: 330) a sample is a small number of the population selected to be a part of the research as representatives for the larger population. As the entire population is too large, a sample is taken. “In homogeneous populations, where the members are similar with respect to variables that are important to the study, smaller samples may adequately represent the population” (Maree, 2016: 178). The number of staff members in the broader DUT population in all six faculties at DUT is 1508 and the researcher opted to select a sample of all academic staff members (150) and all administrative support staff (85) in two faculties at DUT: Health Sciences and Arts & Design (a total of 235 staff members). These two contrasting faculties were selected as one might expect different responses due to the fact that the Arts & Design faculty is known to have creative and artistic staff members while the staff in the Health Sciences faculty is more scientifically and logically inclined.

Brink, van der Walt and van Rensburg (2012: 141) state that “the advantage of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to select the sample based on knowledge of the phenomena being studied ” while Maree (2016: 178) states that

“purposive sampling is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind”.

Purposive sampling was used by the researcher as the sample selected is knowledgeable about the study area and would contribute appropriately. Purposive sampling of both also points to the fact that the academic and administrative support staff could possibly demonstrate different ends of the spectrum within their answers.

A survey was conducted which included all academic and administrative support staff members in the two faculties (Arts & Design and Health Sciences) and questions were structured based on the objectives of the study.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 15), “in many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access knowledgeable people” and “researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought”.

3.10 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Brink, van der Walt and van Rensburg (2012: 154) point out that a well-designed questionnaire is simple for literate respondents to complete to the best of their ability and is easy for the researcher to administer and analyze. Many aspects of the questionnaire can affect the respondents’ replies and therefore should: “meet the objectives of the enquiry, demonstrate a fit between its contents and the research problem and objectives and obtain the most complete and accurate information possible, and do so within reasonable limits of time and resources”.

The researcher resolved to develop and use the same questionnaire for both groups of staff members (administrative support and academic) as it would be both interesting and informative to discover and investigate the trends, answers, views

and feelings of these two diverse groups to the same set of questions, and to grasp the misunderstandings and differences which may be identified by comparing the responses of the two groups to particular questions. The data was analyzed and presented under two separate headings: 'Academic Staff' and 'Administrative Support Staff' so as to compare the responses for each question.

The question: 'Do you believe administrative support staff have power in your department?' links to the objective 'to identify the views of the academics and administrative support staff on the issues of power in the academic environment at DUT'; and the statement under the Likert scale section of the questionnaire: 'Administrative support staff are sometimes taken for granted in my department' links to the objective 'to explore the relationship that exists between the two sectors'.

The researcher acknowledges that she is not an expert or proficient in the psychology field but reflects that the open-ended questions will aid in recording the feelings, thoughts and experiences of the participants in order for the researcher to draw a feasible conclusion. Every question in the questionnaire required an additional qualitative open response from the participants which allowed for the collection of valuable qualitative data.

The questionnaire comprised two sections: Demographic Data (eight questions) and Research Data (seventeen questions) [*See Appendix 3*].

3.10.1 Pilot study

According to Brink, van der Walt and van Rensburg (2012: 174), a pilot study or pre-test is a small-scale study piloted before the main study on a small number of participants from the population and is carried out to "test the practical aspects of a research study" and these individuals "meet the inclusion criteria but will not form part of the sample. Data collected during this process are not included in the main

study”. A pilot study was conducted with 11 respondents (5% of the sample size) to test that the questionnaire was simple to read, comprehend and answer and to measure the time it took to complete the questionnaire. The following feedback was received from the staff members who completed the pilot study, and corrections were made accordingly:

- It was not clearly defined as to whom “Administrative Support Staff” referred. A descriptive paragraph was added to the Questionnaire (*Appendix 3 attached*).
- Questions 17.3, 18.3, 19.3, 20.3, 21.3 and 24.3 should be changed to read “if you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer” as respondents would not be required to provide a reason for their answer if they answered ‘no’. This was corrected accordingly.

3.10.2 Administration of the questionnaires

Patten (2014) indicates that early in the research, the researcher must decide whether to gain access to her target population in order to administer the questionnaire personally. As the researcher is employed at DUT, it was fairly simple for the majority of the questionnaires to be hand delivered (except for those that went to Pietermaritzburg and Wentworth campuses). Due to the distance, these were emailed to the secretaries for distribution to academic and administrative support staff in the different departments. The secretaries were asked to contact the researcher once the questionnaires were completed. Some of the questionnaires were picked up by the researcher and others were returned via internal mail and email. The questionnaires were handed out and collected between November 2016 and May 2017. The researcher found it extremely difficult to collect sufficient completed surveys, and of the 235 questionnaires distributed, after numerous attempts to collect further completed surveys, a total of 77 responses were

completed and returned. The researcher is of the view that some of the staff members who were targeted were reluctant to answer. A higher number of academic staff members responded to the questionnaire than administrative support staff. The researcher is of the view that the administrative support staff may have a certain suspicion as to the meaning of the study and may not want to answer questions that possibly make them feel uncomfortable. This response rate (33%) did however allow for sufficient analysis, particularly as all relevant staff members were targeted and the population is fairly homogeneous as explained above.

According to Petersen and Nielsen (2016: 230), the response rate to surveys can be increased by offering incentives such as cash prize lotteries and charity donations. They further stated that electronic surveys are used more often now but often the response rate is approximately 11% lower than other methods used to collect data. The researcher's low response rate could possibly be due to the fact that the literature does not offer viable suggestions for improving this in a research study such as this one.

3.11 INTERVIEWS

According to Brink, van der Walt and van Rensburg (2012: 158) a semi-structured interview is one in which the researcher asks a number of precise questions but can also ask open-ended, exploratory questions where responses can be expanded which provides a more detailed and thorough insight to the question. Interviews will add depth and richness to the data collection process. According to McEvoy and Richards (2006: 76), "using both quantitative and qualitative approaches gives the inquiry a greater sense of balance and perspective". Drawing on the literature as well as extensive own experience, the researcher linked the interview questions to the objectives of the study. The interview schedule (*Appendix 4*) was utilized for all the interviews to obtain the information required.

The researcher conducted the interviews herself, as, according to Struwig and Stead (2013: 90), “the physical presence of the interviewer tends to have a positive effect on the accuracy of the data obtained”. Bhattacharyya (2006: 68) explains that: “using his schedule, an interviewer presents the questions to the interviewee and records his responses”. This procedure was followed.

The interviews were conducted with nine DUT staff members, two of whom were Senior Academic staff (the Deputy Executive Dean and the Acting Executive Dean of the selected faculties), six who were central administrative staff from the departments of Finance, Human Resources, Student Admissions, Registrar and both of the Faculty Officers of the two selected faculties and one technical staff member.

The researcher selected the Executive Deans and Faculty Officers of the two chosen faculties for interviews as they have a better understanding of the policies, procedures and structures of DUT and have a clear idea of the running of a faculty and ideally how the faculties slot in to the general mechanisms of DUT. The administrative and technical staff who were selected to be interviewed have continuous and frequent contact with all academic departments at DUT and therefore have a wealth of knowledge on the operations of policies and procedures at DUT in dealing with academic and administrative support staff not only from the two selected faculties, but all faculties at DUT. These interviewees were selected as the researcher needed to hear their views on the important role administrative support staff and academic staff play in the two selected faculties as well as their views on a myriad of issues at an HEI. The nine interviewees were either telephoned or e-mailed to set up a date for their interviews. The interviews were held between February 2017 and June 2017 in each of the interviewees’ offices, for their convenience.

The question: 'Do you believe academic staff sometimes treat administrative support staff as inferior to themselves' links to the objective 'to examine to what extent the support staff are appreciated by their academic colleagues' and the questions: 'Do you think administrative support staff are envious of the academic staff' and 'Do you think administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff' are both linked to the objective 'to identify and explore the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff at DUT.'

The researcher had a recorder available to tape the interviews (with the permission of the interviewees) to ensure the capturing of the interviews in full. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed by the researcher for documenting under the findings of this study.

3.12 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 385) mention content analysis which "enables the researcher to analyze large amounts of textual information and systematically identify its properties, such as the presence of certain words, concepts, characters, themes, or sentences". They continue by describing conceptual analysis as that which "establishes the existence and frequency of concepts (such as words, themes, or characters) in a text and then analyzes and interprets text by coding the text into manageable content categories". Lastly, they describe relational analysis which "builds on conceptual analysis by examining the relationships among concepts in a text".

Once the data was collected, the researcher captured the responses using Microsoft Excel version 2016. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed to obtain rich, in-depth data thematically. It must be noted that certain questions in the interviews were not part of the questionnaire. Data was grouped into themes dependent on using

techniques such as repetitions, transitions, similarities and differences to categorize qualitative data. “Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 85).

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

According to Struwig and Stead (2013) there is a code of conduct (guidelines) as to how to conduct research in an ethical way. This code stipulates that researchers do not plagiarize other people’s work; distort and invent data; falsely report results and fail to preserve research participants’ confidentiality.

The researcher was granted ethics clearance and permission to conduct the research study by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) of DUT, after the study proposal had been approved by them. (*Appendix 1*).

The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter of information and consent (*Appendix 2*). This letter provided the title and purpose of the study and the Researcher’s details. The respondents were also informed of the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study. They were reassured that their personal details and any information they provided would be kept confidential and that they were free to withdraw their participation at any stage. This information was included in the consent form to assure the participants that the researcher followed all correct and ethical processes required for this study.

The researcher was provided with a Gatekeepers letter (*Appendix 5*) in order to collect relevant data from any DUT departments.

3.14 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Maree (2012: 216) states that “validity of an instrument refers to the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure”. He further states that reliability of an instrument is achieved “if the same instrument is used at different times or administered to different subjects from the same population, the findings should be the same” (Maree, 2012: 215). Validity was assured by piloting the questionnaire and reliability of the research instrument was assured by the use of MS Excel to formally analyse the statistics.

3.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined details on the process, methodology, sampling techniques and the research instruments used in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using questionnaires and purposive semi-structured interviews. Academic and administrative support staff personally completed the questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire. The researcher followed all correct and ethical processes for this study. The next chapter will discuss the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS & DISCUSSION: ACADEMIC STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the design and methodology utilized to collect and analyse the required data, the population targeted, the sampling method used, the instruments used to collect the data and a brief account of the pilot study conducted. This chapter will outline the results, data analysis, findings and discussion of the academic staffs' questionnaire and interviews. Chapter Five will outline the results, data analysis, findings and discussion of the administrative support staffs' questionnaire and interviews.

4.2 RESULTS

A total of 235 questionnaires were issued to both administrative support and academic staff members of the Faculties of Health Sciences and Arts & Design at Durban University of Technology. Seventy seven questionnaires were completed and returned by fifty academic staff and twenty seven administrative support staff. This equated to a total response rate of 33% (21% response rate for academic staff and 12% for administrative support staff). No division was made between the responses from the two selected faculties.

Interviews were conducted with nine DUT staff members, two of whom were senior academic staff (one Deputy Dean and one Acting Dean of the selected faculties), six who were central administrative staff from the departments of Finance, Human Resources, Student Admissions, the Registrar and both of the Faculty Officers from the two selected faculties and one technical staff member.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel version 2016. The researcher then analysed the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions by grouping them in terms of frequency of words and topics and reporting on it.

According to Cresswell (2009: 184), “data analysis involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants”.

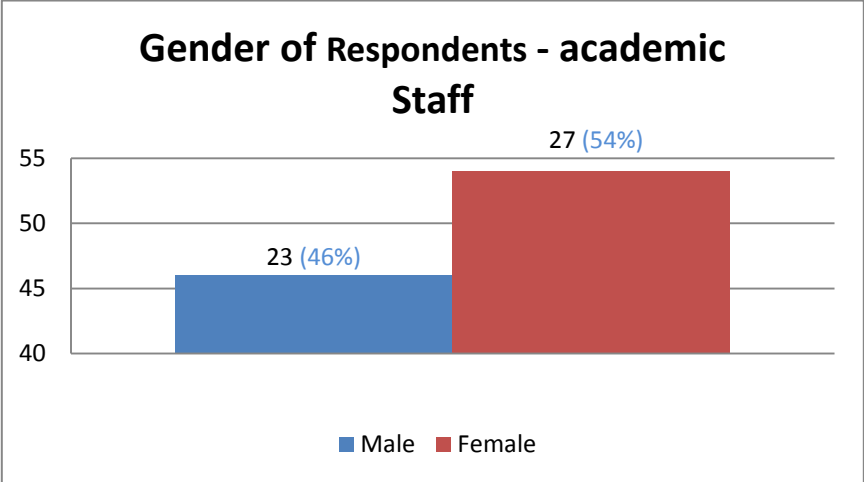
Interviews were transcribed and analysed to obtain rich, in-depth data thematically. Some of the questions included in the interview schedule were not included in the questionnaire. These are: “If you require assistance on any departmental issues, do you approach the HOD, secretary or technician?” and “Do you believe that the relationship between the academics and administrative support staff is cordial on the whole?” Data was grouped into themes using techniques such as repetitions, transitions, similarities and differences to categorize qualitative data. “The researcher collects qualitative data, analyses it for themes or perspectives, and reports 4-5 themes” (Cresswell: 2009: 184).

4.4 FINDINGS – QUESTIONNAIRE: ACADEMIC STAFF

Of the seventy seven respondents, fifty (65%) were academic staff members. This section describes their responses to the questionnaire.

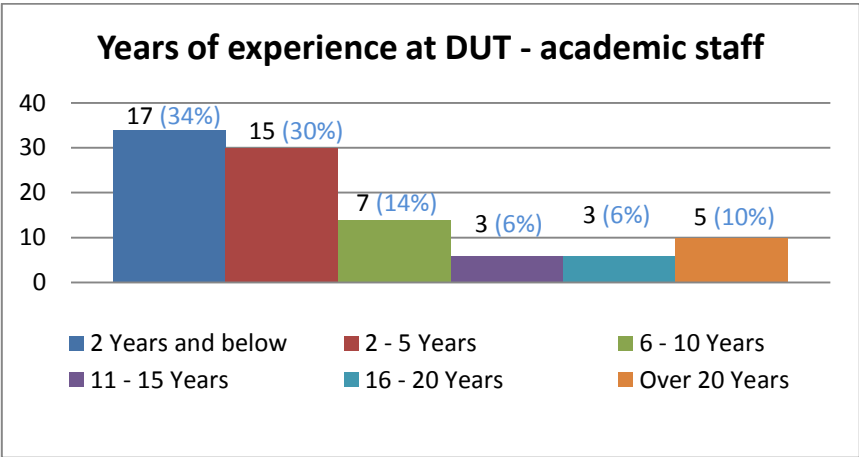
SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Figure 8: Gender of Respondents – academic Staff



The data indicates that of the 50 academic staff respondents to the questionnaire, 46% were male while 54% were female. This number reflects the composition of the academic staff in the faculties quite closely.

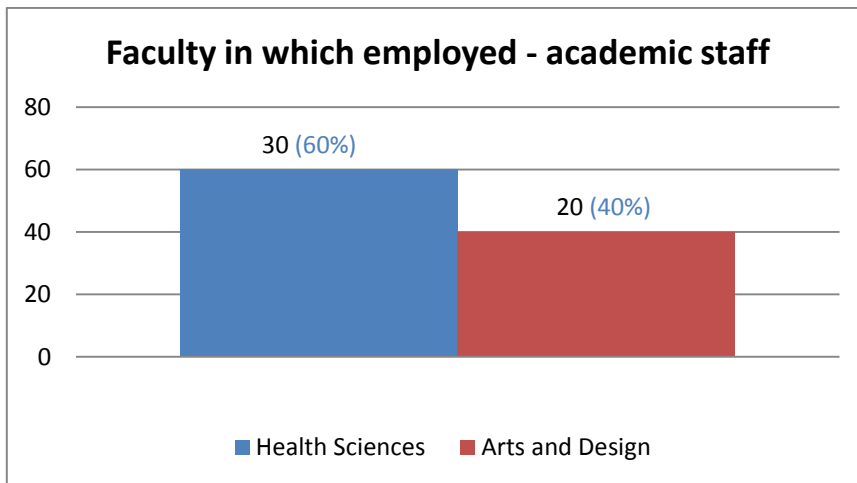
Figure 9: Years of experience at DUT



It can be seen that of the academic staff respondents, 34%, have worked at this institution for 2 years or less; 30% of the respondents between 2-5 years; 14%

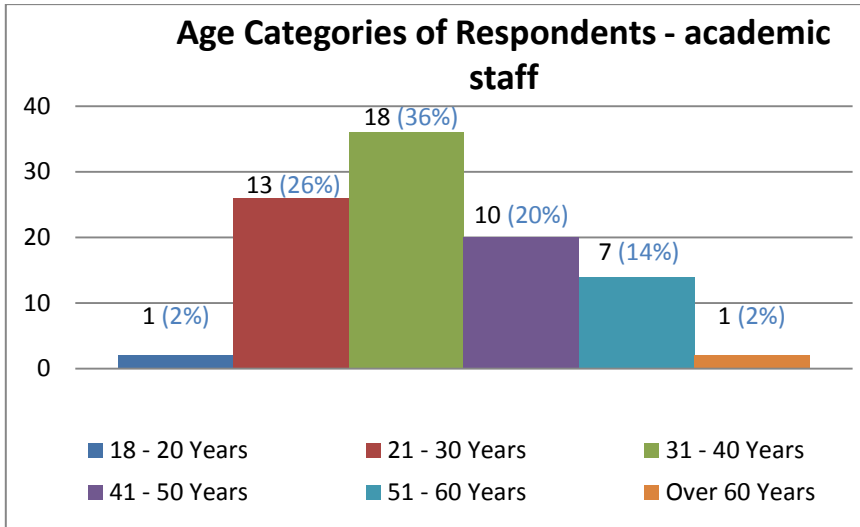
between 6-10 years; 6% between 11-15 years; 6% between 16-20 years and 10% for over 20 years. This indicates that there appears to be a significant turnover of staff as the majority only have a few years' service.

Figure 10: Faculty employed



It is evident that 60% of the academic staff respondents were from the Faculty of Health Sciences while 40% were from the Faculty of Arts and Design. As the researcher is employed in the Faculty of Health Sciences, she possibly received more support from her colleagues in this faculty.

Figure 11: Age Categories of Respondents



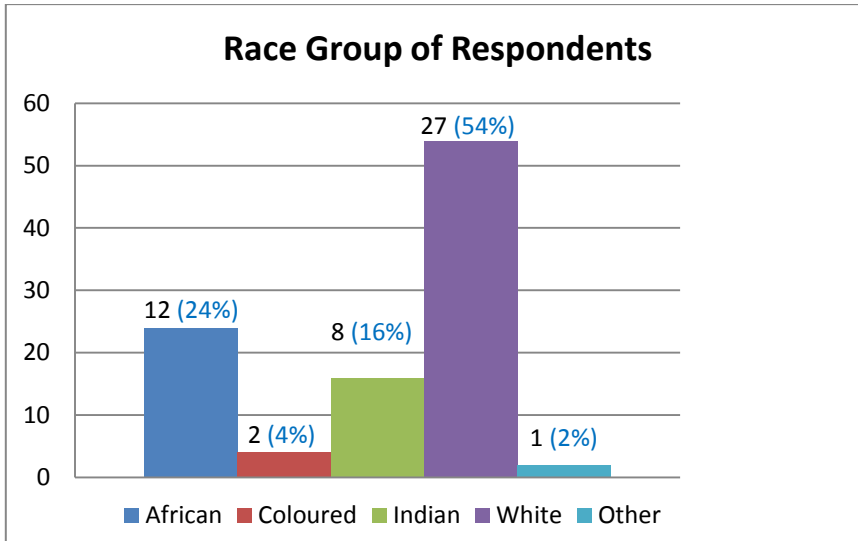
The data shows that a high number (36%) of the respondents were in the 31-40 year age group; and only one staff member was in each of the 18-20 year and over 60 years age groups.

CURRENT TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS AT DUT (Academic and administrative):

Table 1: Total staff numbers at DUT (Management Information System, 2018)

Age group	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Number of staff	1 (0,5%)	127 (7.5%)	345 (24%)	492 (34%)	399 (27%)	102 (7%)

Figure 12: Race Group of Respondents – academic staff



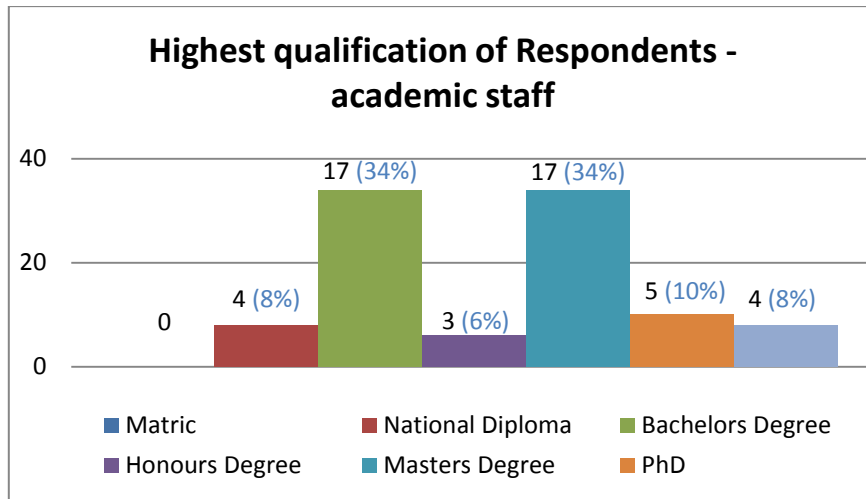
The data showed that of the respondents, the majority were of the White race group with the smallest number being the “Other” group.

CURRENT TOTAL RACE GROUPS OF STAFF MEMBERS AT DUT (Academic and administrative):

Table 2: Total race groups of staff members at DUT (Management Information System, 2018)

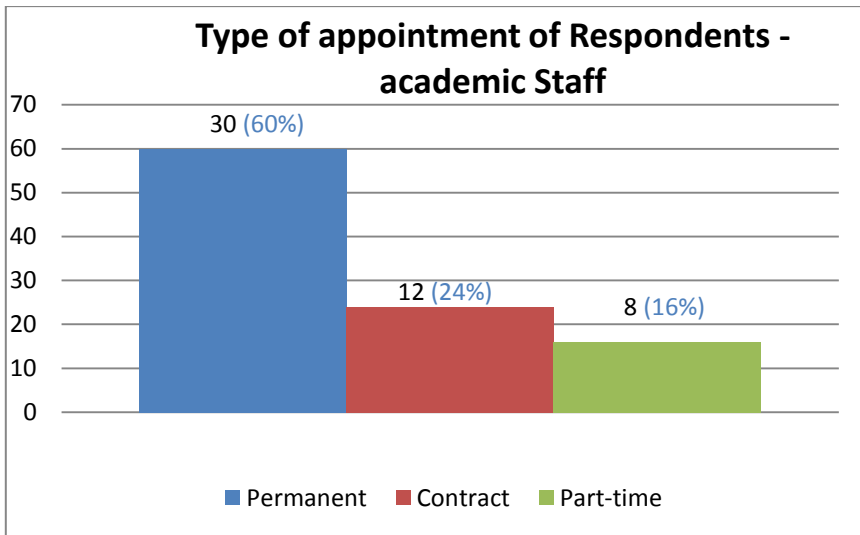
Race group	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Other
Number of staff	652 (44%)	43 (3%)	566 (39%)	173 (12%)	32 (2%)

Figure 13: Highest qualification of Respondents



The above highlights that 34% of the respondents have a Bachelor’s degree and 34% have a Master’s degree. As these are academic staff members, none of the respondents have only a matriculation certificate as their highest qualification. A Master’s degree is the minimum requirement for lecturers and a PhD/Doctorate is the minimum requirement for senior lecturers at DUT. These findings conclude that the majority of the respondents in these two faculties hold a bachelors or master’s degree and that there is a paucity of Honours and PhD graduates in the academic staff complement. It is interesting to note that it is an historical legacy that DUT is an ex-Technikon and did not have this qualification requirement and therefore many academic staff members are upgrading their qualifications to fit in with university requirements.

Figure 14: Type of appointment of Respondents

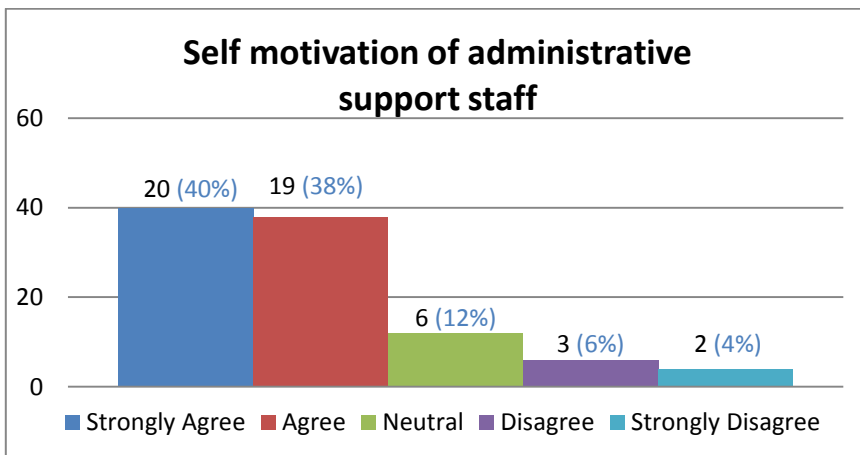


The data shows that the majority of academic staff respondents (60%) are permanently employed; 24% are on contract and only 16% are part-time employees.

SECTION B: RESEARCH DATA

4.4.8 Self-Motivation of administrative support staff

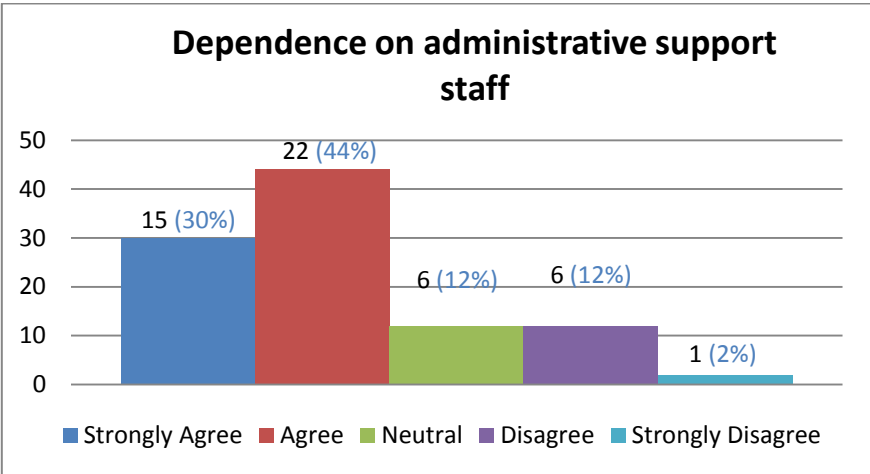
Figure 15: Administrative support staff in my department are intrinsically (self) motivated to carry out their duties to the best of their ability



Forty percent of the respondents, strongly agree with this statement and 38% agree. The findings therefore conclude that the majority of the respondents feel that administrative support staff are self-motivated to perform their tasks satisfactorily. Jones and George (2015: 299) observe that “motivation is central to management because it explains why people behave the way they do in organizations”.

4.4.9 Dependence on administrative support staff

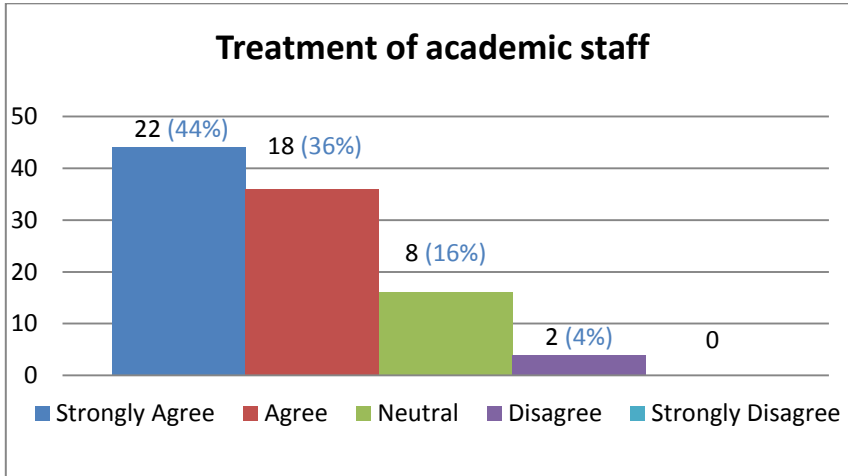
Figure 16: Academic staff in my department are dependent on administrative support staff for most of their key functions



Thirty percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 44% agreed with this statement. This indicates that the majority of the respondents feel that academic staff do rely on their administrative support staff for assistance in carrying out their duties in their department. This highlights that administrative support staff are an integral part of any department. However, a quarter of the respondents were either undecided or did not agree with this statement.

4.4.10 Treatment of academic staff

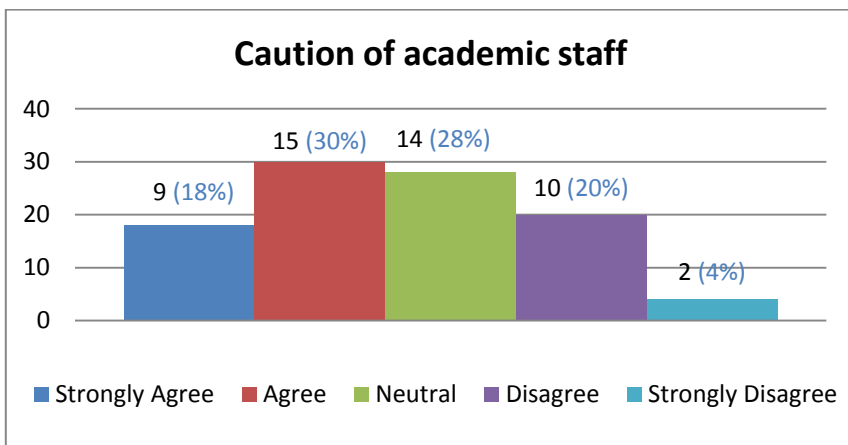
Figure 17: Academic staff in my department are generally treated fairly/equally by administrative support staff



The above figures highlight that the majority of the staff were of the view that academic staff and the tasks they require to be completed by administrative support staff, are treated fairly and equally. However, 20% of the respondents were undecided or disagreed with this statement.

4.4.11 Caution of academic staff

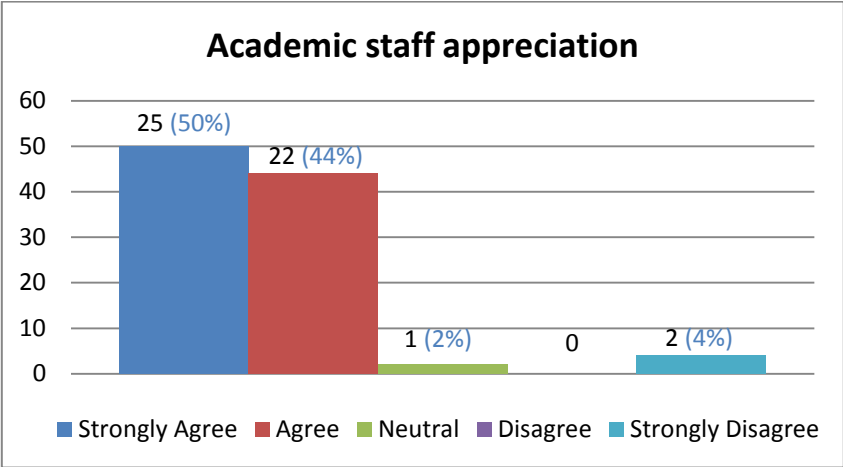
Figure 18: Academic staff are cautious of the manner in which they treat administrative support staff in order to avoid any backlash or lack of assistance



Forty eight percent (18% strongly agree and 30% agree) feel that academic staff need to tread cautiously with the administrative support staff in their departments.

4.4.12 Academic staff appreciation

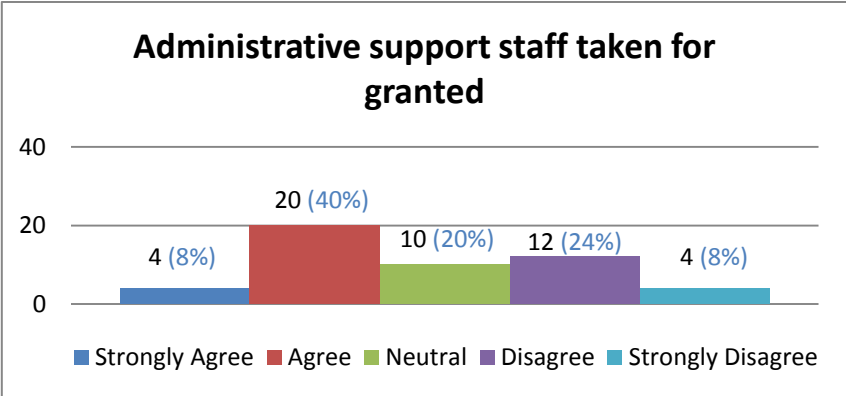
Figure 19: Academic staff appreciate the efforts/assistance of the administrative support staff in my department



An overwhelming majority of the respondents - 94% (50% strongly agreed and 44% agreed) that administrative support staff efforts are appreciated by their academic colleagues.

4.4.13 Administrative support staff taken for granted

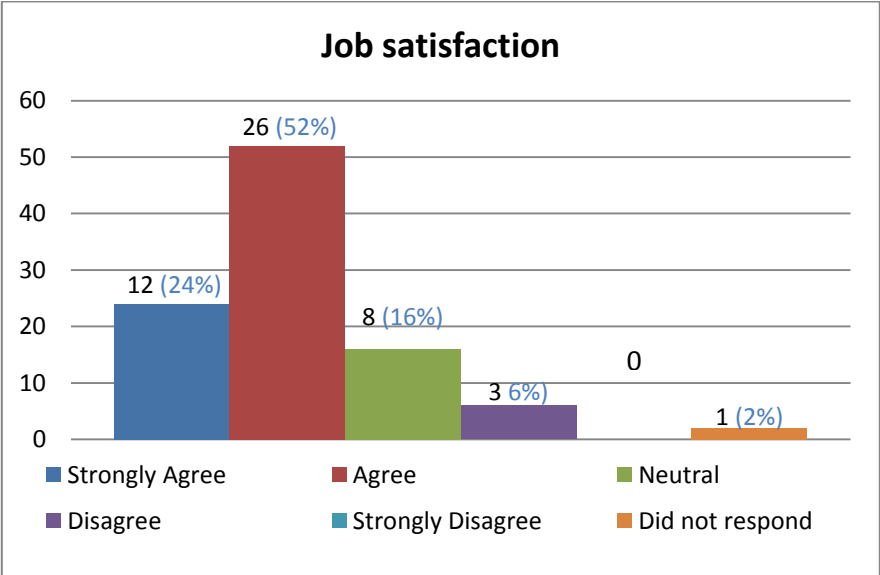
Figure 20: Administrative support staff are sometimes taken for granted in my department



The findings show that, from an academic perspective, the administrative support staff are quite frequently taken for granted in academic departments. Interestingly the academic staff acknowledge that they and their peers do sometimes take advantage of administrative support staff.

4.4.14 Job satisfaction

Figure 21: I experience job satisfaction in my position

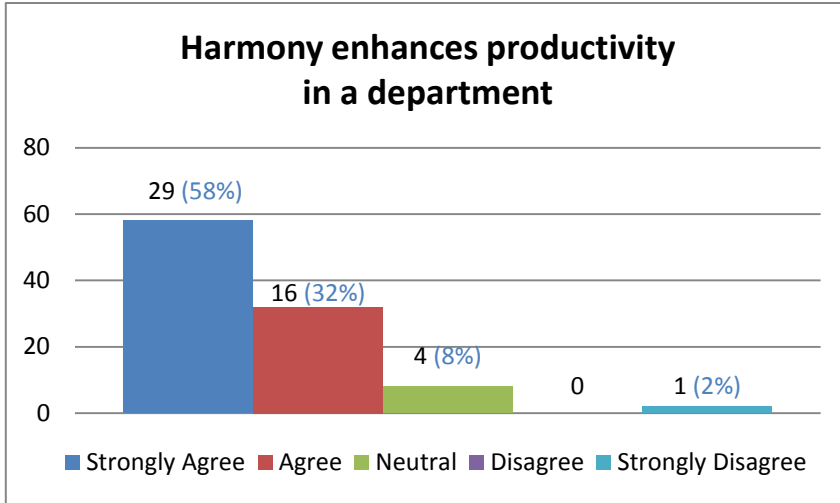


Seventy six percent collectively strongly agree or agree that they experience job satisfaction in their jobs. This indicates that the majority of academic staff members are happy in their jobs. However, a fairly high number were neutral (16%).

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2008: 170) “job satisfaction is an affective or emotional response toward various facets of one’s job and this includes a person’s satisfaction with co-workers”.

4.4.15 Harmony enhances productivity in a department

Figure 22: Harmony between administrative support staff and academic staff creates team players which enhances productivity in a department

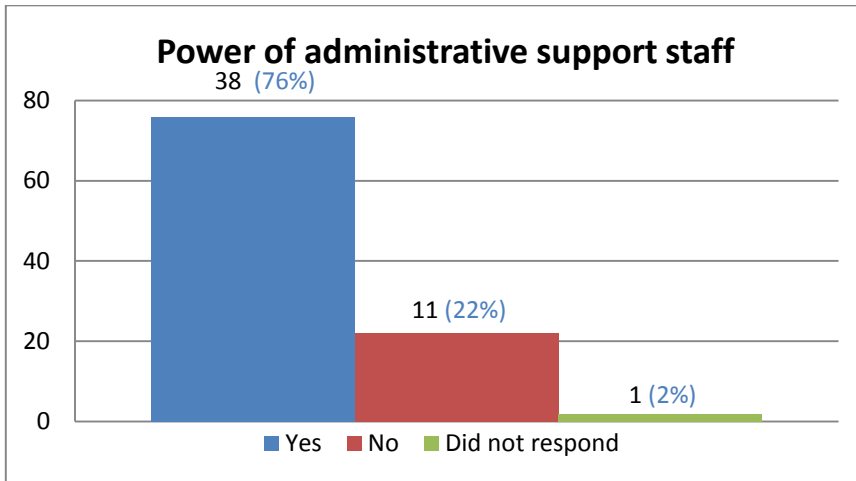


The data indicates that the majority of the respondents - 90% (58% strongly agree and 32% agree) believe that harmony between administrative support staff and academic staff creates team players which enhances productivity in a department. This points to the fact that the majority of staff would be eager to create and maintain harmony in their departments and ultimately ensure a high degree of productivity.

The following questions were followed by a sub-section asking the respondents to provide reasons for their answer, if they answered 'Yes'. It must be noted that although all questions required an answer, it was voluntary for respondents to expand on why they had answered as they did.

4.4.16 Power of administrative support staff.

Figure 23: Do you believe administrative support staff have power in your department?



Seventy six percent of the academic staff agreed that administrative support staff have power in their departments while only 22% disagreed. This concurs with the literature which indicates that secretaries and technical staff have the power to decide who and when to assist in their department. The “social connections” they have in an organization are extremely important in their gaining and maintaining this power (Cenk Sozen, 2012: 489).

Thirty nine respondents provided reasons for their answers. The majority of the respondents concurs that the administrative support staff are the backbone of the department, are efficient and have a wealth of knowledge; a large number commented on a similar point that administrative support staff have the power to make decisions on their own in their departments and can slow down the running of their department if they choose to; while a few respondents commented that they were not sure what “power” means; a few respondents commented that they support the administrative support staff and all staff work as a team in their departments; a small number likewise commented that administrative support staff are very important and are the first point of contact in their departments and one commented that administrative support staff are not always aware that they have power in their

departments. The respondents' comments provided reasons as to why they thought the administrative support staff hold power in their departments. All these comments confirm that the respondents firmly believe the administrative support staff hold power in their departments.

Selected comments made by the respondents:

They are the personnel that liaise with all departments initially and ensure a follow up and updates are done timeously.

Administrative staff do not always wait for the HOD to make some decisions. They are quite capable to function without HOD input.

They have more knowledge of the inner workings of the department and are able to assist when needed to the rest of us that are not in the know.

Their behaviour and decisions strongly impact on the academic functioning.

They are familiar with administration requirements and form a crucial link between academic staff and the institution, thereby providing them with power.

They act as the backbone of the department. Without their efforts, multiple tasks would not occur. They do indeed have power in their position.

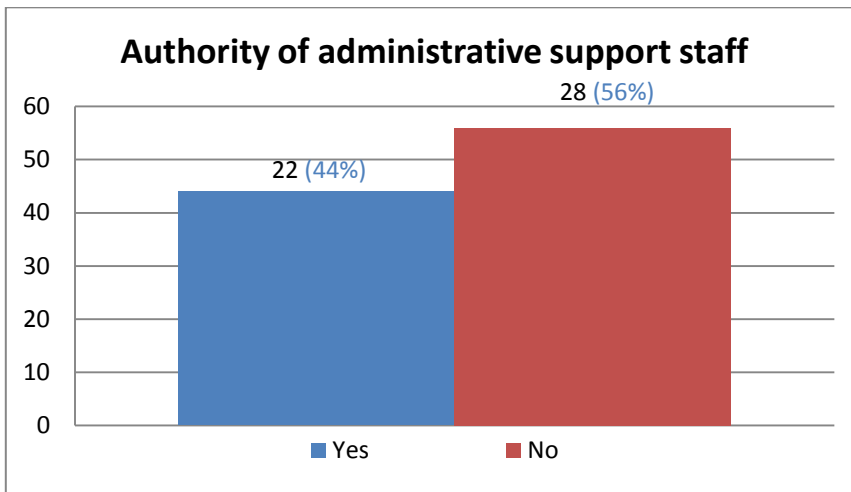
The running of the department can be slowed down, no progress if they don't perform their duties.

Administrative staff sometimes have the responsibility to allocate staff to certain duties, which is an automatic 'power'.

They are not always aware of their power. The things they do or not do have definite repercussions on the smooth running of the department.

4.4.17 Authority of administrative support staff

Figure 24: Do you believe administrative support staff have authority in your department?



The data shows that 44% of the respondents agreed that administrative support staff have authority in their departments while 56% disagreed. This is in contrast to the previous question on whether administrative support staff have power in the department. The findings indicate that a fair number of the respondents believe administrative support staff have power but not authority, which shows that authority lies with the academics of the department.

There were twenty two responses to this question and eleven of them similarly said that administrative support staff do have authority because they have more knowledge of systems and information than academic staff, while a number of the respondents made a similar comment that the administrative support staff only have authority on certain issues in order to improve the running of the department, but not authority over staff. A smaller number commented that they have “informal” authority. A few commented they do, but that the HOD has the final say, and a few made a very similar point that they have authority over students.

Comments made by the respondents:

Considered as informal authority as they have limited say with all information.

Authority in the sense of improving on something? Yes, of course. Authority to change something for the sake of change? I don't think so.

Authority within the requirements of the position they hold. Authority to ensure their work is performed as best as possible.

They have authority over their domains eg. the labs etc. they are in charge there.

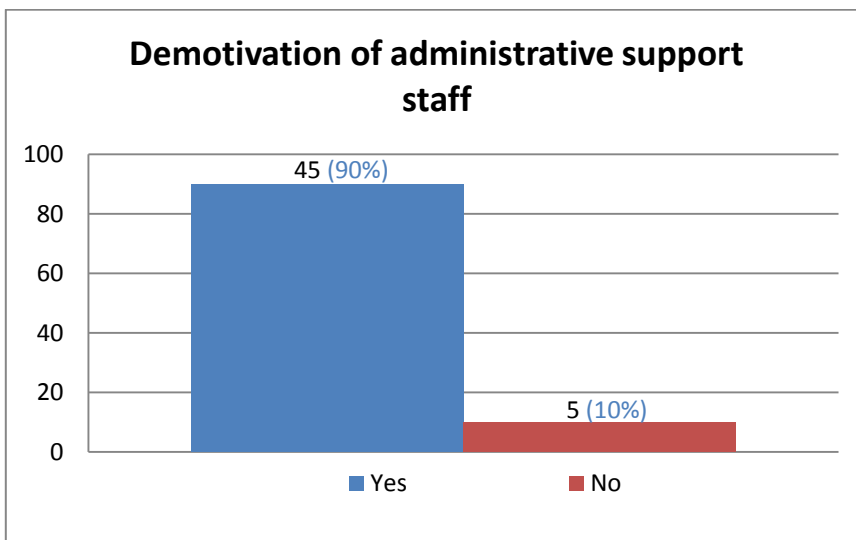
To an extent, administrative staff have authority over students and support the lecturers during class time.

Some staff have a world of knowledge with regards to the department, and as mentioned earlier, have certain responsibilities which allow authority.

At times academics are informed by support staff of what they are employed to do, which might not auger well in team work.

4.4.18 Demotivation of administrative support staff

Figure 25: Do you believe that demotivation of administrative support staff can have a negative impact on students?



The data indicates that 90% of the respondents answered yes to this question while only 10% disagreed. Therefore, the findings show that an overwhelming number of

the respondents feel that if administrative support staff are demotivated, this can have a negative impact on students in their departments as it could affect the students' willingness to seek help and ultimately may reflect badly on the outcome of their results.

Forty respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. A third of the respondents said a similar point that the administrative support staff are the face of the department, the first point of contact and need to show the students good, positive energy. Almost half made the point that if administrative support staff are unhappy, depressed and demotivated, this will lead to a lack of productivity by students and the balance of the respondents similarly commented that the administrative support staff are the middle men between staff, students and the institution and need to keep these relationships healthy.

Selected comments made by the respondents:

The students become aware of negative vibes and then start not appreciating the support staff.

If administrative support staff is demotivated, he/she will not be able to assist students and staff well. Administrative staff are the faces of the department of which they belong to.

All staff need to feel motivated in order to perform to the best of their ability. If staff are demotivated, students are surely going to notice and this could cause students to become demotivated.

The secretary is the forefront of our department and if she is negative it will undoubtedly adversely impact on students. Unintentionally, her decision to assist students may be blurred.

Students sometimes rely on the staff for information or materials and if the staff is demotivated, they can make it hard for a student to get their work done.

Administrative staff play an integral part between students and the university. Without their assistance, or incorrect assistance, many students are left wanting.

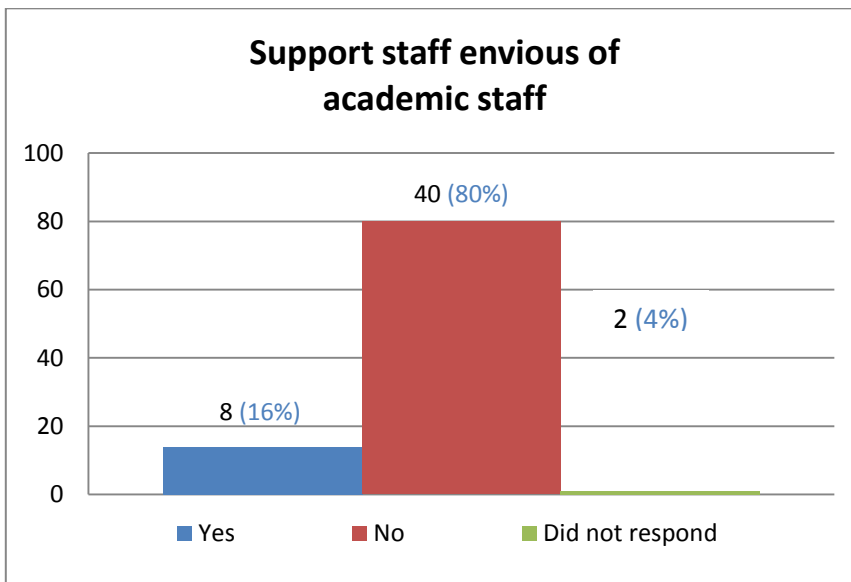
Administrative staff have direct contact with students, through technical and administrative support. Demotivation of administrative staff could result in poor performance and therefore hinder student progress.

Yes, they are the coalface of dealing with students, the approach to their work directly influences students' activities.

Academic support staff are the first point of contact.

4.4.19 Support staff envious of academic staff

Figure 26: Do you believe administrative support staff are envious of academic staff in your department?



The data indicates that 16% of the respondents answered yes to this question while 80% answered no. Therefore, the majority of academic staff feel that the administrative support staff are not envious of them.

A small number of respondents, who it is assumed answered yes, provided reasons for their answers to this question. The comments ranged from there being a perception at DUT that administrative support staff are envious of the treatment of academics; that administrative support staff are taken for granted; that academic staff have more flexibility/shorter hours than administrative support staff; that it could be a power dynamic; while a few respondents commented that administrative support staff were envious that academic staff received better pay.

Comments made by the respondents:

I think it's mainly financial. Possibly the power dynamic is an issue.

Yes, I think they are underpaid, although doing an equally important job as academic staff (bearing in mind that most administrative staff are academics themselves).

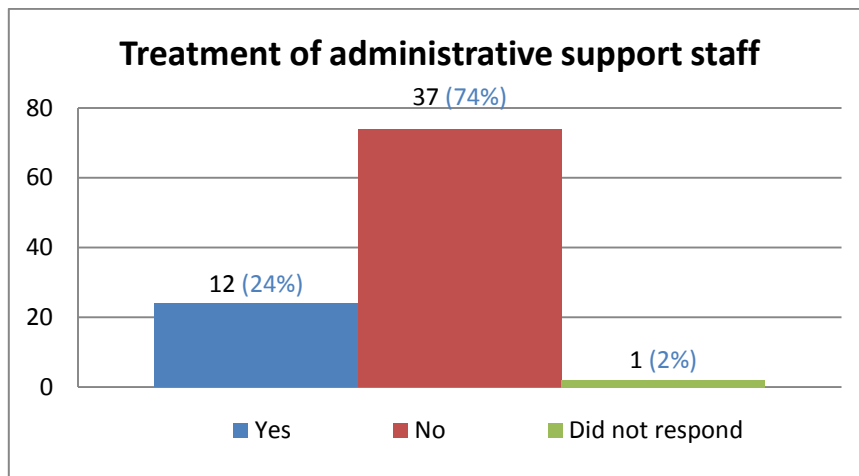
*Envious of how they are treated, yes.
Because they think we get paid more to do nothing and that's not true.*

In a way I feel as though administrative support staff get taken for granted and academic staff get held to a higher regard even though some administrative staff are just as highly qualified to perform their duties.

A loaded question. Perhaps of the flexibility that academic staff have.

4.4.20 Treatment of administrative support staff

Figure 27: Do you believe administrative support staff are sometimes treated as less important than academic staff in your department?



Although the majority of the academic respondents answered “no” to this question, a significant percentage (24%) did agree with this statement.

Eleven of the respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. Two respondents commented similarly that less opportunities are given to administrative support staff; five respondents commented that administrative support staff are taken for granted and are not respected by academic staff; one respondent commented

that administrative support staff are mistreated by DUT; two respondents commented that administrative support staff are stereotyped as being less educated and one respondent commented that administrative support staff are the key to the department running efficiently and people tend to forget that.

Comments made by the respondents:

You can hear the way some academic staff speak to the administrative staff as if they are lesser employees.

Administrative staff are stereotyped as being less "educated" by many people and that leads to academics treating administrative staff as less important.

Even though the administrative support staff are equally qualified in their own field, they are sometimes treated as inferior/not as important.

They are the key to the department running efficiently. People tend to forget how things get done, they assume that it just will be done.

Yes and no, some support staff are mistreated by the institution as a whole (pay structures, etc) but the value of support staff is clear.

Academic professional growth is given precedence.

When things run smoothly, it is taken for granted.

Less opportunities are given to them.

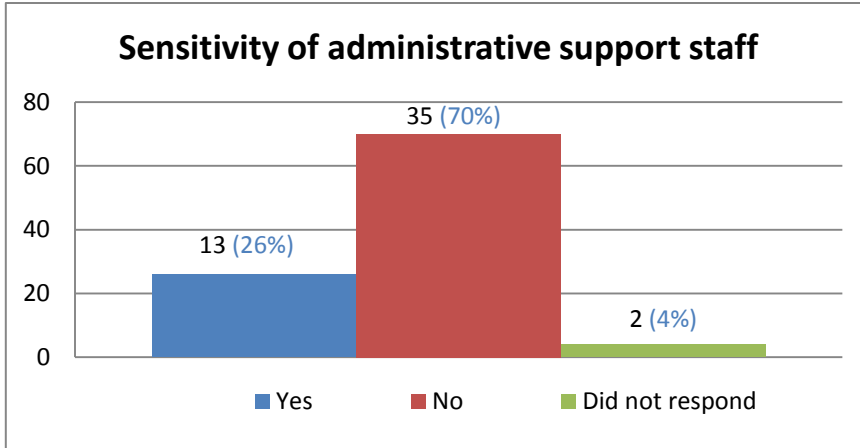
They are taken for granted.

In our department, YES.

By certain staff members – used as dogs' bodies so to speak to do jobs outside their role.

4.4.21 Sensitivity of administrative support staff

Figure 28: Do you believe administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff?



The data shows that a fair number (26%) of the academic staff respondents answered yes to this question.

Thirteen of the respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. One commented that academics are “switched off”; five commented that academics take advantage of administrative support staff and treat them poorly; two commented that administrative support staff take things personally; two commented that there need to be clear boundaries between academic and administrative support staff; two commented that academic staff often require urgent information from administrative support staff which can make them sensitive and one commented that it depended on the staff members.

Comments made by the respondents:

Academics do not mean to be harsh or inconsiderate they are just a bit "switched off".

Continual treatment by some academics who are of the opinion that administrative staff, such as the secretary, are at their 'beck and call', will, in the long term, make them overly sensitive.

They sometimes have a lot of tasks and it may reflect as if they are not appreciated.

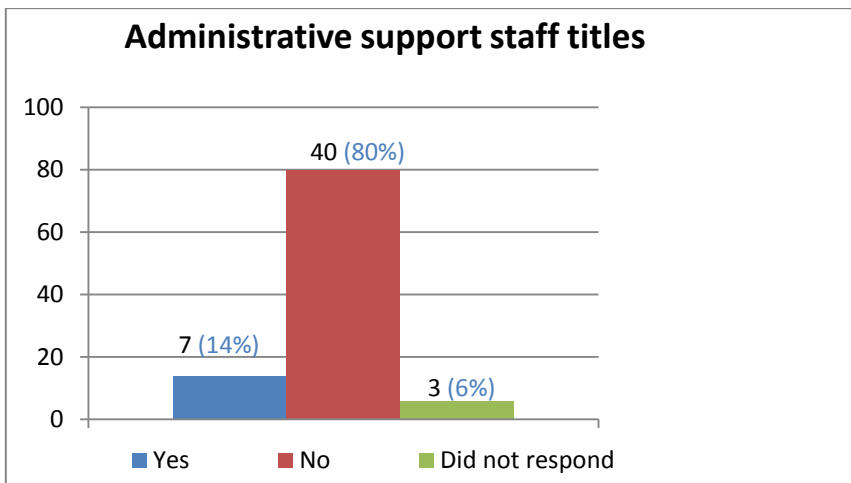
There has to be clear demarcated boundaries between academic and administrative support staff so as to avoid stepping on each other's toes.

They can be overly sensitive to their treatment, they take things personally.

If they find they are being taken advantage of by academics.

4.4.22 Administrative support staff titles

Figure 29: Do you believe administrative support staff feel that their titles as non-academic staff members are demeaning and/or degrading to themselves?



The data shows that 14% of the respondents answered yes to this question while 80% answered no. These findings suggest that the majority of the academic staff respondents do not believe that administrative support staff in their departments are unhappy with their present titles.

Twelve respondents provided reasons for their answers. Four commented that many administrative support staff hold degrees themselves and therefore 'non-academic' is not a respectful title; four commented that they could not speak on behalf of the administrative support staff; two commented that a title should not be negative and two commented that academic activities are overrated.

According to Sebalj, Allyson and Bourke (2012: 463), administrative support staff at universities have become “the forgotten workforce” and the use of “non-academic” as a title to describe these staff members is a form of “negative classification”.

Comments made by the respondents:

I feel that the ‘academic’ activities are over rated, but everyone thinks that being an ‘academic’ is sought after.

Yes, most of them are academics, and because of the title given to them, at times they do not get the same respect as their ‘academic’ counterparts.

I believe the term is not true because non-academic staff can also be academically educated and therefore deserve a better title.

Some staff hold degrees and I feel as though ‘non-academic’ does not do their qualification justice.

Not in my experience but I don’t think a title should be a ‘negative’ – ie you are NOT something.

‘Non-academic’ literally excludes them from the ‘academic staff’, in my opinion they are both academics as they help drive the department.

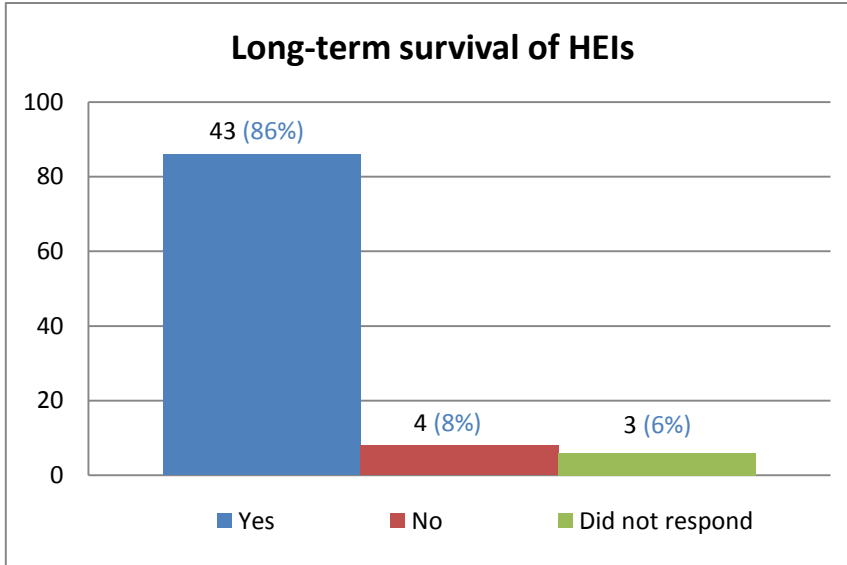
ALTERNATIVE TITLES:

Table 3: Suggested alternative titles

Twenty eight respondents offered suggested alternative titles	
Administrative Support Staff	10
Status Quo (remain as non-academic)	7
Administrative Staff	4
Personal Assistant	2
Administrative Officer	1
Internal Staff Member	1
Departmental Administrator	1
Academic Support Staff	1
Co-Academia	1

4.4.23 Long-term survival of HEIs

Figure 30: Do you believe administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of higher education institutions?



The data reflects that 86% of the respondents answered yes to this question, 8% answered no and 6% did not respond. Thus the majority do feel that administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of HEIs.

Forty one respondents provided a reason for their answer, the majority made a similar point that administrative support staff have a vast array of duties in departments and are the 'glue and backbone' of the department; a number of them commented that HEIs would very quickly become disorganized without the input of the administrative support staff and that all staff and not only administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of higher education institutions and a small number concurs that administrative support staff are the staff members who conduct the fundamental duty of intake in their departments.

Selected comments made by the respondents:

Everyone involved in higher education is responsible, it's team work.

They perform functions that cannot be included in an academic's workload.

They form a critical link and can influence the running of a department.

These individuals facilitate the efforts of academic staff to such an extent that the department is extremely reliant on them. Their removal would quickly lead to disorganization within an institution.

They form the glue that holds the department together. Without them things won't get done in a timely manner or in some cases, at all.

Question 24: Further comments/remarks

Eighteen of the fifty Academic staff respondents added further comments.

Comments made by the respondents:

This is a difficult topic because you can't generalize people's feelings. We have some incredible support staff (administrative and technical) who go above and beyond. They are sometimes treated unfairly by the systems. Then we have other support staff who barely do their jobs and cause issues for students and academics who ride the system. Some academic are considerate and respectful, some are demanding and treat support staff as dogs bodies. It's not a simple issue.

With motivated support staff, things will carry on. Motivated support staff add a sparkle!

It is difficult when administrative and academic staff don't work together. It is important to understand the roles that each play. I would not cope with inefficient administrative staff but I suppose it works both ways.

I find it difficult to comment on how admin staff might feel, as I have never had reason to suspect or believe that academic staff are 'superior' to admin staff. We all work as a team to get the job done.

The grading scale for experienced administrative staff should be reviewed.

Administrative staff should never feel like a lesser employee. A business is just as strong as its weakest link - so everyone in any company is a key role player.

Administrative staff deserve to be treated with respect and have their salary scales revised.

I think as administrative staff, they need to review their job profiles accordingly - whoever deals with it from HR, and provide us with skills development training that builds capacity.

Academic support staff is vital and necessary for the functioning of the faculty/institution.

Interesting topic. Could prove beneficial to CQPA as part of their Programme Review.

I think this study is useful for the harmony between administrative, academic staff and students. It can also assist inter-department relations.

Drama departments (as I'm sure other departments) tend to have a culture of their own and a sense of family. The administrative support staff hold that family together; they ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible and provide assistance and support for each member.

Support staff are an essential component of a programme/department. They provide administrative support which alleviates the load on academic staff.

I think the term non-academic staff member should not be used - rather administrative staff

Administrative staff are an essential part of the university.

It depends on the person as well as attitudes of academic and non-academic staff. I have had pleasant interaction with our support staff and most of our programme department staff. However, I have witnessed somewhat arrogant behaviour by others. The question is loaded and emotive – I am not sure about the acceptance of responsibility.

It is important for administrative support staff to be happy in their jobs - to ensure that there is a smooth workflow in the department. Unhappiness will lead to frustration and inefficient work related tasks.

Both academic and administrative staff need each other to drive the needs of the department forward.

Overall, the comments to this question were positive and supportive. It was stressed that it is difficult to generalize as some administrative support staff work really hard while others do not.

4.5 INTERVIEWS: SENIOR ACADEMIC STAFF

One Deputy Dean and one Acting Dean were interviewed as they are the most senior academic staff members of the two selected faculties. They have a wealth of knowledge on the operations of policies and procedures as well as rules and regulations at DUT. They also have a continuous wealth of knowledge and experience in dealing with academic and administrative support staff not only from the two selected faculties, but all faculties at DUT. These interviewees were selected as the researcher needed to hear their views on the relationships between academic and administrative support staff in their faculties and how this impacts service delivery to their students.

Question 1: **If you require assistance on any departmental issues ie. Budgets, part-time periods, staff issues, student issues, finances, etc. do you approach the HOD, secretary or technician?**

“Operationally I would like to speak to the HOD first. I assume it would be the HOD and not the secretary who makes decisions”. (Senior Academic 1)

“It would be the HOD. I would approach the secretary if I couldn’t get hold of the HOD”. (Senior Academic 2)

Question 2: **Do you believe that the relationship between the academics and administrative support staff is cordial on the whole? Please provide reasons for your answer.**

“I don’t actually. I think that there are relationships that are good, very good, but I think that on the whole, there is a tendency for academics to play administrative staff down. I think in some departments administrative staff frankly are responsible for the department operating but I don’t know if necessarily they are appreciated. For myself, it may not be the mainstream view but I historically operated with very poor administrative support for years. I know how difficult life can be when you have to do everything yourself. I think there are some HODs who have never had to do it for

themselves so they have no idea what they've got. I think that administrative staff probably feel they are under appreciated, they feel that they have to respond to the demands of their manager regardless of what they might be busy with themselves and I can imagine it makes their day quite difficult because you come to work in the morning planning to do x, y and z and you might get a, b and c added in the middle and x and y will still remain to be done by the end of the day, So I think it's a frustrating role but on the other hand, in defence of the department, I think that there are some administrators who quite like doing that, and I think in those departments they probably have more severe relationships but I think that on the whole, HODs don't afford administrators enough respect and administrators feel that they are abused". (Senior Academic 1)

"Yes, I do think so". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 3: Describe the attitude that administrative support staff display towards you.

"I have good relations with administrative support staff, in general terms the staff that report to me will respond to my requests immediately and they will deliver what I need but I am more specific on what I require. Probably because for years I had no administrative support, it was clear I didn't and I think there's a recognition of that - that I would have done it on my own, but I have chosen to ask for help so the help comes". (Senior Academic 1)

"They are helpful and respectful, including my faculty staff". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 4: Do you believe that the academic staff appreciate the administrative support staff? Tell me more about this.

"I have already covered this in my previous answer". (Senior Academic 1)

"I think it would be difficult to generalize, I think some do and some don't. I've sometimes seen a certain arrogance amongst academics towards administrative staff. Yes, I have seen that". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 5: Do you believe that academic staff sometimes treat administrative support staff as inferior (or less important than) to themselves?

"I think they do. I think if you were to call admin support staff - administrative service staff, that describes the relationship best but it isn't always necessarily about appreciation, but whether staff members support you, it's more that they do stuff that I rather wouldn't do". (Senior Academic 1)

"Yes, I do". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 6: Do you think administrative support staff are envious of academic staff, even if subconsciously?

"Yes, I have worked with a range of administrative staff, I have dealt with, in my time, administrative staff who for instance cannot appreciate the differences that do exist between academic and administrative roles and that if academic staff can come and go, why can't administrative staff. Yes, academics don't need to be at work at 08:00 and stick around until 16:30, so why is there a song if I arrive at 08:30. Sometimes administrative staff battle with that and one would be reluctant to pull rank with the basic thrust of saying I studied for many years and you studied for a few. Historically on that coming and going issue, by and large, when you are an administrator and you shut down your computer, you don't need to work until you come back to work the next morning whereas I would be sitting at home marking, reading research, etc. I don't leave my work behind when I shut my computer down and so I work on Saturdays and I work on Sundays. So I might not be working from 08:00 to 16:30 five days a week but I have a lot of work to get done and if I don't get it done, it will be noticed but that work doesn't always happen during office hours – and I think there's a sense that academics have it easier because they are less desk-bound, but the academics work until its done". (Senior Academic 1)

"No, I don't really". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 7: Do you think administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff?

"I think so. I think there is a certain vulnerability being an administrative staff member and I think that vulnerability is at a basic level and means that it makes that person very susceptible to being attacked or abused under their leadership or hard done by. I also think that sitting in your administrative office, you don't necessarily know what the academic is going through when they are actually engaging with students because academics' work from the administrative office looks like an absolute gem. You rock up when you want to, you go sit in your office for a while, you go play with the students for a while, you pop in and you go home at half past two, which looks like an absolute jol. Yet when you put a whole lot of academics in a room together, they are extremely stressed out and I don't know whether administrative staff

necessarily know this. The students don't realize at all what is happening behind closed doors". (Senior Academic 1)

"Yes I have seen it, but not often. I'd say I've seen one or two cases but not as a rule". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 8: Do you think administrative support staff wield a certain amount of power in their departments? Please provide reasons for your answer.

"I think administrative staff hold a lot of power in their departments. They might not be aware of it. If they do their job well, they can make things happen that otherwise would not happen. If they do their job badly, they can totally cripple their department. If they have a good relationship with the HOD, they can be responsible for decision making. I think they have a very important role, more important than they think. A good relationship is a little bit like a spousal relationship. I don't need to explain to you that women, theoretically, are below their husbands but no husband will make a decision his wife disapproves of. So you actually have the power and I think that if it's a good relationship, you have an HOD who will actually take advice. I mean make a decision but take advice from the administrative person and that puts the administrative person in potentially a very powerful position". (Senior Academic 1)

"Yes, very much so". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 9: How would you describe your relationship with academics and administrative support staff in academic departments?

"I think I have good relationships with most staff. For myself, I tend to not make a distinction between who people are, so I tend to talk to administrative staff similarly to the way I would talk to academics, and the way I would talk to students. In my head, I don't work with that strategy but I don't give more time to academics than to an administrator. So I think my relationships are good. I think I'm viewed quite similarly by the staff as well". (Senior Academic 1)

"Cordial on the whole". (Senior Academic 2)

Question 10: Are there any other comments you would like to make about this study?

“It goes back to the original comment. I think some administrative staff in this institution work very hard and actually hold it together, and then in other offices elsewhere in the institution, where if the particular administrator that is running that office, if that person was removed, the whole system would fall apart but there are a whole lot of administrative staff, and I don’t mean secretaries necessarily, that are deadweight in many respects and I think that might drive some of the perceptions. You as a secretary might know that there has been a lot of belt-tightening on academic work. You’ve got to do more with less all the time. I don’t think that belt-tightening has happened in the administrative sector and so whenever we talk about the salary bill and all those things, it’s automatic that academics will say that there are fewer of us than there are administrators and look how much they cost, we are totally viable and we hand over a whole lot of budget to these other structures and suddenly we are not viable and there doesn’t seem to be the same cost containment, human resource rationing that seems to be happening in the academic environment and I think it feels contentious but the individual relationships are another story, about attitude towards administrative staff and the attitude towards academics, I don’t know, collectively across the administrative sector, and I’m using it very broadly, collectively around the administrative sector - whether there is an appreciation of this servicing role that is implied in administration. You’ll know exactly which departments I’m talking about. Where there is no sense that we are actually supporting the academic programme. Our job is to provide a service so that the academics can do what they are meant to do. It’s almost like we are running some sort of corporate band or something. Where everybody’s got a job to do and I’ll do it when I need to do it. There’s a realization that there’s really no support. So that’s my comment”. (Senior Academic 1)

“I think one of the things that has arisen sometimes that I’ve noticed is that academic staff believe that they can take time off work and administrative staff have to work until half past four and they see academic staff leaving early. That is something that is a problem because nobody minds if those academic staff are producing research and are obviously hardworking but it is known that they are simply going off without that. Quite rightly there is resentment from administrative staff and I think that is something that should be watched out for by the HODs. They need to keep a tally of when people go and when they are taking time out for research. Not if they are doing research, but then there must be some output. I know there are a number of staff who work at lunch time and they are producing research. It really needs to be tightened up”. (Senior Academic 2)

4.6 DISCUSSION

One interviewee believes that the relationship between academics and administrative support staff is cordial while the other does not but both interviewees believe they have a cordial relationship with administrative support staff in their respective faculties. Both interviewees think that academics treat administrative

support staff as inferior to themselves, that administrative support staff wield power in their departments and that they are overly sensitive to their treatment by academics.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a full analysis of the data that was gathered from the surveys that were completed by the academic staff as well as that gathered from the interviews.

The next chapter presents the results, data analysis, findings and discussion for the administrative support staffs' questionnaire and interviews.

CHAPTER 5
RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS & DISCUSSION:
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the results, data analysis, findings and discussion of the academic staffs' questionnaire and interviews. This chapter will outline the results, data analysis, findings and discussion for the administrative support staffs' questionnaire and interviews.

5.2 RESULTS

As explained previously, a total of 235 questionnaires were issued to both administrative support and academic staff members of the Faculties of Health Sciences and Arts & Design at Durban University of Technology. Of the seventy seven questionnaires that were completed and returned, fifty were from academic staff (21% response rate) and twenty seven (12% response rate) were from administrative support staff. As mentioned in chapter three, the administrative support staff may have been reluctant to answer the questionnaire as it could be seen as a sensitive issue. No division was made between the responses from the two selected faculties.

Interviews were conducted with nine DUT staff members, two of whom were academic (the Deputy Executive Dean and the Acting Executive Dean of the selected faculties), six who were central administrative staff from the departments of Finance, Human Resources, Student Admissions, the Registrar and both of the Faculty Officers of the two selected faculties and one technical staff member.

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel version 2016. The researcher then analysed the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions by grouping it in terms of frequency of words and topics and reporting on it.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 386), “Conceptual analysis establishes the existence and frequency of concepts (such as words, themes, or characters) in a text”.

Interviews were transcribed and analysed to obtain rich, in-depth data thematically. Some of the questions included in the interview schedule were not included in the questionnaire. These are: “If you require assistance on any departmental issues, do you approach the HOD, secretary or technician?” and “Do you believe that the relationship between the academics and administrative support staff is cordial on the whole?” Data was grouped into themes using techniques such as repetitions, transitions, similarities and differences to categorize qualitative data. “Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 85).

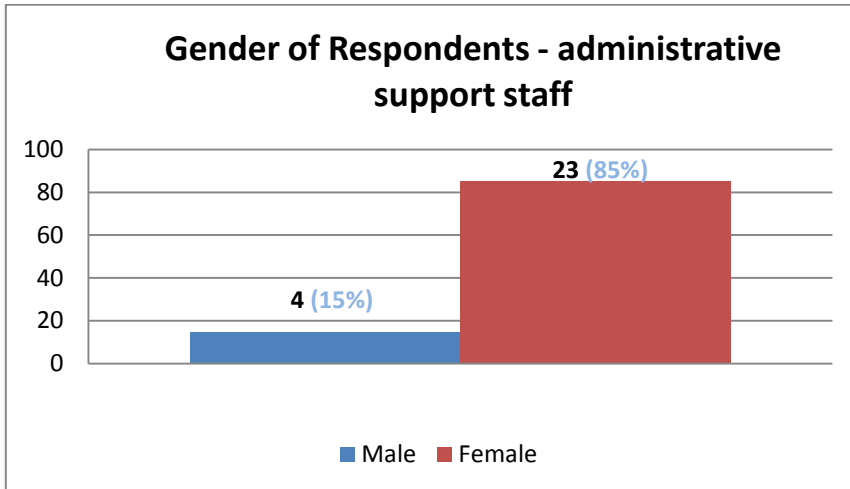
5.4 FINDINGS – QUESTIONNAIRE: ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF

Of the seventy seven respondents, twenty seven (35%) were administrative support staff members. This section describes their responses to the questionnaire.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

5.4.1 Gender of Respondents – administrative support staff

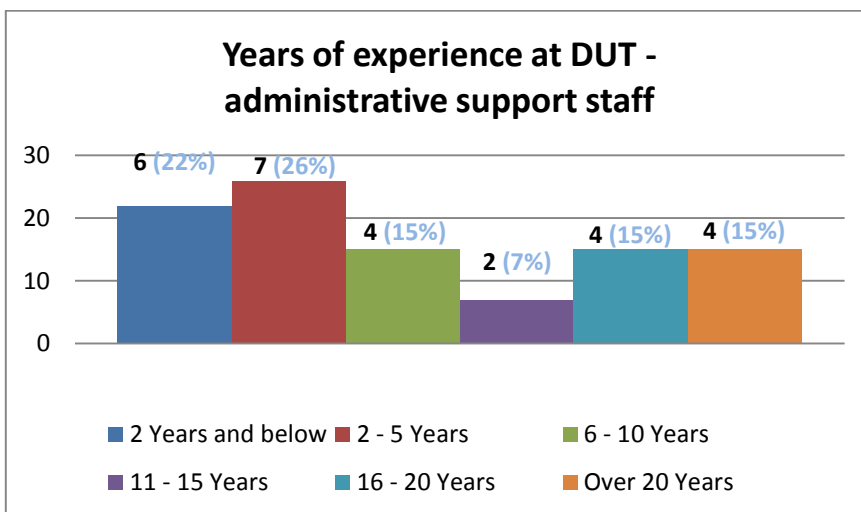
Figure 31: Gender of Respondents



The data indicates that of the administrative support staff respondents to the questionnaire, 15% were male while 85% were female. This number indicates that the administrative field is still mainly staffed by females.

5.4.2 Years of experience at DUT – administrative support staff

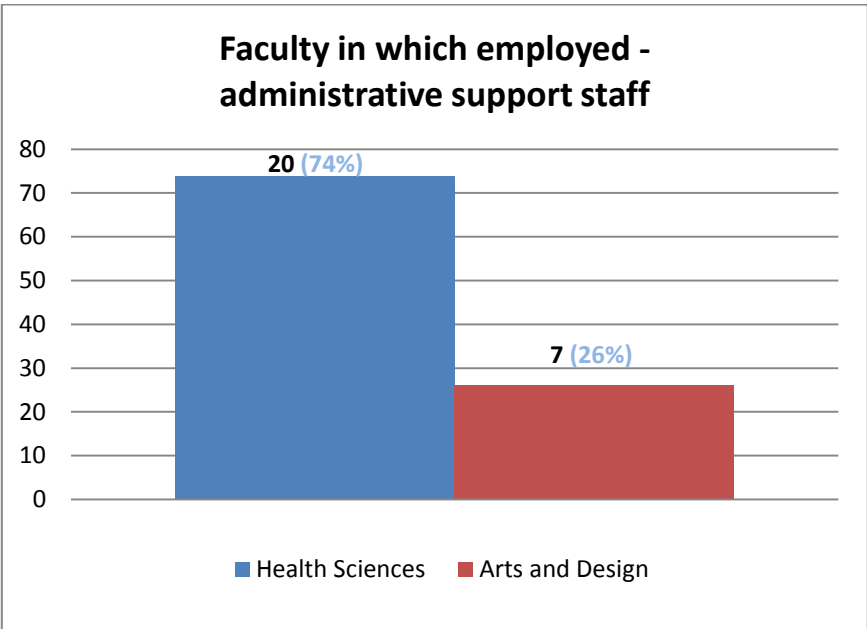
Figure 32: Years of experience at DUT



It can be seen that of the administrative support staff respondents, 22% have worked at this institution for 2 years or less; 26% of the respondents between 2-5 years; 15% between 6-10 years; a small percentage (7%) between 11-15 years; 15% between 16-20 years and 15% for over 20 years. These results show that 48% of the administrative staff have been with the institution for 5 years or less.

5.4.3 Faculty in which employed – administrative support staff

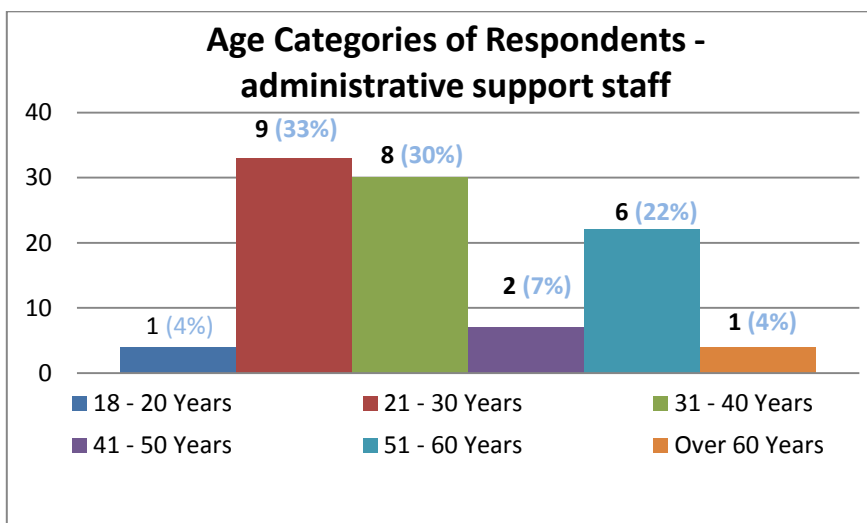
Figure 33: Faculty in which employed



The majority of the respondents (74%) are from the Faculty of Health Sciences. As the researcher is employed in the Faculty of Health Sciences, it appears she received more support from her colleagues in this faculty.

5.4.4 Age Categories of Respondents – administrative support staff

Figure 34: Age categories of Respondents



As seen in the table below, across DUT there are very few young and old staff members and the findings above indicate that these numbers are representative of DUT staff age groups as a whole.

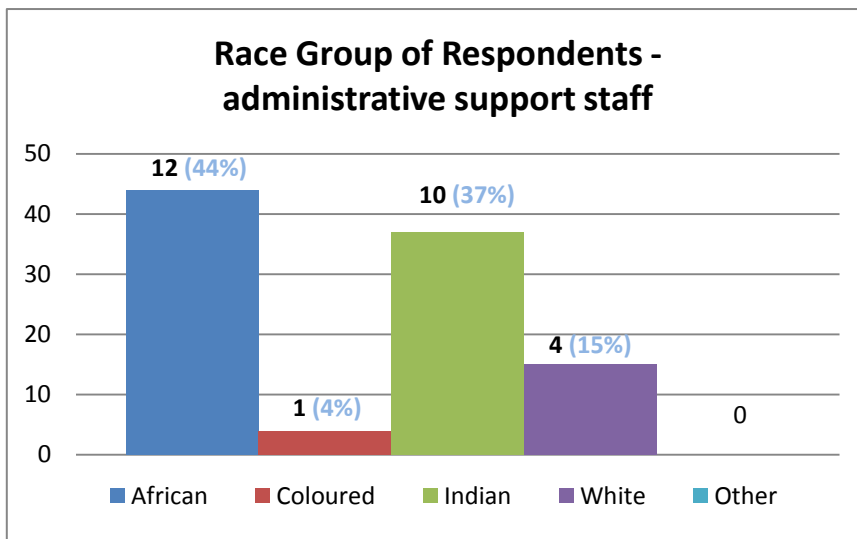
CURRENT TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS AT DUT (Academic and administrative):

Table 4: Total staff numbers at DUT (Management Information System, 2018)

Age group	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Number of staff	1 (0,5%)	127 (7.5%)	345 (24%)	492 (34%)	399 (27%)	102 (7%)

5.4.5 Race Group of Respondents – administrative support staff

Figure 35: Race Group of Respondents



The data showed that of the 27 respondents, the African race group was the majority with the minority being the Coloured group. The Indian race group is also significantly large. This is in contrast to the results for the academic staff where the majority of staff were from the White race group.

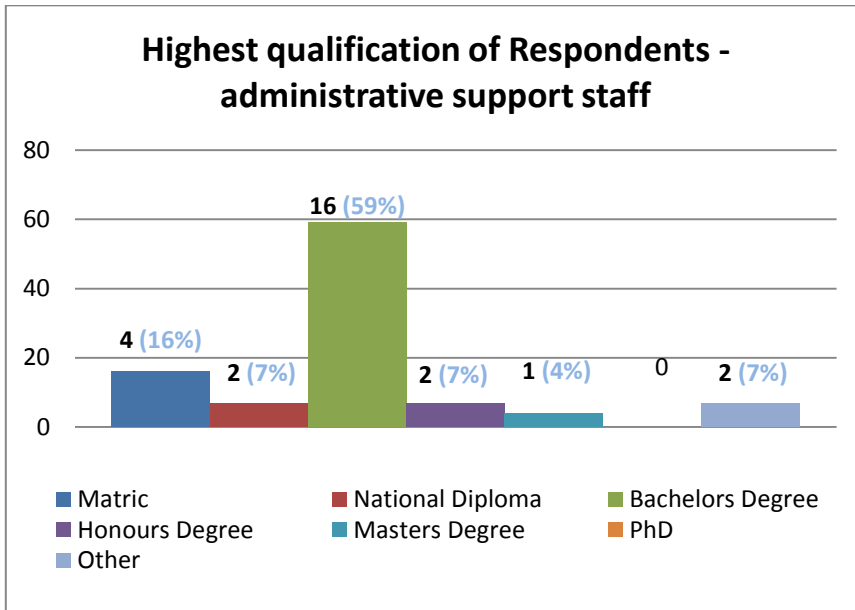
CURRENT TOTAL RACE GROUPS OF STAFF MEMBERS AT DUT (Academic and administrative):

Table 5: Total race groups of staff members at DUT (Management Information System, 2018)

Race group	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Other
Number of staff	652 (44%)	43 (3%)	566 (39%)	173 (12%)	32 (2%)

5.4.6 Highest qualification of Respondents – administrative support staff

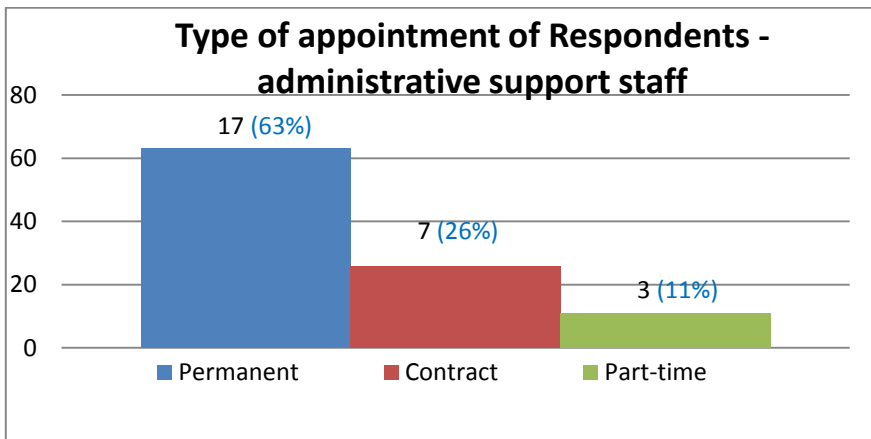
Figure 36: Highest qualification of Respondents



Fifty nine percent of the respondents have a Bachelors degree and only a small percentage have a qualification higher than this. Only 16% have only a matric. This confirms that the administrative support staff are well qualified.

5.4.7 Type of appointment of Respondents – administrative support staff

Figure 37: Type of appointment of Respondents

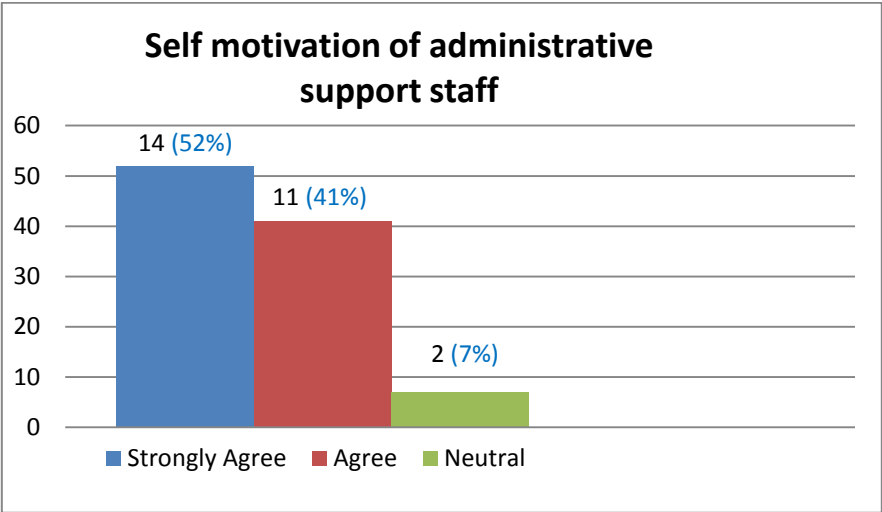


The majority of the respondents are permanently employed at DUT with only a small portion employed part-time. Approximately one quarter of the respondents (26%) are on contract.

SECTION B: RESEARCH DATA

5.4.8 Self-motivation of administrative support staff

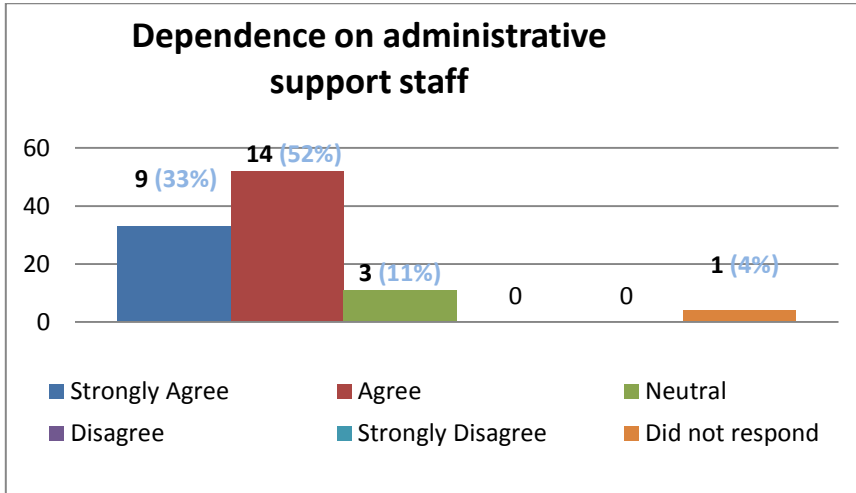
Figure 38: Administrative support staff in my department are intrinsically (self) motivated to carry out their duties to the best of their ability



The majority of the respondents agreed with this comment while a few were neutral and none of them disagreed with the statement. Therefore, it is illustrated that the administrative support staff endorsed this statement. The percentage of academic staff who strongly agreed and agreed with this statement was slightly less (40% and 38% respectively).

5.4.9 Dependence on administrative support staff

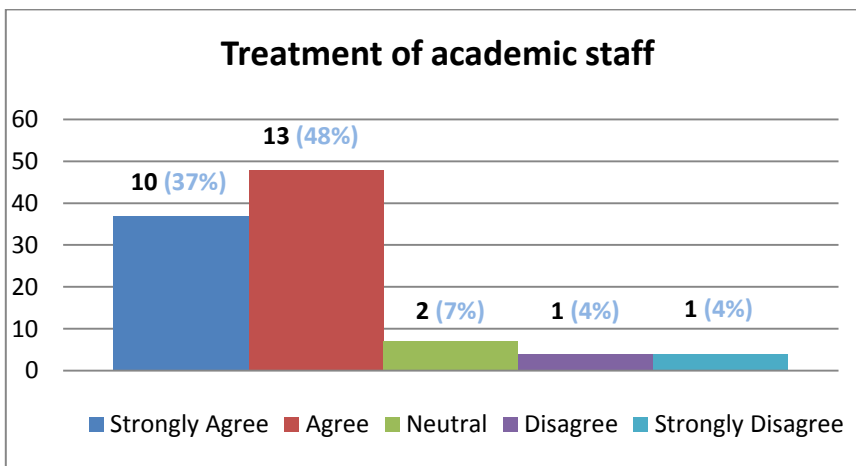
Figure 39: Academic staff in my department are dependent on administrative support staff for most of their key functions



The respondents agreed with this statement and none of them disagreed. They obviously feel strongly that their work in their departments is important. These results were very close to the ones of the academic staff members (30% strongly agreed and 44% agreed) however, it was noted that 12% of the academic staff disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with this statement.

5.4.10 Treatment of academic staff

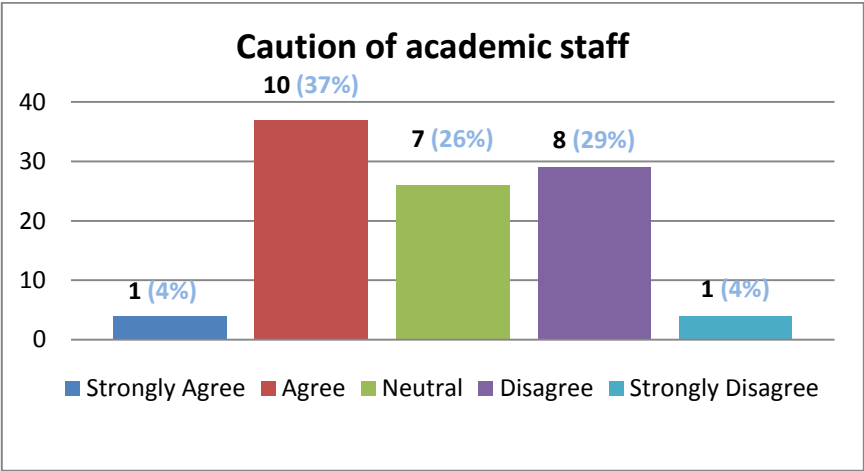
Figure 40: Academic staff in my department are generally treated fairly/equally by administrative support staff



A large percentage of the respondents agreed with this statement, while a small number of them disagreed. A similar number of the academic staff were of the same view.

5.4.11 Caution of academic staff

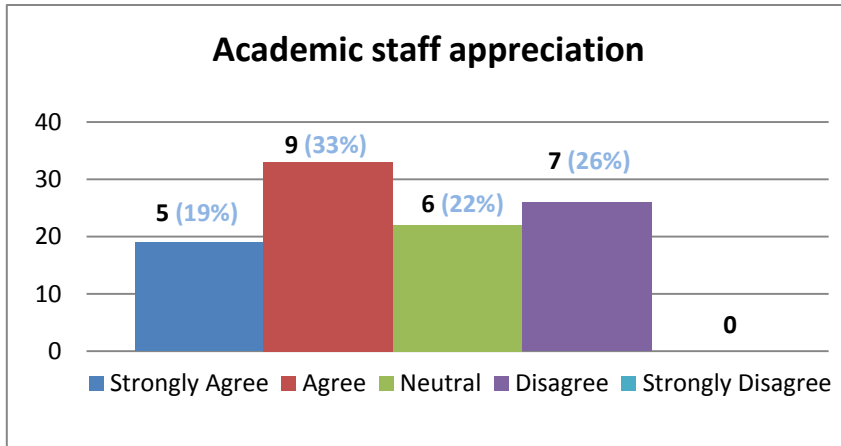
Figure 41: Academic staff are cautious of the manner in which they treat administrative support staff in order to avoid any backlash or lack of assistance



There was a similar number of respondents that agreed and did not agree with this statement so the administrative support staff appear to be divided on this question. 48% of the academic staff agreed that they need to tread cautiously with the administrative support staff in their departments.

5.4.12 Academic staff appreciation

Figure 42: Academic staff appreciate the efforts/assistance of the administrative support staff in my department

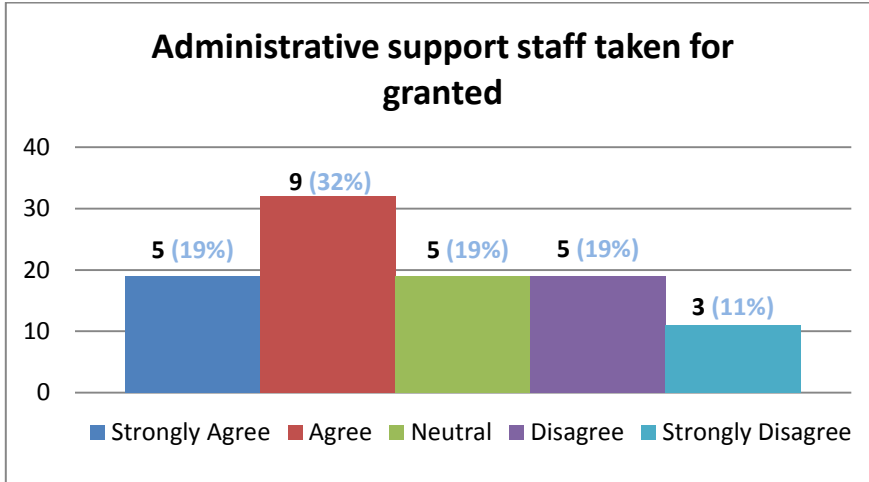


While a large number of respondents agreed with this statement, a substantial number (26%) disagreed. These findings indicate that a large portion of the respondents feel that the academic staff in their departments do not value the work they do.

In contrast, the majority of the academic staff respondents – 94% (50% strongly agreed and 44% agreed) that administrative support staff efforts are appreciated by their academic colleagues.

5.4.13 Administrative support staff taken for granted

Figure 43: Administrative support staff are sometimes taken for granted in my department

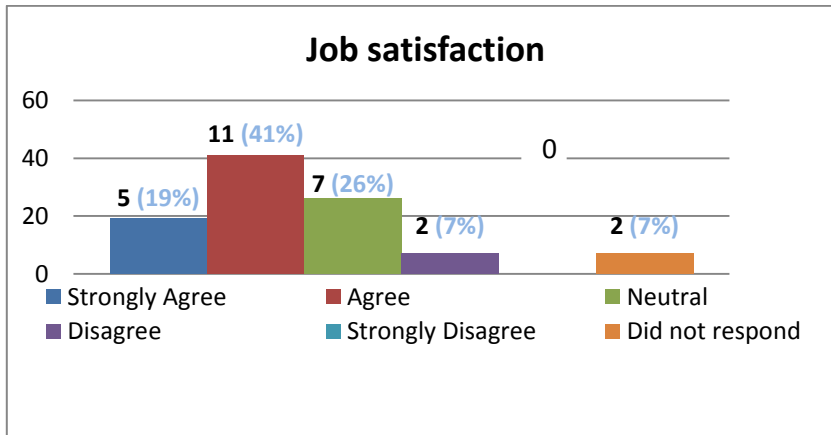


Fifty one percent of the respondents strongly agree or agree that they are taken for granted in their departments while 30% disagree. These findings illustrate that at least half of the respondents feel that the academic staff in their departments take advantage of them.

The academic staff respondent findings also show that the administrative support staff are quite frequently taken for granted in academic departments.

5.4.14 Job satisfaction

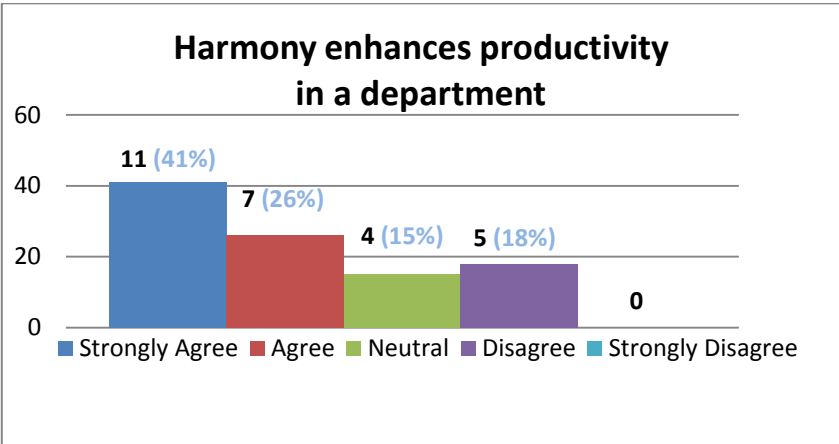
Figure 44: I experience job satisfaction in my position



The findings show that a moderate percentage (60%) of the respondents experience job satisfaction however, a number of staff (40%) were neutral, did not respond or do not experience job satisfaction. Staff members who experience job satisfaction are content and tend to attain their goals. Phillips and Gully (2012) define motivation as “the processes that account for an individual’s intensity, direction and persistence of effort towards attaining a goal”.

5.4.15 Harmony enhances productivity in a department

Figure 45: Harmony between administrative support staff and academic staff creates team players which enhances productivity in a department

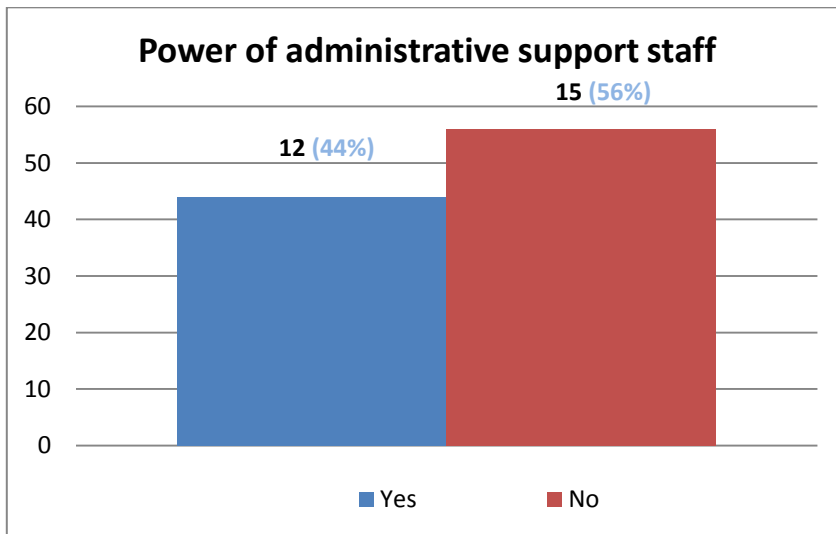


The data indicates that while the majority of the respondents (41% strongly agree and 26% agree) agree that harmony between administrative support staff and academic staff creates team players which enhances productivity in a department, these figures are significantly lower than those for the academic staff (58% and 32% respectively).

The following questions were followed by a sub-section asking the respondents to provide reasons for their answer, if they answered Yes. It must be noted that although all questions required an answer, it was voluntary for respondents to expand on why they had answered as they did.

5.4.16 Power of administrative support staff

Figure 46: Do you believe administrative support staff have power in your department?



Only 44% of administrative support staff agreed that they have power in their departments in comparison to 76% of academic staff. This finding points to the fact that administrative support staff may be completely unaware of the power they hold in their departments and in the university as a whole, while academic staff do see this power.

Ten of the respondents provided reasons for their answers. A large number similarly commented that the administrative support staff have power because they manage and control the department while a few commented that administrative staff support the academic staff who can then focus on students.

Comments made by the respondents:

They usually manage the department.

They are the backbone of everything.

Sometimes we come up with good suggestions.

Administrative staff do not always wait for the HOD to make some decisions. They are quite capable of functioning without HOD input.

The academics need to focus on their students and delivery, while the administrative staff support them.

Administrative support staff have power in my department as they keep track and organize the functions of the department.

Yes, because administrative staff are the oil to run an engine for the smooth running of the department and they serve as the ambassador of any department since they are the first and last person to interact with.

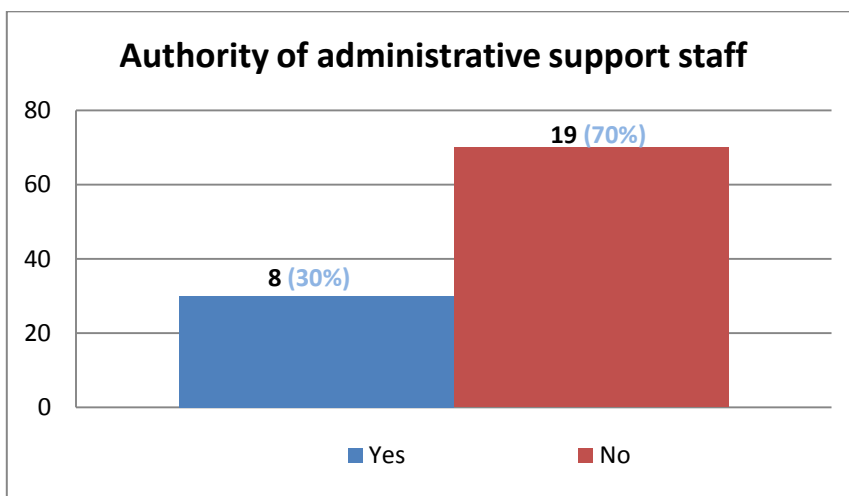
I am able to make suggestions and implementations which are considered and permitted where viable.

Both administrative and academic staff create team players to work together.

It controls the functioning of the department.

5.4.17 Authority of administrative support staff

Figure 47: Do you believe administrative support staff have authority in your department?



The data shows that 30% of the 27 respondents agreed that administrative support staff have authority in the departments, significantly lower than the figure for academic staff (44%). Therefore the findings suggest that administrative support staff may be unaware that they do have authority in their departments.

Seven respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question.

Comments made by the respondents:

As much as you can give positive input, it does not matter. Academics will always have the final say.

Sometimes they have authority, especially in their area of expertise.

Because of some of the tasks which the support staff have to complete, it gives them authority.

When something needs attention we contact the relevant departments to action.

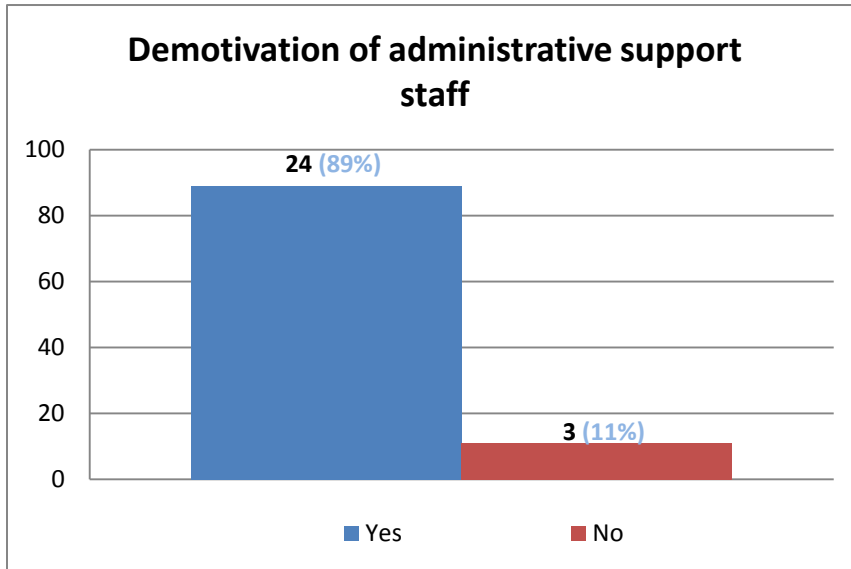
I am able to request for relevant information or assistance in completion of my tasks.

I have full access in maintaining student records

I have had staff members say "oh I saw an email from you, but I didn't read it, was it important"... very disrespectful. Would I send you something unless I needed your input?

5.4.18 Demotivation of administrative support staff

Figure 48: Do you believe that demotivation of administrative support staff can have a negative impact on students?



The data indicates that 89% of the respondents answered yes to this question while only 11% disagreed. These results were very close to the ones given by the academic staff (90% agreed and 10% disagreed). Therefore the findings show that most of the respondents feel that if administrative support staff are demotivated, this can have a negative impact on students in their departments.

Twenty two of the respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. A few commented in a similar way that the administrative support staff are the face of the department, first point of contact and need to show the students good, positive energy; just over half commented that if administrative support staff are unhappy, depressed and demotivated, this will lead to a lack of productivity by students and a

few commented that the administrative support staff are the middle men between staff, students and the institution and need to keep these relationships healthy.

Comments made by the respondents:

Students expect assistance all day,(8-16.30) including lunch time in my department. If the staff are demotivated, the service to students will be lacking.

I am often the middle man for students and staff on certain issues, therefore a good relationship is required.

We are frontline staff and if we are having a bad day, it is quite noticeable. Administrative staff are normally self motivated.

Since we communicate directly with students, we have to be motivated about our work and as always, they believe all the information we are providing to them is correct.

If the support staff is demotivated, they will not do their tasks to the best of their ability and this also affects other staff members who are affected by the same task.

Working in the environment where you're not happy can depress you.

They possibly won't go the extra mile if need be.

We see too many 'foundation' issues, such as maintenance/printing/purchasing. The university mindset is to ignore us until an HOD intervenes.

Especially when an administrative person can help but you would always have to refer students to an academic.

If replaced with someone who isn't as experienced or skilled, students could be affected.

Lecturers rely heavily on administrative support staff i.e. for capturing of marks, setting up lecture venues, setting up practical tests. Without administrative support staff, lecturers would be overloaded which will have a domino effect on students (for example: delayed marking).

If the administrative staff are demotivated, it will prevent important/vital administrative functions from taking place, hampering the academic progress.

As the administrative staff is the front face of the department.

We end up taking out our frustrations on the students.

Administrative and academic staff should work as a team. If staff is demotivated, work won't get done properly and it will affect students.

Administrative staff being demotivated will not carry out their respective duties properly which will thus be a disadvantage to the students.

Administrative staff are the front of the department – if they are not there, the department can't function properly.

The administrative support staff are responsible for the smooth functioning of the department.

Yes, as sometimes you might not be friendly to students and treat them badly.

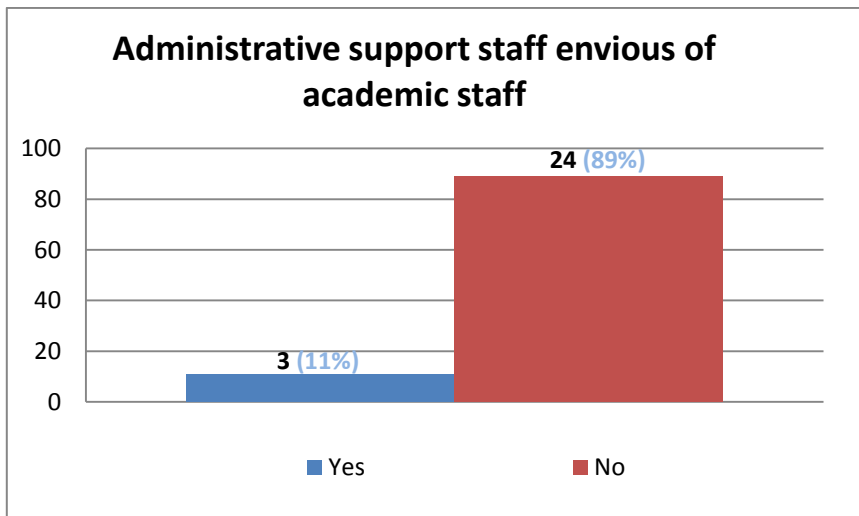
The students won't be able to get access to useful information about the department. The policy of student centredness won't be of service to the students.

Administrative staff deal with students every day so if they are demotivated, then the service they will provide to the students will be unsatisfactory. They might take out their frustrations on the students.

It can have a negative impact on students because the administrative staff manage the department.

5.4.19 Administrative support staff are envious of academic staff

Figure 49: Do you believe administrative support staff are envious of academic staff in your department?



The data indicates that 11% of the respondents answered yes to this question while 89% answered no (very close to the numbers of the academic staff).

Five of the respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. Their comments are noted below.

Comments made by the respondents:

It is often perceived this is the case, but I can assure you we are not.

Never... though the perks of coming to work at any odd time compared to the 8-16:30 shift?

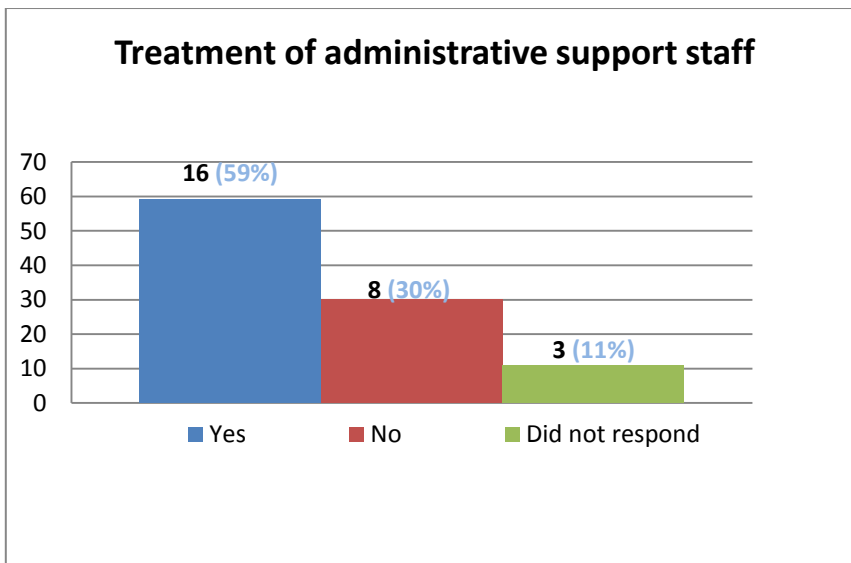
Academic staff have qualifications, therefore feel superior to administrative staff, which results in the academic staff giving menial jobs to administrative staff which is not related to their job description or duties for example reporting faults in buildings or equipment and ITS maintenance.

Yes, because they work shorter hours.

They are treated better.

5.4.20 Treatment of administrative support staff

Figure 50: Do you believe administrative support staff are sometimes treated as less important than academic staff in your department?



The data indicates that 59% of the respondents answered 'yes' to this question and 30% answered 'no' while the academic staff responses were 24% for yes and 74% for no). Therefore academic staff are unaware of the thoughts and feelings of the administrative support staff in their departments.

Fourteen of the respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. Two respondents commented that less opportunities are given to administrative support staff; nine respondents commented that academic staff think they are superior and two respondents commented that administrative support staff are not always informed of what is happening in the department.

Comments made by the respondents:

Academics sometimes feel they are more superior.

There is a clear divide between academic vs administrative support staff. The title "Dr" is sometimes taken too far. Administrative support staff get ordered around, are hardly ever thanked and academic staff always complain about all efforts made.

Yes, because if you are an administrative staff member, especially at an academic institution, you are treated as if you are not educated. Academics don't treat administrative staff as one of the important professionals. I seriously don't like the way administrative staff are treated.

The administrative staff are seen as irrelevant and sometimes not intelligent. This is sometimes due to the way they get addressed by the academic staff.

Academic staff think they are clever.

They think being a lecturer is more important.

Tasks are often assigned to us, because they are "beneath" academics, and won't matter on their "CVs".

Staff are on a "need to know" basis. They are not informed of staff functions involving the administrative staff adequately.

In case of development, academic staff are given first preference over administrative staff.

Administrative staff are discriminated against when it comes to study leave benefits, conference and workshop attendance.

Because of the qualifications they receive.

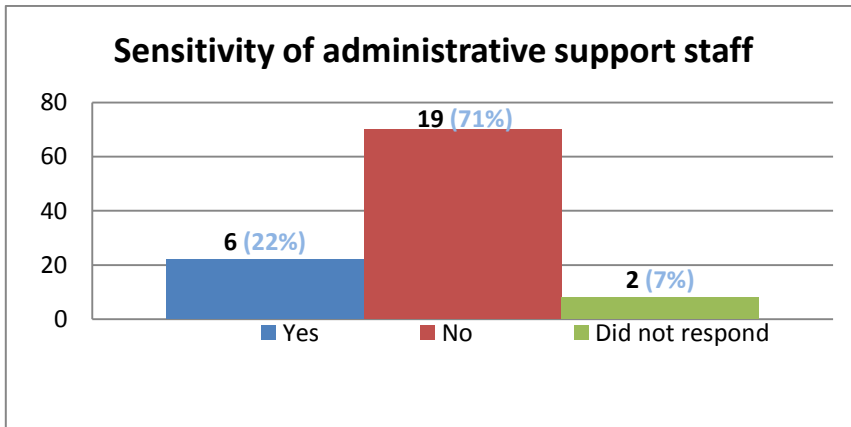
Academic staff feel that they are senior lecturers and thus they are more important.

We are a university where students are priority, administrative staff support that function.

We have more responsibilities and sometimes they look down on us and treat us like an office maid.

5.4.21 Sensitivity of administrative support staff

Figure 51: Do you believe administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff?



The data shows that quite a number (22%) of the administrative support staff respondents answered 'yes' to this question and 71% answered 'no' while 7% did not respond to the question. The majority of the administrative support staff do not feel that they are overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff. There appears, therefore, to be a feeling that there are real issues which if they are not overly sensitive, there could possibly be something more substantial.

Seven respondents provided reasons for their answers to this question. Comments are below.

Comments made by the respondents:

We don't like to be compared.

We voice nothing.

As this can drop self esteem.

Sometimes academic staff don't meet deadlines but blame it on the administrative staff eg Marks.

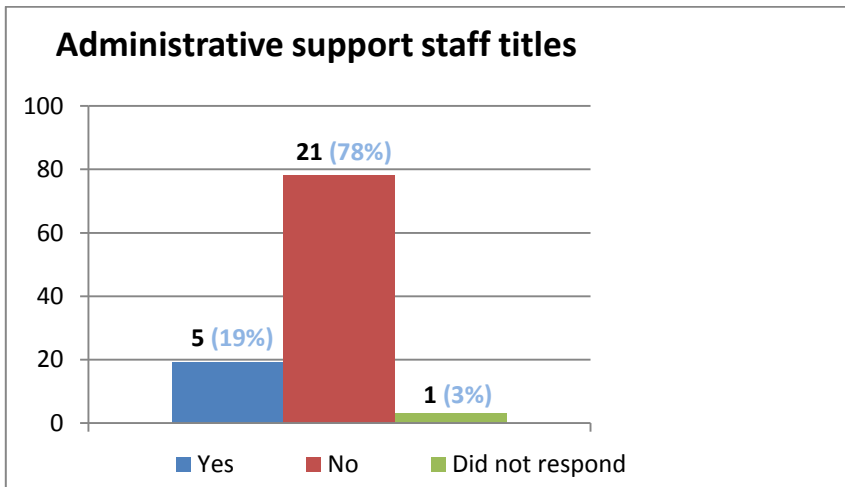
We feel intimidated.

It is because administrative support staff often have more tasks to do in the department compared to academic staff.

It can demotivate one into not doing their job.

5.4.22 Administrative support staff titles

Figure 52: Do you believe administrative support staff feel that their titles as non-academic staff members are demeaning and/or degrading to themselves?



The data shows that 19% answered yes to this question; 78% answered no and 3% did not answer this question. These findings suggest that the majority of the administrative support staff respondents are not unhappy with their present titles however, it is significant that 19 of the respondents suggested alternative titles as listed in Table 6 below.

Four respondents provided reasons for their answers. Comments are below.

Comments made by the respondents:

It does sound negative and highlighting what we are not instead of what we are.

Some academics treat administrative staff badly and this makes us feel demeaned and belittled.

Yes because of the way they are treated by the academic staff.

Because of the perception of the academic staff about administrative staff, some academic staff don't appreciate the work being done by the administrative staff.

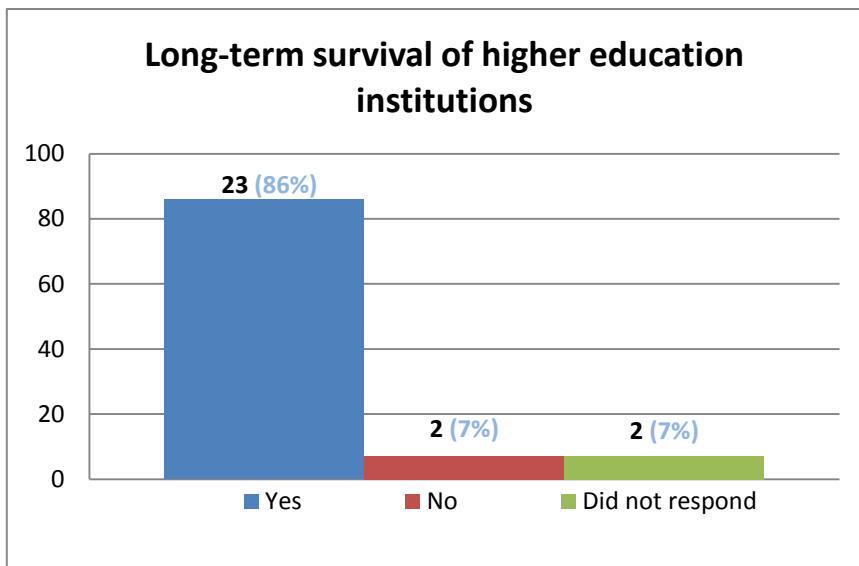
ALTERNATIVE TITLES:

Table 6: Suggested alternative titles

Nineteen respondents offered suggested alternative titles	
Administrative Staff	1
Status Quo (Remain as 'non-academic')	4
Administrative/Office Manager	3
External Staff	1
Administrative Professional	1
Office Administrator	1
Administrative Officer	4
Any title EXCEPT 'non-academic'	2
It's not the title – it's about getting respect	2

5.4.23 Long-term survival of higher education institutions

Figure 53: Do you believe administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of higher education institutions?



The data reflects that 86% of the respondents answered yes; 7% answered no and 7% did not answer the question. These figures are very close to those of the academic staff.

The majority feel that administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of HEIs.

Twenty two of the respondents provided a reason for their answer, all of whom commented that academics rely on administrative support staff, who are the backbone of the department and are committed to the goals of the institution. Comments are noted below.

Comments made by the respondents:

Especially buying equipment of high technical value to our department, running a department that does have a lot of technical equipment such as studios and outside broadcast facilities of value over millions of rands.

We are dedicated and keep the paper work up to date which is important for record keeping.

Once again we carry out many "foundation" type duties.

Yes and no - dependent on how efficient the administrator runs the department.

They are responsible for many departmental duties which academic staff cannot do alone.

Lecturers rely heavily on administrative support staff i.e. for capturing marks, setting up lecture venues, setting up prac tests. Without administrative support staff, lecturers would be overloaded which will have a domino effect on students (delayed marking etc.)

Academic staff are clueless when it comes to administrative work despite having many qualifications. The department will grind to a halt.

All work to be done needs administration all the time.

Many planning, executions, payments, follow-ups and often running around is done by administrative staff.

Without administrative support no organization can survive. Academics teach and administrators run the departments.

Without them nothing would be possible

Yes, since administrative work is the backbone of everything. Even if you are an academic, but you also require administrative skills to carry out your academic duties.

They complete the team.

Administrative staff are the ones who communicate with the students in terms of registration into various courses and the way that they deal with students' impacts on the long survival chain of the institution.

Without academic support or administrative function, academics would not be able to focus on their students and delivery of their programmes.

Without the frontline the institutions can't function.

It is because of administrative support staff, they perform important tasks in the administration.

Administrative support provides the main role in the department.

Yes because administrative staff plays a very vital role in terms of communication with all internal and external stakeholders of the institution. The HOD won't be a manager without administrative staff.

There are a lot of administrative duties that comes with the education institutions. Who will do all of it if the administrative support staff is not there.

Some of the tasks which the support staff complete are critical to the department.

Yes, if change is not handled correctly, it can be more devastating than ever before. For long-term survival of HEIs, administrative staff are committed to the goals of the institution and are valuable partners in working with the academics.

Question 24: Further comments/remarks:

Eleven of the twenty two administrative support staff respondents added further comments.

Further comments made by the respondents:

I definitely do not envy academic staff their politics and added marking and test setting etc. I just feel they could have better understanding of our duties and not nag and complain so much.

Administrative staff are not allowed to take leave unless there are arrangements made for one of the other staff to 'man' their stations, with a result that they have to forfeit their leave.

The academic staff must be treated equally with the administrative support. There shouldn't be any gap between the two to avoid people (staff) being offended.

Administrative staff need to be treated as fairly as academic staff when it comes to self-development - academics are given time off during their studies but administrative are not, if given it is limited and it's in the HODs willing/favour. The faculty does not fully support administrative staff on self-development. I believe that DUT does not recognize administrative staff like the academic staff. Some academics are favoured over administrative staff by HODs. There is discrimination against administrative staff.

Most important for any department to function is team work of all staff, so that the students get the best teaching.

I personally think administrative support staff should be treated equally with the academic staff because they are performing for the same objective.

Good topic for your research, I wish we can have a debate - administrative and academic staff in a big hall.

You have chosen a good topic of research. This is a big issue here (academic institution). Administrative staff are not appreciated for their effort and as a result, some of them are thinking to leave this work environment.

Maybe there could be a study carried out where the academic staff does all the administrative work on top of their lecturing duties to see if they will manage and it might also give them an idea of what the administrative staff does on a daily basis. To be healthy, happy and successful in your workplace, staff need to be motivated, workshops to learn how to motivate each other in building an effective team. One's values, beliefs and attitudes in an organization are vital - then goals and objectives can be defined. Recognition that the skills of administrative staff need to be continually strengthened and enhanced.

5.5 INTERVIEWS: ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF (ADMINISTRATORS)

The administrative staff who were selected to be interviewed have continuous and frequent contact with all academic departments at DUT and therefore have a wealth of knowledge on the operations of policies and procedures at DUT. They also have a vast wealth of knowledge and experience in dealing with academic and administrative support staff not only from the two selected faculties, but all faculties at DUT. These interviewees were selected as the researcher needed to hear their views on the role administrative support staff play in the two selected faculties as well as their views on a myriad of issues at an HEI.

Question 1: If you require assistance on any departmental issues e.g. budgets, part-time periods, staff issues, student issues, finances, etc. do you approach the HOD, secretary or technician?

“It would depend on what the matter is. For something simple then obviously I would contact the secretary and not inundate the HOD with simple matters. If it's more complex, then it would be directly with the HOD. So it would depend on the actual matter, it varies”. (Administrator 1)

“The secretary, definitely the secretary would be my first port of call”. (Administrator 2)

“It would depend on the type of issue firstly. If it’s something that’s purely administrative or an operational issue that I need something to be sent to me for example, then I would probably ask the secretary to contact the HOD to obtain that. If it needs a little bit of discussion, or more involved issues such as disciplinaries that would need the HOD. Academic irregularities, disciplinary action, to get information over and above what Exams gives, I would contact the HOD directly. There are some cases which involve a group of departments, then I would speak to the faculty officer”. (Administrator 3)

“It would depend on the query”. (Administrator 4)

“Depending on what the issue is, if the issue is related to someone who’s been appointed, I would definitely approach the secretary who might have the knowledge. If the secretary does not know, then I approach the HOD. It depends on the query. If it’s about a procedure, I won’t approach the department, I’ll look at our handbook”. (Administrator 5)

“It depends on the nature of the issue I have at hand. Some would require direct interaction with the HOD, some would even require me to liaise with the person who deals with selections, because sometimes we have the secretary but they don’t do selections, so I will contact the person who does selections if it’s regarding selections. Sometimes it will be an administrative person or, I’ll want to know your target, so I don’t need to speak to the HOD, it does vary”. (Administrator 6)

“We often have to fill in reports and if there is anything we don’t know in terms of procedures and policies, our first port of call is we consult the secretary. If not for the information itself then for the relevant person we need to contact to get that information”. (Administrator 7)

Question 2: Do you believe that the relationship between the academics and administrative support staff is cordial on the whole? Please provide reasons for your answer.

“I think within Health Sciences, my experience seems to be cordial”. (Administrator 1)

“No, I have had experiences first hand. It’s like a disparity because academics see themselves on another footing/level to academic support/administrative/technical staff”. (Administrator 2)

“Yes I would say that it is. I would say there may be other staff members who experience different things, maybe it’s because I’m a senior person that my experiences are quite different. I definitely get cooperation from academic departments generally”. (Administrator 3)

“Yes I do. Obviously people’s personalities and characteristics do play a big part in this relationship”. (Administrator 4)

"In my faculty there aren't many issues. If there are issues, they are handled in the departments. If there's a problem where staff have taken excessive leave or someone has misconduct, then it comes to me and then I would get involved". (Administrator 5)

"Most of the time, the synergy between them, the work relations are cordial. Sometimes an HOD thinks his secretary does A, B and C meanwhile it is I who does A, B and C or the work that I do, they get credit for. I mean when they don't do it, it comes to me". (Administrator 6)

"I can't speak for the other departments obviously, I'm speaking for myself. In my department I have no problems with relationships I share with my colleagues for a few reasons. Firstly I've been in the department for such a long time, longer than some of the academic staff. So obviously there is that respect and of course with my experience that I have, I have the knowledge that academics require from me a lot of the time. So in my department, I have a good relationship with academic staff". (Administrator 7)

Question 3: Describe the attitude that academic staff display towards you.

"A difficult one that. I think their attitude towards me is a good one. I think I have built up a good relationship with them over the years so I think their attitude towards me is that they can approach me whenever they need assistance with student matters or any other matter related to the faculty. So I think I'm approachable and I have an open door policy with my staff and we work closely, we don't work in silos. I work with them, all hands on and get involved in the daily activities of all my staff". (Administrator 1)

"I think because of my years of experience and the time I offer to them, I have a cordial relationship with them but there are instances where they perceive that they are doing too much administrative work and it should be the onus of the faculty officer or the secretary. Not realizing that it's a two way process and it's a team effort but they feel anything administrative has to be done by the secretary or the faculty office". (Administrator 2)

"To me personally – I think it's a very good, respectful relationship. People usually approach me for guidance and advice on matters relating to student administration, that involve issues that are related to disciplinaries, application of rules and the like. So I think largely my interactions with academics are initiated by academics in my case, and we have a very cordial relationship and I try to help as quickly and efficiently as I can". (Administrator 3)

"I don't have a problem with staff members' attitudes, but feel that my attitude and how I react towards them is also important when dealing with them". (Administrator 4)

"They are very passionate, they care about staffing, they have etiquette in what they do and they like to follow rules. They rarely break the rules but you

can see they are passionate about their staff and their departments. They respect me and my department and they listen to me on procedure and advice and they don't always agree, but most times they do". (Administrator 5)

"I only deal with academics if they do selections. I only deal with HODs, secretaries and those who deal with selections. I don't have a lot of interaction with lecturers". (Administrator 6)

"In the departments, in DUT, academics always act or feel more superior, more important than administrative staff. I feel that. Even in my department, it is not blatant, it is not intentional but it feels that we are not as important, support staff, administrative staff, whatever you want to refer to us as – we are not as important. Even when they discuss staffing issues within the department and problems, it's always about the academics that are having the problems. So little importance and priority is given to the support staff. That's from my experience". (Administrator 7)

Question 4: Describe the attitude that administrative support staff display towards you (only answered by five Administrators – not the faculty officers)

"I have nothing to complain about. That could be because I am a tyrant". (Administrator 1)

"I find staff often don't follow the correct procurement policy and procedure and then get angry when their orders take time to process". (Administrator 2)

"Their attitude is good, I don't have a problem with any staff". (Administrator 3)

"They interact with me very well. I don't have any problems with the administrative staff". (Administrator 4)

"I think I have a good relationship with administrative support staff". (Administrator 5)

Question 5: Do you believe that the academic staff appreciate the administrative support staff? Tell me more about this.

"I can only talk for my sector and the feedback that I get is that they are very appreciative in terms of the support they get from this ambit. On the whole, I can't really comment. I'm not sure how the others feel towards the academics and how the academics treat them". (Administrator 1)

“Very rarely. I mean they are quick to complain when things go wrong but any acknowledgements or accolades is very rare, but having said that, my dean is quick to acknowledge, but academic staff as a whole, no. I think that what contributes to it is that there is no proper induction and the turnover of HODs, they don’t know how the systems operate and you always have the butt end of it. There’s a tendency for them to have a negative impression of the secretary. Another thing, our HR process and policy for induction is not great”. (Administrator 2)

“It’s very difficult for me to answer that question accurately because I really don’t know, I only know from my own experience from my 28 years of working here, I have come up through the ranks over the years and I’ve notice that if you are a junior administrative staff member, sometimes your views are challenged quite vigorously by academics. I have heard of experiences with other administrative staff, especially junior ones who have said academic staff may not be as respectful as they ought to be. It probably works vice versa but it really is anecdotal, I have no way of actually making that a definitive kind of statement”. (Administrator 3)

“Yes, I do. On the whole I believe it is a good relationship but you are always going to get those people who have a bad attitude towards others”. (Administrator 4)

“In my personal opinion, I do think the academics treat their administrative staff differently, like in terms of hierarchy. Like I’m here and you are here because of me but that doesn’t mean they don’t respect them but there is a distinct difference, they feel you are here because of me - I do see that”. (Administrator 5)

“They make our services useful but I’m not sure about appreciating all the time, but we try to work hand in hand with them. We try to create a good atmosphere”. (Administrator 6)

“Academics take the administrative staff for granted, in the sense that they feel the administrative staff are there to do anything and everything, even if it’s beyond the scope of their job description. So I think in many ways, the academic staff do take the administrative staff for granted. We are only appreciated when we are needed, when they want something from us. Other than that, they probably don’t know we are around. So I think we are under-valued in the department and taken for granted”. (Administrator 7)

Question 6: Do you believe that academic staff sometimes treat administrative support staff as inferior (or less important than) to themselves?

“I feel there is definitely a notion that academic staff seem to think that they are more superior than administrative staff due to their position and qualifications”. (Administrator 1)

"Definitely, yes definitely". (Administrator 2)

"There is that perception and I must admit that in my early days at the university, and I'm talking about 28 years back, we certainly had that problem". (Administrator 3)

"I do know of and have heard of cases at DUT". (Administrator 4)

"Some do and some don't. There are some that respect their administrative staff and appreciate them. There are some that have that attitude but very few that I have come across. I have heard some of my secretaries complain but I haven't seen it". (Administrator 5)

"I wouldn't know". (Administrator 6)

"No one's ever been disrespectful to me or treated me with any kind of contempt but certainly academic issues seem to take priority over administrative issues in the department. I think a lot is expected of administrative staff. Academic staff are always ready to say it's not their job to do something and then it automatically gets pushed over to the administrative staff". (Administrator 7)

Question 7: Do you think administrative support staff are envious of academic staff, even if subconsciously?

"I don't think so because I seem to think that administrative staff nowadays are more motivated and challenging in terms of their personal goals and are also wanting to further their own profession and I think in some cases we have a lot of highly qualified administrative staff sitting in here. So I don't think it's anyone being envious, it's more them wanting to further themselves". (Administrator 1)

"No, because they have been appointed according to their expertise, their area of speciality, they are here to do a piece of work. Although there are two distinct different operations, they need to gel together to achieve one common objective and at the end of the day, it's the students that matter. So from an administrative perspective, we are just here to assist departments". (Administrator 2)

"Look let's be real about this. I think the university is ruled in the real sense by managers and all that but to me, the most important role players for the students are the academic staff because they drive the university, they are responsible for the quality. I don't know if they are envious but I certainly think they see academics in an elevated position from themselves and I think there's nothing wrong with that view. They are the people responsible for our image, our standards and all of that, I'm very mindful of that". (Administrator 3)

"No, I haven't found this to be the case". (Administrator 4)

“Some love what they are doing and those who have wished to, have improved their qualifications and I’ve seen them move up. So I have seen administrative support staff move up to the rank of lecturer. So if they want to change their position, they go and get it”. (Administrator 5)

“I wouldn’t know from my point. I think normally if you don’t have enough on your plate, you will be envious but if you are doing enough and you are excelling in your job, you wouldn’t be envious. Nobody is stopping anyone from becoming whatever they want to become. I mean at DUT you can study for free to improve yourself so there shouldn’t be any reason for anyone to be envious”. (Administrator 6)

“In some ways, yes. In the sense that the university always seems to commit resources and training, seems to concentrate on uplifting the academics. Although there are skills development programmes for administrative staff but I think the university seems to be more focussed on the academic staff rather than the administrative or support staff”. (Administrator 7)

Question 8: Do you think administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff?

“Sometimes in certain staff you do see it. There is this thing about academic administrative staff, they do tend to get a bit sensitive around them”. (Administrator 1)

“Yes, witnessed it first hand and to be insensitive to the gender bias, I think when there are more females involved and it’s human nature, they perceive that someone with authority, if it’s a female, the males do not like to take instructions. So authority for males is a bit of a problem. Generally, I have had first hand experiences where there is that inferiority complex with regards to administrative staff”. (Administrator 2)

“Okay, let’s look at some experiences that I’ve seen. A number of departments that I’ve talked to, administrative departments, occasionally some of the staff have reported to me that academic staff simply dictate to them and don’t give them a chance to explain points of view and even been told “you will do this better.” I’ve heard of a few cases like that. I don’t want to generalize and make a statement that there’s an ongoing experience. These are isolated cases but it’s there certainly and it all depends, you get people who maybe not because of the fact that they are academic staff - the way they treat administrative staff – it could just be their personalities and the different characteristics of people”. (Administrator 3)

“Sometimes, as far as I have heard”. (Administrator 4)

“They could, some of them do. Some of the secretaries feel like they are not appreciated. Some do but very few say they do. They feel inferior, not appreciated and overworked. They feel they do more than they are expected to do”. (Administrator 5)

"I haven't worked out the relationship between the two because I make contact via phone and so between the two, I don't really know". (Administrator 6)

"I think some administrative support staff are overly sensitive but I think that stems from the pressure that some of them have to work under. Not all, some administrative staff are under a lot of pressure and are quite frustrated in their positions presently and that frustration leads to that oversensitivity, possibly that you are referring to". (Administrator 7)

Question 9: Do you think administrative support staff wield a certain amount of power in their departments? Please provide reasons for your answer.

"I think administrative staff are critical in any department and their support is very important so they are in positions of power although in lower levels. Without their support, departments can collapse, especially if secretarial support collapses. It causes chaos in departments. We've seen it in this faculty as well". (Administrator 1)

"That's a good question but it's more like a double-barrel thing because yes, in a sense because they are there in their special areas of expertise. So when you try and communicate with the academics, some of them are like "you know what, you are a junior so I'm telling you what you need to do." So on that hand there is a sense of power". (Administrator 2)

"You see, that's a very general question because you are talking about rank and file administrative staff and their heads of departments and certainly the people who really have power are the people in the senior positions in their departments, that's the Heads. In our case here, we have assistant registrars who report to me. They definitely wield power and they ought to be giving instructions, guiding departments and they certainly are in the more leadership position than the rest of the staff. Some staff do wield power in an alternative kind of way simply by virtue of the superior skills and abilities that they have. So they are respected by even the assistant registrars. You know they are the only person who can access this programme and through knowledge and skills and all of that, they do wield power as well". (Administrator 3)

"Yes to a certain degree. However, in the procurement process, obviously documents need to be signed off by HODs. Therefore administrative staff do not have too much formal power here". (Administrator 4)

"In my faculties, no. It is curbed as we have three strong Deans. You don't make your own decisions. You follow the rules and if you break the rules, you will be disciplined. They are very restricted in what they do". (Administrator 5)

"They are given power to make selections for their departments. That is very important. Even us, the department's decision, the power we have been given but we are trusted enough with that power when people give us permission". (Administrator 6)

"Yes I do. Coming back to one of your previous questions where I mentioned that administrative staff are overworked and have to do a lot of the stuff that academics don't want to. This has created a greater dependence on administrative staff by academics. So if an administrative support staff member is unavailable, many times academics don't know what to do because they haven't been doing it themselves and they've relied on the support staff. So that is where the dependence comes in, where the academic staff are helpless. Especially when it comes to things like entering marks or support in the computer laboratories. So yes, there is a certain amount of power. Not in all the departments, but a lot of the departments where that situation is". (Administrator 7)

Question 10: How would you describe your relationship with academics and administrative support staff in academic departments?

"I think I have a good relationship with all staff, academic and administrative. I'm not sure what their perspective is but I think I have a good relationship with them". (Administrator 1)

"I think because of the years of experience and the nature of how the faculty office operates, we have a very cordial, professional relationship but here too, the change in headship, change in protocol, there needs to be a process and this needs to be more formal. I'm going to repeat myself, induction is lacking. At the end of the day, it's the faculty support staff and administrative staff that will have to teach them. You see it affects your daily routine and the sad thing is that if there is a negative comeback, it comes back on you". (Administrator 2)

"Good, when I have contacted the departments, I generally get good cooperation from them". (Administrator 3)

"I mostly have a good relationship with all staff in academic departments". (Administrator 4)

"This is not really applicable to me as I am not in an academic department". (Administrator 5)

"It is quite cordial, I haven't had a problem with them". (Administrator 6)

"Personally, once again coming back to my previous answers, I've been at the university for many years now and I know a lot of the staff at university. Over the years we've developed a mutual respect for each other and I like to think I've earned a good reputation here at the university and a lot of people turn to me for help even if it's over and above my normal duties. So I think that willingness to help others and cooperate with other staff has created a

mutual respect that I have with staff. People who know me are always willing to assist me. So I feel that I have a good relationship with academics and administrative staff in my department and other departments simply because I'm well known". (Administrator 7)

Question 11: Are there any other comments you would like to make about this study?

"No, I think we have covered everything". (Administrator 1)

"I think that generally the administrative sector at DUT is looked down upon and I think it is more of a mental set because most of the academics have PhDs and higher qualifications. Notwithstanding, and I take my hat off to them, there are some administrative staff who are trying to achieve higher qualifications. So I think once they are up to the same level, the disparity will be done away with. It shouldn't be us and them. It's very depressing. Yet with all these trials and tribulations, the administrative staff get on with their work. We have successful registration and graduation, not just my faculty but across DUT. There are hiccups here and there but overall, it is a positive outcome. To come back to one of your questions, not much accolades or acknowledgement is given for a job well done. You do get it but it's very rare". (Administrator 2)

"I would just like to say that it is a very interesting study that you are doing because one speaks about cooperative governance – it's a concept of the national commission on higher education, they have one of the underlying principles which is cooperative governance - and it requires mutual respect and synergy between the different players be they students, management, cultural and government structured staff". (Administrator 3)

"I find this to be an interesting study and perhaps DUT could arrange workshops to further discuss/pursue this topic". (Administrator 4)

"I've got really good HODs and staff. Very rarely do I have a problem with them. You do get HODs that the staff complain about as they are too autocratic in their positions but we try to resolve it, issues and stuff, by talking to the HOD". (Administrator 5)

"The topic is a personal one. We interact around that topic. I think everything should be supported by trust. If there is trust between the two, it should be an easy relationship". (Administrator 6)

"I think to add to what I've already said, I think administrative support staff are really undervalued. I think in many cases they are overlooked by the university in terms of being provided the necessary resources to do their jobs. For example, at the moment, the faculty is looking at replacing the computers for all staff members but it only applies to academics. So what happens to the administrative staff? Some of them are using ten year old computers. Being a computer technician and adviser to the department in all matters relating to IT, for me to not be considered to get an upgraded computer – yet

I'm expected to advise on the latest technology, to find solutions to problems experienced by lecturers and students relating to software applications in the laboratories – I don't have the necessary resources to do that. So I find that a little bit demotivating and disheartening when the university overlooks us when it comes to things like that. It makes you think why must it come to that and I also feel a bit frustrated when there's anything that nobody else wants to do they get the administrative staff to do it. I'm doing the administrative work, I'm doing teaching work, I'm doing technical work. I'm advising staff. The photocopier jams, I have to fix it. Staff have got a computer problem, even though I'm a computer technician, I don't do the staff computers but because staff can't wait for the ITS department to come, they call me. So I'm having to juggle and run around the entire day. I feel exploited in the department and I feel taken for granted. They automatically assume that I will do it because I'm the technician and I will fix all IT matters whether it's within my portfolio or not. So that can be a little frustrating and demotivating. I just don't seem to have enough time in the day. But on the flipside, when things go well and when people are appreciative, it gives you a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that you have helped someone. So it's not all bad, not all doom and gloom but I think we need to be valued a bit more by management and the higher powers at this university". (Administrator 7)

5.6 DISCUSSION

Administrative support staff interviewees provided similar answers in most of the ten questions asked of them. The general findings that the interviews point to are that the interviewees have a cordial relationship with both academic and administrative support staff, as was reported on by the Senior Academic interviewees. However, both the Senior Academic staff interviewees commented that in their experience, they thought that the academic staff often treated the administrative support staff as inferior to them. Although the administrative support staff feel that they may have a cordial relationship with academics, they do believe that they are generally treated as inferior staff by the academics.

It is interesting to see the similarities in the responses to the statement 'Academic staff in my department are dependent on administrative support staff for most of their key functions'. The majority of the academic staff believe that the administrative support staff are an integral part of any department and the administrative staff also feel strongly that the work they do in a department is important.

The academic and administrative support staff responded similarly to the statement 'Academic staff are cautious of the manner in which they treat administrative support staff in order to avoid any backlash or lack of assistance'. Just under half the respondents of both groups agreed with this statement.

Interestingly, there was a large disparity in the responses to the statement 'Academic staff appreciate the efforts/assistance of the administrative support staff in my department'. While only 52% of the administrative staff agreed with this statement, a large majority (94%) of the academic staff agreed. A number of the administrative interviewees commented that the administrative support staff are not happy as they do not receive credit for the work that they do and they are not acknowledged nor appreciated by the academic staff.

It is thought provoking to note that while two thirds of the academic staff respondents' answers to the survey believe that the administrative support staff wield power in their departments, less than half of the administrative support staff respondents believe this. As previously mentioned, these findings point to the fact that the administrative support staff may be completely unaware of the power, albeit informal, they hold in their departments and indeed in the university. Both the Senior Academic and administrative staff interviewees are of the view that administrative support staff wield power in their departments.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a full analysis of the data that was gathered from the surveys that were completed by the administrative support staff as well as that gathered from the interviews with administrators. The chapter also provided a discussion of the findings of both chapters four and five.

The next chapter presents the recommendations and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters four and five presented the findings from the data and gave a detailed analysis of these. This chapter presents the achievement of the objectives, draws conclusions and makes recommendations. The limitations of the study are also discussed. Suggestions for further research are also made.

6.2 ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This section will present conclusions and recommendations that have been reached with regards to the objectives of the study.

6.2.1 Identify and explore the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff at DUT

(a) Their working conditions:

There is an understanding that academic staff have a great deal of flexibility, and different working hours from administrative support staff as they do not need to be at their desks from 08:00 to 16:30. Two of the administrative support staff respondents commented that the academic staff work shorter hours than they do and come and go as they please. However, administrative support staff do not realize all the preparation and marking that needs to be completed by academic staff, which often happens off campus.

The working conditions could possibly account for the administrative support staff experiencing a lower percentage (60%) of job satisfaction than the academic staff (76%). This points to 40% of the administrative support staff who did not say they enjoyed their job nor experienced job satisfaction otherwise they would certainly have expressed this. This could possibly lead to these staff members not carrying out their duties to the best of their ability. Phillips and Gully (2012: 143) indicate that the most important aspect of job satisfaction is enjoying doing the actual job you are employed to do as well as being employed in a job that makes a person challenge themselves. Without that, a person is never going to be satisfied. While these researchers have pointed out that it is a personality issue, there are some people who are never going to be satisfied and experience job satisfaction. According to Robbins and Judge (2014: 66) a person's personality plays a role in job satisfaction. People who are positive, confident and believe in themselves are more likely to be satisfied than those who are less ambitious with negative personalities.

It is interesting to note that the findings show that only 19% of the administrative support staff who completed the survey do believe that their titles as "non-academic" staff members are demeaning and/or degrading to themselves. However, 70% of them suggested alternative titles. This was also the sentiment of the academic staff. So while perhaps they do not find the title "non-academic" demeaning or degrading, it is clearly not an ideal title. A study conducted by Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke (2012: 463) shows that the title 'non-academic staff' does suggest that these staff members are less important than their academic colleagues.

Therefore, this study **recommends** that DUT Management introduces new titles for administrative support staff that do not include the term 'non-academic'. This will be of benefit to the morale of the administrative support staff.

(b) Administrative support staff job description:

One administrative support staff member who completed the survey mentioned that academic staff often give them “menial jobs to complete which are not related to their job description” while two other members stated that these are jobs they, as academics, feel are “beneath” them and that academic staff “look down on us and treat us like an office maid”.

One respondent stated that “sometimes academic staff don’t meet deadlines but blame it on the administrative staff” and almost half of the respondents believe that administrative support staff find they are being taken advantage of by academics. One administrator who was interviewed stated: “I think some administrative support staff are overly sensitive but I think that stems from the pressure that some of them have to work under”. An academic interviewee stated: “I think there is a certain vulnerability being an administrative staff member and I think that vulnerability is at a basic level and means that it makes that person very susceptible to being attacked or abused under their leadership or hard done by”.

The current DUT Staff Induction policy appears to be outdated and more applicable to academic staff than administrative staff. In fact, it is stored under ‘DUT Approved Policies for Academic Staff’. This was highlighted by one of the Administrators who was interviewed who stated that DUT’s Human Resources process and policy for induction is not ideal. His view was that often administrative procedures for new academic staff members were taught by the Secretary or Faculty Officer which affected their daily routine, instead of the Head of the Department or an academic staff member in the department and he feels that this is inappropriate as “if there is a negative comeback, it comes back on you”.

This study **recommends** that the Human Resources Department revise their Staff Induction Policy which appears to be old and outdated (DUT CHED: March 2007) to

show more cognizance of the job description and duties of administrative support staff at DUT.

The researcher attempted on many occasions to meet with management staff of the Human Resources Department to discuss the interviewing of applicants for administrative support positions at DUT. Unfortunately, the Human Resources staff were not open to talk to the researcher, either because they did not have time in their busy schedules, or they were unwilling or uninterested to do so.

The researcher **suggests** that the more effective selection methods interviewing techniques may possibly be utilized by the DUT Human Resources Department if they are not presently using them. These would be structured interviews and behavioural structured interviews. Robbins et al (2009: 454) discusses how structured interviews “enhance the validity of the interview” and are less biased than unstructured ones in which interviewers tend to prefer interviewees who show the same attitudes as them. Robbins et al (2009: 455) further describe the behavioural structured interview as one in which interviewees are asked to describe how they had dealt with certain problems and situations in their previous jobs. Improving the selection process and bringing it up to date would support better inter-staff relations at DUT.

(c) Their Remuneration:

It is understood and accepted that in HEIs, the job grading and therefore remuneration of academic staff is pegged at a higher scale than for administrative support staff. Administrative support staff may not always be mindful of the number of years that academic staff have dedicated to their studies and consequently are rewarded with higher remuneration as well as the fact that a number of staff members who started off as administrative support staff became academics after studying. One academic staff respondent commented that “the grading scale for

experienced administrative staff should be reviewed”, while another mentioned that “administrative staff deserve to have their salary scales revised.”

The researcher located DUT internal advertisements for both academic and administrative support staff posts from 2011. There appears to be a discrepancy between the salary scales as the highest notch on the non-academic post scales is less than the first notch of a lecturer’s scale and the minimum requirement for the non-academic posts is an M+3. This would still be the case currently as the researcher was told by the HR Department that “the salary notches on the scales increase in line with the general salary increases.”

(d) Study Opportunities:

The general feeling of the administrative support staff was that administrative support staff are treated as less important than academics who are given preference over them in terms of attending conferences, workshops and study leave benefits.

One administrative support staff member commented that administrative staff are only given limited time off for studying at the discretion of their HOD and that the faculty does not support them while an academic staff member commented that academic professional growth is given precedence. Academic staff members are favoured at DUT in terms of self-development, as they are given a budget for replacement staff when they take study leave while administrative support staff are not. The Researcher experienced this first hand when she was informed by the Research Department that funding for replacement staff is earmarked for academic staff only and not administrative staff (*See Appendix 6*).

One of the administrative support staff interviewees stated that at DUT everyone is given the opportunity to study for free to improve themselves. While this is the case at DUT, the support offered to administrative support staff in terms of sabbatical

leave, replacement staff and study leave benefits is lacking which could possibly result in administrative staff not pursuing their studies.

Therefore, this study **suggests** that Management consider making better provision for administrative support staff to share more equally in these benefits which will go a long way in showing them that they and their studies are as important to DUT as those of academic staff and will also help to increase staff motivation levels.

6.2.2 Identify the views of the academics and the administrative support staff on the issues of power in the academic environment at DUT

David Mechanic (1962: 364) was instrumental in bringing this topic to the forefront and he mentioned how a secretary has informal power in an organization as he/she may even be more familiar than his/her manager with certain aspects of the organization, especially if he/she has been in the organization for a long time. He was one of the first authorities to point out the power that secretaries and administrative staff hold in an organization.

Ullrich and Wieland (1980: 264) touch on the paper written by Mechanic (1962) and explain how lower participant power can be negative as they control resources that other staff depend upon as well as access to his/her boss and they also have power over staff use of equipment. Administrative support staff can therefore make other staff members dependent on them in an organization.

The issue of power is a complicated one because greater power and authority tends to be with academics but a huge amount of power (which can be used positively or negatively) is held by administrative support staff. The role of administrative support staff is important and reflects on the image of the university.

As previously discussed, the responses received indicate that three quarters of the academic staff respondents believe that administrative staff have power in their departments while less than half of the administrative support staff agree with this. These findings point to the fact that a large number of administrative support staff may be unaware of the power they hold in their departments while the academic staff acknowledge their power. A respondent stated that administrative support staff are familiar with administrative requirements and form a crucial link between academic staff and the institution, thereby providing them with power. One Senior Academic interviewee stated that he thought administrative staff hold a lot of power in their departments, but they might not be aware of it.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the findings show that while a large number of academics believe that administrative support staff have power in their departments, they do not believe that they have authority, they feel that authority lies with the academic staff within departments. One respondent stated that administrative support staff have what is considered as informal authority as they have a limited say with all information. An administrative support staff respondent stated that they have full access in maintaining student records, which would give them authority in their department.

The literature shows that support staff, particularly technical staff in an ever-changing technical world, are increasingly becoming the central role in higher education as they have the necessary knowledge which gives them power (Dearing, 2014: 6). Administrative support staff duties have changed over the years due to the growth of information technology, changes in the delivery of higher education, and the running of universities as enterprises.

There is an increasing requirement for technicians to not only be involved in technical duties (e.g. with software and computers) but often their expertise is valuable for the

students who are brought in to train/lecture. The question needs to be asked: is this an academic or administrative support staff member?

This issue was discussed by Szekeres (2006: 134) who stressed that support staff are not given any formal power in universities, however, they have in some instances become responsible for teaching and carrying out new functions and tasks often without any training. One of the administrative support staff interviewees commented that he has to do a number of duties that academics either do not want to or cannot do, particularly of a technical nature, which has created greater dependence on him. Due to this, if he is unavailable, academics cannot continue by themselves as they rely on him. Therefore, he holds a lot of power in his department.

Secretaries are also expected to do many more tasks than previously such as public relations and policy decisions. They are more 'high powered' than they were in the past. In an historically research-oriented university, it is a normal requirement that no one becomes an academic staff member unless they have a PhD. In a University of Technology this is not yet the case and there is therefore a strong possibility that an administrative staff member can complete a Masters degree and make that move to become an academic staff member. This is particularly possible in, for example, the IT field where a staff member would be considered a highly skilled subject specialist.

This study **recommends** that a new DUT policy for highly skilled and knowledgeable subject specialists such as in the IT field, be created whereby teaching and learning by administrative support staff, specifically computer technicians, be acknowledged, formalized and compensated accordingly.

6.2.3 Explore the relationship that exists between the two sectors

A large number of the respondents (85% of administrative support staff and 74% of academic staff) felt that academic staff are dependent on the administrative support staff in their department for assistance in carrying out their duties. Only one respondent suggested it is possible for academic staff to manage without administrative support. Although the administrative support staff are probably not seen as indispensable by academic staff, their assistance in a department is important.

The responses received indicate that a large number of academic (80%) and administrative support staff (85%) believe that administrative support staff treat all academic staff in a fair and equal manner. This bodes well for the relationship between the two sectors.

Administrative support staff and academic staff were divided equally on the question in the survey “Academic staff are cautious of the manner in which they treat administrative support staff in order to avoid any backlash or lack of assistance” as almost half of the academic respondents agreed with this statement as did the administrative support staff respondents.

The findings show that the great majority of the academic respondents (90%) agree that harmony between the two sectors enhances productivity in a department. However, only 67% of the administrative support staff agree with this statement. This is significantly lower than the percentage for academic staff which does appear to indicate a lack of total harmony by this group. The literature points to the fact that “a harmonious university with good working relations between academic and administrative staff is more likely to be an effective university” (Taylor and Underwood, 2015: 5).

The comments made by administrative support staff respondents on the relationship between the two groups are disturbing as, according to them, there appears to be underlying tension between academic and administrative support staff members. Six administrative support staff respondents believe that academics do act or feel superior to them.

However, the academic staff tend to feel that there is a very good relationship between academic and administrative support staff although there is a tendency for academics to play administrative staff down. Both Senior Academic interviewees stated that they have a cordial relationship with all staff in their faculties.

The findings indicate that the majority of academic and administrative support staff agree that administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of higher education institutions. The general consensus is that administrative support staff perform important tasks which free up the academic staff to enable them to teach. Twelve administrative support staff respondents stated that an organization cannot survive without administrative support. This is in line with the literature which shows that the long-term continuity of universities could possibly become dependent on enabling the non-academic staff by motivating them to strive to become ambitious and inventive in their duties (Lau, 2010: 6).

Although all staff members are responsible for the long-term survival of HEIs, administrative support staff have vital knowledge and information which is needed to successfully run their departments. Examples of knowledge and information they have is of documents and key people inside and outside their organization, they also have very specific knowledge in their specific areas.

This study **recommends** that faculties and departments offer workshops and teambuilding exercises for all staff members to attend in order to further discuss this relationship between the two sectors and hopefully improve on this.

6.2.4 Examine to what extent the support staff are appreciated by their academic colleagues

Administrative support staff need recognition for work well done, these could even be non-monetary rewards. They need to feel valued, appreciated and not taken for granted. Three of the seven Administrators who were interviewed stated that administrative support staff are not happy as they do not receive credit for the work that they do and they are not acknowledged by academic staff. Administrative support staff are in fact often doing far more than their job description, over and above their call of duty.

As mentioned in chapter five, the responses received from the great majority (94%) of the academic staff respondents show that they believe they appreciate the efforts and assistance of the administrative support staff while only 52% of the administrative support staff believe this to be true. These responses may point to the fact that academic staff have unrealistic views on how the administrative support staff are treated in the departments or the administrative support staff may be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff. The literature shows that in her blog, Fowler (2015: 2) states that in her experience, students and academic staff appreciate administrative staff and what they do for the university as administrative staff “are a constant in the organization, holding a wealth of useful and practical knowledge”.

Just over half (51%) of the administrative support staff believe that they are taken for granted by academic staff while 48% of the academic staff agree with this statement. This is closely aligned to the previous point of whether administrative support staff are appreciated by academic staff. In his study, Qwabe found that certain of the administrative staff respondents commented that they were taken for granted by academic staff in their departments (Qwabe, 2016: 92).

This study **recommends** that staff need recognition for good work. This could be in the form of non-monetary rewards or simply a letter or certificate of recognition.

6.2.5 Additional Data

From long experience in the administrative field, the researcher would endorse the findings pointing to the fact that administrative support staff in HEIs feel that they are not treated in the same manner as academics. They feel they work harder and longer hours for less pay, less benefits, less chance of promotion and less opportunity for improvement and skills development. Lower level employees feel their jobs are routine with less rewards and they are the bottom feeders (minions) in an organization. However, if they are aware of their power, certain administrative staff can definitively identify the factors which give them this power.

The researcher has perused the major trends in universities in South Africa and noted it is very interesting that in universities of technology (of which there are six in South Africa) non-academic staff realize that staff with a masters degree are lecturing and they can also get their masters and become lecturers, whereas at research-led universities such as University of Cape Town, this would generally not be possible.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study, it has been shown that there are many factors which influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff. Future research could be extended to other HEIs in South Africa as this study only focused on one university of technology in KwaZulu-Natal. If and when the recommendations and suggestions of this study are implemented, a post-implementation study may be feasible.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study included that the findings were only from two of the five faculties of one selected University of Technology (DUT), although, it is probable that the findings could apply to other faculties and similar institutions in South Africa. The researcher had difficulty in getting the cooperation of staff members, both academic and administrative support, to complete the survey. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires and conducted the interviews while working full-time at DUT which was difficult and time consuming. The response rate that was eventually achieved was therefore necessarily lower than the researcher would have considered ideal.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The recommendations made were based on the findings of this study, on the literature reviewed, and on the researcher's personal and professional knowledge and experience as an administrative support staff member at DUT for the past 28 years. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be known and discussed by senior DUT management with a view to considering new policies.

In conclusion, the objectives of the study were largely met.

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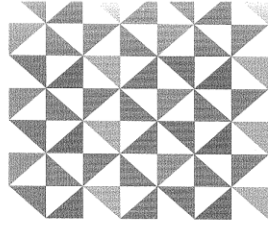
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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Ethics clearance letter



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

10 May 2017

IREC Reference Number: **REC 6/16**

Mrs L A Meyers
32 Hewitt Road
Glenwood
Durban
4001

Dear Mrs Meyers

Factors influencing the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff: A case study at Durban University of Technology

Your provisional approval letter dated 11 July 2016 refers.

Please be advised that ethics clearance has been granted for a period of 2 years, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification.

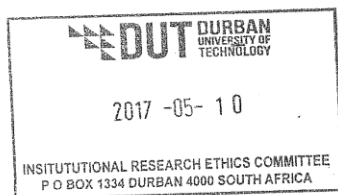
Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification form to apply for recertification, this form can be found on http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics/

Please note that this form must be submitted to the IREC 3 months before ethics approval for the study expires.

Yours Sincerely



Professor J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC



Appendix 2: Letter of information and consent form



INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Factors influencing the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff: A case study at Durban University of Technology.

Principal Investigator/researcher: Leigh Meyers, MMSc: Administration and Information Management

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

My research study aims to determine the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff. This research topic is important as it looks at the relationship between academics and administrative support staff in the Faculties of Arts & Design and Health Sciences at Durban University of Technology (DUT). The findings of this study may lead to the enrichment of the relationship between all staff members at DUT as well as improved service delivery to students and other stakeholders.

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Leigh Meyers (name of researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 057/16,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including my personal details will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant

Date

Time

Signature / Right Thumbprint

I, Leigh Meyers (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Leigh Meyers

4/10/2016



Full Name of Researcher

Date

Signature



QUESTIONNAIRE

This study aims to determine the factors that influence the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff.

Please note the administrative support staff category includes technicians, secretaries and general administrative staff. Kindly complete this questionnaire by placing a cross (X) in the appropriate box which corresponds with your answer.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Please indicate your gender.

1.1	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please indicate whether you are an academic or administrative support staff member.

2.1	Academic staff member	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Administrative support staff member	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Years of experience at this institution.

3.1	2 years and below	
3.2	2 - 5 years	
3.3	6 -10 years	
3.4	11-15 years	
3.5	16-20 years	
3.6	Over 20 years	

4. Please indicate the faculty in which you are employed.

4.1	Health Sciences	
4.2	Arts & Design	

5. Please indicate your age category.

5.1	18 - 20 years	
5.2	21 – 30 years	
5.3	31 – 40 years	
5.4	41 – 50 years	
5.5	51 – 60 years	
5.6	Over 60 years	

6. What race group do you belong to? (This question is optional)

6.1	African	
6.2	Coloured	
6.3	Indian	
6.4	White	
6.5	Other	

7. Please indicate your highest qualification.

7.1	Matric	
7.2	National Diploma	
7.3	Bachelors Degree	
7.4	Honours Degree	
7.5	Masters Degree	
7.6	PhD	
7.7	Other	

8. Please indicate your type of appointment.

8.1	Permanent	
8.2	Contract	
8.3	Part-time	

SECTION B: RESEARCH DATA

Indicate your agreement with the following statements, please place a cross (X) in the appropriate box which most closely reflects your view.

	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9.	Administrative support staff in my department are intrinsically (self) motivated to carry out their duties to the best of their ability.					
10.	Academic staff in my department are dependent on Administrative support staff for most of their key functions.					
11.	Academic staff in my department are generally treated fairly/equally by Administrative support staff.					
12.	Academic staff are cautious of the manner in which they treat Administrative support staff in order to avoid any backlash or lack of assistance.					
13.	Academic staff appreciate the efforts/assistance of the Administrative support staff in my department.					
14.	Administrative support staff are sometimes taken for granted in my department.					
15.	I experience job satisfaction in my position.					
16.	Harmony between Administrative support staff and Academic staff creates team players which enhances productivity in a department.					

17. Do you believe Administrative support staff have power in your department?

17.1	Yes	1	
17.2	No	2	

17.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

18. Do you believe Administrative support staff have authority in your department?

18.1	Yes	1	
18.2	No	2	

18.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

19. Do you believe that demotivation of Administrative support staff can have a negative impact on students?

19.1	Yes	1	
19.2	No	2	

19.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

20. Do you believe Administrative support staff are envious of Academic staff in your department?

20.1	Yes	1	
20.2	No	2	

20.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

21. Do you believe Administrative support staff are sometimes treated as less important than Academic staff in your department?

21.1	Yes	1	
21.2	No	2	

21.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

22. Do you believe Administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff?

22.1	Yes	1	
22.2	No	2	

22.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

23. Do you believe Administrative support staff feel that their titles as non-academic staff members are demeaning and/or degrading to themselves?

23.1	Yes	1	
23.2	No	2	

23.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

23.4 What titles do you believe would be more appropriate to non-academic staff members?

24. Do you believe Administrative support staff are responsible for the long-term survival of higher education institutions?

24.1	Yes	1	
24.2	No	2	

24.3 If you have answered yes, please provide reasons for your answer.

25. Please add any other comments/remarks you feel may be important to this research study.

Thank you for your input and valuable time

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

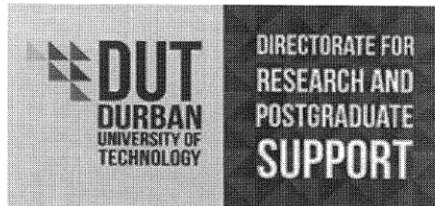


Thank you for agreeing to see me for this interview. I really appreciate it. I will try not to take more than 20 minutes of your time. I am interested in hearing your personal feelings and views on the working relationship between academics and administrative support staff. The information you give will be confidential. Would you mind if I use a voice recorder?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please can you state your name and position at DUT for the record?
2. If you require assistance on any departmental issues ie. Budgets, part-time periods, staff issues, student issues, finances, etc., do you approach the HOD, secretary or technician?
3. Do you believe that the relationship between the academics and administrative support staff is cordial on the whole? Please provide reasons for your answer.
4. Describe the attitude that academic staff display towards you. (Not the deans).
5. Describe the attitude that administrative support staff display towards you. (not faculty officers)
6. Do you believe that the academic staff appreciate the administrative support staff? Tell me more about this.
7. Do you believe that academic staff sometimes treat administrative support staff as inferior as (or less important than) to themselves?
8. Do you think administrative support staff are envious of academic staff even if subconsciously?
9. Do you think administrative support staff can be overly sensitive to their treatment by academic staff?
10. Do you think administrative support staff wield a certain amount of power in their departments?
 - 10.1 Please provide reasons for your answer.
11. How would you describe your relationship with academics and administrative support staff in academic departments?
12. Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding this study?

Appendix 5: Gatekeeper's Letter



*Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-37325767
Fax: 031-3732946
E-mail: moyos@dut.ac.za*

26th July 2016

Ms Leigh Anne Meyers
c/o Department of Information and Corporate Management
Faculty of Accounting and Informatics
Durban University of Technology

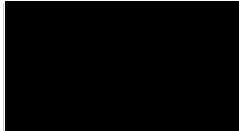
Dear Ms Meyers

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) has granted full permission for you to conduct your research "Factors influencing work relationship between academics and administrative support staff. A case study of the DUT" at the Durban University of Technology.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings can be submitted to the IRC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely



PROF. S. MOYO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT

Appendix 6: Email from Research Office

Leigh Anne Meyers

From: Vaneshree Govender
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2017 10:17 AM
To: Leigh Anne Meyers
Subject: Re: Masters

Dear Leigh

Unfortunately, funding through the Research Development Grant is earmarked for academic staff only.

regards
Vaneshree

From: Leigh Anne Meyers
Sent: 05 September 2017 10:49 AM
To: Vaneshree Govender
Subject: FW: Masters

Hi Vaneshree,

Please see below – is there replacement support for admin staff?

Regards

DUT
DURBAN
UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY

LEIGH MEYERS
Academic Secretary
Department of Emergency Medical
Care and Rescue
Faculty of Health Sciences
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban 4000, South Africa
Tel: 031 273 3203
Email: leighm@dut.ac.za
www.dut.ac.za

From: Melissa Ogle
Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2017 10:48 AM
To: Leigh Anne Meyers <leighm@dut.ac.za>
Subject: RE: Masters

Hi Leigh

As far as know there is no replacement support for admin staff but you can double check this with Vaneshree Govender @ the research office.

Regards
Melissa

From: Leigh Anne Meyers
Sent: 05 September 2017 08:50 AM
To: Melissa Ogle <melissao@dut.ac.za>
Subject: Masters

Hi Melissa,

Please can you advise me.

I am taking vacation leave from 26 September to 6 October (I will be busy with my write up for my masters during this period) and wanted to take study leave from 9 to 20 October. Is there any funding available to employ a temporary person in my place?

Thank you.

Leigh



LEIGH MEYERS
Academic Secretary
Department of Emergency Medical
Care and Rescue
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