



The motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies in the Humanities: A case study of the postgraduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

By

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Declaration

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged.
- (ii) Where other written sources have been used or quoted, then:
 - a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced; and
 - b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.
- (iii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signature:

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DEDICATION

Dedicated in the memory of my late dad,

Mr S.C. Luthuli,

You will forever be missed.

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“I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds”

Psalm9:1

I would like to show gratitude towards my supervisor, Dr Khambule, for his guidance, not giving up on me and pushing me to go on. I will forever be grateful for your encouragement and support. On a related note, the following people have been of great assistance to me:

- My lecturer, Dr Sutherland, thank for being there for me from day one, your constant support will never be forgotten. Please do carry on being a great help to other students as you have been to me. May God Bless You.
- My mother, my prayer warrior, my pillar of strength. I am nothing without you. May God keep you because this is for you and my siblings (Nokuphiwa and Bhekumuzi). All I do, I do for you.... *UNkulunkulu uzozifeza izifiso zethu ngelinye ilanga.*
- Mavundla Family, Angisoze ngankohlwa yini. Bo Rhwayiza, Mthimude, Nonduku.
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- My study participants, thank you for taking part in this study.

Lastly to God all mighty, my saviour, comforter. All that I am, I am because of you Lord. Thank you!

ABSTRACT

Through the development process, higher education provides the necessary tools and skills for individuals to access employment opportunities and improve human development. Global statistical evidence shows that those with higher education qualifications are more likely to be employed than those with lower-level education or no education at all. This has subsequently led to the growth in the enrollment of postgraduate students as a permanent feature in institutions of higher education across the globe. South Africa is not an exception to this trend because its National Development Plan views education as an essential element to the country's developmental needs and foundation to alleviate poverty, unemployment, and inequalities. With the increasing enrollment of students into postgraduate studies, it becomes crucial to understand the main drivers of this phenomenon.

This study is geared towards exploring the motives connected to pursuing postgraduate studies in the South African context. The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus in the School of Humanities). Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative approach that involved semi-structured interviews with ten participants that were selected within the institution.

The study showed that many participants attach several motives to pursuing higher education, with the need to access further employment and financial opportunities to better their livelihoods being the main drivers. Other participants were found to be driven by the need for self-development, their role models, and the need to improve their communities. While there has been a rapid increase in postgraduate intake, the lack of funding for postgraduate studies was a leading barrier and contributed to excessive financial exclusion. The study recommends that the government finds other proactive measures of developing a funding model that is explicitly targeting postgraduate students.

Key words: Postgraduate studies, motives, higher education, Fees Must Fall, South Africa

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

<i>ASEAN</i>	<i>Association of Southeast Asian Nation</i>
<i>COVID-19</i>	<i>Coronavirus disease</i>
<i>HEQF</i>	<i>Higher Education Qualification Framework</i>
<i>OECD</i>	<i>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</i>
<i>NCHE</i>	<i>National Commission on Higher Education</i>
<i>NDP</i>	<i>National Development Plan</i>
<i>NPHE</i>	<i>National Plan for Higher Education</i>
<i>NRF</i>	<i>National Research Foundation</i>
<i>NSFAS</i>	<i>National Student Financial Aid Scheme</i>
<i>UKZN</i>	<i>University of KwaZulu-Natal</i>
<i>UNESCO</i>	<i>United Nations Education and Cultural Organization</i>

Chapter One

“Knowledge is power. Information is liberation. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family”. Kofi Annan

1.1 Introduction

Access to education forms one of the fundamental pathways that individuals need for human development and increase their labour market opportunities. Espinosa and Oliver (2020) state that education has been recognized as the basis of development, as an innovation element and a strategic advantage for countries. Motivations behind pursuing education not only produce the benefits of self-development, but also prove to be vital in the development of any country. With the rise in the intake of postgraduate students in South Africa and across the globe, there is an acute need to study the motives students attach to pursuing postgraduate studies.

Through the development process, higher education provides the necessary tools and skills for individuals to access employment opportunities to improve their living standards. Halliday (2015:10) highlights that “education plays a role in screening and sorting individuals according to academic criteria, within education and training systems, and from education and training systems into labour markets and workplaces”. In South Africa, higher education is seen as a tool that can transform the state of development. Naidoo and Ranchod (2018:10) describe the ten-year innovation plan (2008–2018) that was aimed at “driving South Africa’s transformation towards a knowledge economy, in which the production and dissemination of knowledge is expected to lead to economic benefits and to enrich all fields of human endeavor”. In the process of transforming the country into a knowledge economy, this has been seen to create a need for students to pursue or be trained at the highest level.

Higher education can be viewed as playing an important role in the development of any country. Naidoo and Ranchod (2018:6) assert that the “contribution of higher education to inclusive development in South Africa as a particular component of the public good has characterized South Africa as an aspirant developmental state”. This is also in line with the country’s National Development Plan’s vision of using higher education as a tool of reforming the country’s unequal socio-economic landscape (National Planning Commission, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to understand why university students pursue higher education and what they intend to gain from pursuing these studies.

1.2 Background of the study

The National Development Plan stipulates that education is an important element to the country's developmental needs and foundation to alleviating poverty and inequalities (National Planning Commission, 2012). This recognition coincides with the rise of the Fees Must Fall movement that called for higher education fees for poor students to be discontinued as means of ensuring no needy students are denied access to higher education opportunities based on their socioeconomic status (Maphumulo, 2017). Higher education also has a transformative role in ridding the country of the past injustices such as the apartheid structures, as observed in the government's investment in schemes that priorities inclusive education from an early phase of education.

Woolard (2002:6) highlights that the apartheid system "was heavily biased towards providing health, education and housing services to the minority, to the detriment of the majority population who were denied the opportunity to accumulate human and physical capital." The inequalities experienced are interlinked with poverty and unemployment as it is stated that the poor were affected by the lack of employment opportunities, low wages, and lack of job security has major contributing factors to their poverty in South Africa (Statistics South Africa (Stat SA), 2016). The injustices of the past have driven state interventions towards restructuring the education approach to promote education as a tool to rewrite the past injustices and balance the socio-economic disparities.

Van der Berg et al. (2011:1) pronounce that education is seen as the only "viable avenue for poor people who want to enter the top end of the labour market with all its attendant economic benefits". Education plays an essential role in both the provision of opportunities to individuals and its potential to unravel the apartheid social structure towards the creation of more connected and more united societies (Van der Berg et al., 2011). Through the expansion of educational opportunities, especially for the previously disadvantage groups, South Africa's stock of graduates has grown rapidly over the past 15 years (Van Broekhuizen and Van Der Berg, 2016). Government funding has contributed to an increase in the number of students enrolling in institutions of higher education. However, the increase in student enrolment and graduates is met with an increase in the country's unemployment rate, which is currently at 30%, with the majority of the unemployed being the youth at 56% (Stats SA, 2019).

This study seeks to explore key motives behind students enrolling for postgraduate degrees through a case study of students at the institution. Exploring the value placed on education, particularly postgraduate studies, is vital in understanding the increase in postgraduate students

in South African universities. Most studies tend to focus on university enrolment and throughput, with a lack of attention on the key reasons as to why students pursue postgraduate degrees. As such, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on key motives behind pursuing postgraduate studies.

Figure 1: University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College



Source: (ESRI, 2019)

This research study will be based in Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, in which University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard Campus) is located. KZN is one of the nine provinces forming the Republic of South Africa and is an important contributor to the national economy (Devey, 2005). UKZN was formed in 2004 following a merger of the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville, and it has five campuses that include Howard College, Westville, Pietermaritzburg, Edgewood, and the Nelson Mandela Medical School. Since Howard College is the immediate research community, it seemed fitting for the study to be conducted there as students, particularly postgraduates, are readily available.

1.3 Problem Statement

South Africa is a country defined by extreme inequality and this plays out in many ways across its social landscape, including higher education (Ashwin and Case, 2018). The past injustices that South Africa faced have structured the development process to address previous injustices. Looking at the education sector, it is vital to understand the conceptions and the values placed

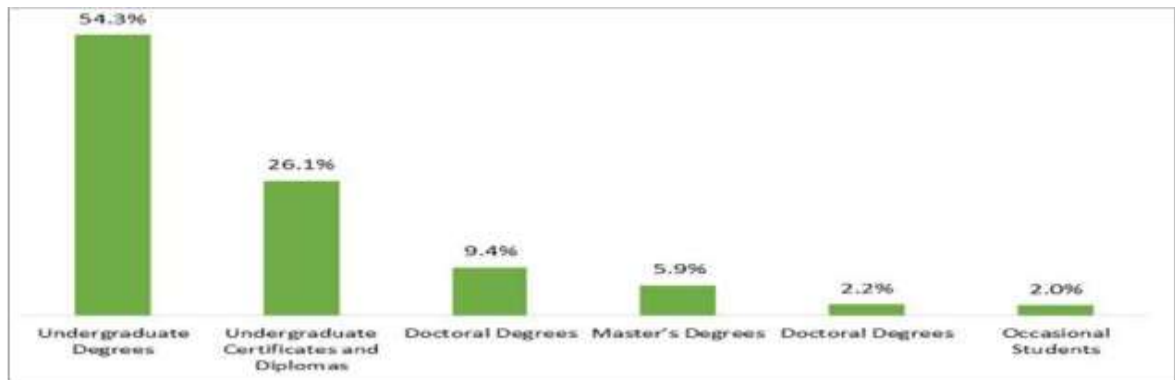
on education in society today. Previously, education was not accessible to all, but since the democratic dispensation in 1994, redress policies have aimed at ensuring inclusion. The National Plan for Higher Education (2001, p.6) states that it aims to “promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realize their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities”.

Higher education is seen as a tool to transform South Africa and should be at the forefront of promoting human development targets after many years of a lack of investment in the education meant for every citizen. The government has a commitment towards the restructuring and provision of new opportunities and ensuring that every citizen has a fair chance of bettering themselves and contributing to a new South Africa. Ashwin and Case (2018, p.20) state that the “development of higher education could be an important step towards both greater equity as well as holding out great potential for the contribution of higher education to wider social and economic development”.

Despite the increase in education intake at both undergraduate and postgraduate phases, the growth in unemployment has persisted over the past decade in South Africa. With this growing gap, there is an identified need to do studies that explore why people pursue postgraduate studies as there are few studies available on this area of research. Exploring the value placed on education, particularly on postgraduate studies, is vital because the way education is viewed today potentially influences any state’s development. Gaining an understanding of the challenges students face in pursuit of this education and the motives behind pursuing postgraduate education will shed light on understanding the issue at hand. This may contribute to the existing literature as this area of research has largely remained unexplored.

The increase in the enrollment of postgraduate students across South Africa reflects growth in the higher education sector, but those do not provide the motives or the reasoning behind this growth. The Statistics of Post School Education and Training in South Africa (2018) shows that enrollment for doctoral and Masters degrees doubled for the 2009-2016 period and Witstrand University and the University of KwaZulu-Natal contributed the most to Master’s and Doctoral degrees enrolment (7 127 and 3 044 respectively) as the figure 2 reflects.

Figure 2: Enrolment according to qualification



Source: (Department of Higher Education, 2018).

Since there is an increase in the enrollment of postgraduate studies, this growth may be caused by several factors such as the behavior of the economy, unemployment, and many external factors. It is crucial to understand the motives attached to pursuing postgraduate studies and how they can potentially develop the country or reflect an issue within the education sector.

1.4 Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies.

The overall research objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies.
2. To assess the value students place on postgraduate education.
3. To explore students' challenges in pursuing postgraduate education.
4. To understand views of students in the country's education system.

5. 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are: What are the motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies?

1. What are the motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies?
2. What are the values placed on postgraduate studies by students?
3. What challenges do students face in pursuing their postgraduate studies?
4. What are the views attached by students in the country's education system?

1.6 Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

This study will utilize the capability approach theory as its framework. The capability approach highlights functioning and capabilities of individuals as an important element to their freedom and as an asset to improve their socio-economic status. In applying the capability approach to education, Unterhalter (2009) states that the capability approach views education as the key to accessing job opportunities which is essential in improving socio-economic conditions, both at individual and household level. The capability approach is applicable to this study because postgraduate studies are supposed to enhance the capabilities of students and equip them with necessary skills to prepare them for the labour market.

Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative approach that involved semi-structured interviews with ten participants that were selected through purposeful sampling. The participants were selected from UKZN's Howard College Campus. The data was analyzed thematically and presented and discussed in chapter four.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Previous discussions in this chapter have highlighted that there is an increase in the enrolment of postgraduate studies across South African universities and it is unclear of what drives this growth. Looking at different policies put in place is a significant part of this because the way education is governed in a country determines the effect it will potentially have on the development of that country. Ashwin and Case (2018, p.20) highlight that there seems to be an occurrence of "inadequate connections between higher education policy and wider economic and social policies of the country". Exploring these policies will shed light on whether this occurrence is factual or not.

This study is significant because it sheds light on the motives that students attach when furthering their studies. It sheds light on the current issues faced by students not only in South Africa but globally. Higher education is often faced with a lot of challenges in South Africa, such as student protests and funding issues. Gaining an understanding of the challenges currently faced by postgraduate students may assist the government in understanding the needs and motivations of students, thus informing the policy-making process as it will be driven towards addressing these issues. It is also important for universities to understand the motives attached by students so the qualifications can be shaped to meet students' needs. An example of this would be the inclusion of practical work from first year of entry at the institution up

until the final year of study to expose students to fieldwork to gain the necessary experience required by employers. This study brings light to the motives attached and contributes to the literature and makes information readily available to upcoming researchers interested in the research area.

1.8 Definition of terms

In this study, the following terms are used:

1.8.1 Higher Education

According to 1 of Act 39/2008 of the higher education Act 101 of 1997 higher education means “where all academic learning programs lead to a qualification that meets the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF)”. Osman and Maringe (2019) stated that Higher education in South Africa is on the path of reinventing and transforming itself and since the dissolution of apartheid, the education policy terrain has shifted remarkably fast. Policies have required that universities respond to a national plan for higher education that commits universities to become cost-effective and open institutional access to all who were historically excluded due to apartheid’s educational exclusion policies.

1.8.2 Postgraduate Studies

House (2010, p.10) states that “the term ‘postgraduate’ is often used to describe further study undertaken by those who already have a first degree and it is frequently used to refer to master or doctoral studies, but it also includes certificates and diplomas which are taught to a more academically demanding standard than undergraduate certificates and diplomas”.

1.8.3 Motives

Motives are defined as needs, wants, drives, or impulses within the individual and often are directed towards specific goals. It is vital to gain an understanding of what drives students to pursue postgraduate studies. Arar and Abromowitz (2017, p.620) highlight that “previous studies have mentioned in the literature that some reasons motivate students to undertake postgraduate studies are the drive for professional advancement, a wish to attain better financial benefits and social mobility and to enhance influence in their own society, the desire for self-fulfillment or expanding horizons and creating a life change”.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The study is taking place in a university setting and the study participants are university students. The main limitation has been that the study was undertaken amid COVID-19 social distancing regulations, and therefore had to be done telephonically. This is a limitation because of resource constraints and the lack of willingness by many students to participate telephonically.

1.10 Dissertation Structure

The dissertation is divided into five chapters

Chapter 1

This introductory chapter mainly focuses on the study that explores motives behind pursuing postgraduate studies, the location, which is in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College in Durban. The aim of the study, objectives, research questions and the significance of the study are also covered.

Chapter 2

This chapter reviews existing scholarly work on higher education, policies that guide the implementation of higher education in South Africa, the state of higher education in international countries and some of the theoretical frameworks that substantiate the motives attached to pursuing postgraduate studies. The chapter also focuses on some studies that have been conducted internationally on motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies.

Chapter 3

This chapter explains the research approach employed in this study. It explains the qualitative approach used, the methods for collecting data, data collection tools, sampling method and sample size. Lastly, this chapter provides the methods used in data analysis, the ethical consideration, trustworthiness of the study and its limitations.

Chapter 4

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings, the analysis of the findings and discusses the overall meaning of those findings.

Chapter 5

This chapter provides the conclusion and a summary of the research findings. The findings of the study are also used to provide recommendations that might be suitable in dealing with some of the key issues that emerged in the study.

1.11 Conclusion

This introductory chapter was aimed at introducing the study that is centered on exploring motives attached by postgraduate students in pursuing postgraduate studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study's background was covered, highlighting the country's education system and how it interacts with the governance of higher education in South Africa. The increase in enrollments to higher degrees has created a need to conduct this study and the research questions and objectives discussed in this chapter aim to respond to these questions. The following chapter 2 will discuss the literature and the main theoretical frameworks employed by the study.

Chapter Two- Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Education is a basic human right that is viewed as the fundamental tool for people to develop themselves and leave a mark in this world. Looking at higher education, it has been seen as tool for individuals to access work opportunities while contributing towards the development of their countries. Rozhenkova (2019: 7) states that due to “the prestige of higher education and the demand of the labor market for employees with college degrees, the number of tertiary students has been steadily rising in the last decades”. The rise in the attainment of higher degrees has been evident not only in South Africa but globally. Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2017) highlight that secondary and tertiary education has undergone some major changes, with global average years of schooling being much higher now than it was a hundred years ago.

Further exploring what drives the growth in university students’ intake will be fundamental in this study, particularly in both the global and South African contexts. This will assist in providing a more precise image of the motives that students attach to pursuing higher degrees. Policies that govern the implementation of higher education within different states and their effects will be discussed. The theoretical framework that guides the study will be highlighted and concluding remarks shared in this chapter.

2.2 Defining Higher Education

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping who individuals become later in life. It is held that “education can be understood generally to mean teaching, the process whereby a teacher transfers knowledge to a learner or student while to others, education refers to the systems and structures put in place to enable the transfer of knowledge” Petrus (2019, p.83). Focusing on higher education, it can be understood as a learning that is oriented towards obtaining a certain qualification. Benjamin and Dunrong (2010) state that higher education mainly refers to the highest level of education that offers advanced qualifications.

Robeyns (2006, p.3), highlights the human socio-economic development, which is explored in two dimensions namely the:

“the personal versus collective and the economic versus non-economic, the instrumental personal economic role of education is that it can help a person to find a job, to be less vulnerable on the labour market, to be better informed as a consumer, to be more able to find information on economic

opportunities, and so forth and collectively, if a large percentage of the population is illiterate, then the market for books and newspapers is automatically limited”

And the economic values of education which are:

economic versus non-economic translated to having access to information by being able to read the newspaper or a medical instruction leaflet, being knowledgeable about issues of health, reproduction, and contraception, being able to speak with strangers in their languages, the ability to work with a computer and communicate with people worldwide through the internet while non-economic entails that children learn to live in a society where people have different views of the good life, for which is likely to contribute to a more tolerant society” Robeyns (2006, p.3).

The choice of furthering education seems to be bearing more fruits as more and more students are pursuing postgraduate studies. The benefits of attaining higher degrees seem to be on the increase. Hout (2012) argues that individuals who complete their higher-level education phase have better prospects at the labour market, healthier lives and largely contribute to the nation’s economy and societal well-being. Higher education does not necessarily equip students with only the necessary skills to secure employment but also develops and improves their personal capacity. This provides them with more knowledge in their field of expertise and aids them in forming new relationships and networks for present and future use.

2.3 Global Context of Higher Education

Higher education is portrayed as a vehicle for development not only for individuals but also for different nations. This occurrence has not been experienced only in South Africa but globally. Belyakov et al. (2009) attest to this notion by stating that higher education has become increasingly important throughout the last few decades because it can benefit the lives of individuals and improve national economies. Many individuals in higher education are striving towards self-development while also improving their livelihoods and contributing towards the development of their countries in the process. Higher education as a vehicle for development can lead to higher education institutions transforming the country’s economy through innovation and development. This is particularly important in the modern era driven by innovation.

In the attainment of higher education internationally, Rozhenkova (2019) highlights how international higher education institutions worldwide have engaged in the global competition for various political, socio-economic, and cultural reasons. This can be viewed that attaining

higher education is not only related to the development of individuals but can be also advantageous to institutions that offer these studies as it increases their status among other international institutions. Throughout this competition, universities compete at an international level to improve their rankings, attract high performing students, academics, and professional staff services as a means of building world-class universities that can engage in international collaborations (Rozhenkova, 2019).

Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2019) observe that over 2.5 million students' study in foreign countries, and these estimates were predicted to rise to 8 million international students would fall under student mobility. These alarming numbers reflect some occurrences taking place within the higher education landscape internationally. Most of the developed countries in Europe regard international students as sources of income for universities, with an increasing pattern in the number of students that do not return to their home countries after graduation.” (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2019:9). This can be an indication that there is a need or a demand for skilled labour internationally.

These occurrences raise many concerns especially in developing countries as student mobility seems to be on the increase. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2019, p.8) highlight that half or more international students study for postgraduate degrees and in many cases do not return to their home countries after completing their studies, depriving their home country of these highly trained individuals. The downside to this student mobility is that developing countries are negatively affected and there is a certain degree of academic inequality that is taking place. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2019) highlight that some of the motives that international students attach to pursuing higher degrees are that most of them are seeking higher salaries. If favorable conditions are existential in the developed countries, then they will continue residing there.

Looking at some of the global issues surrounding the higher education system, Luchinskaya and Ovchynnikova (2011) note three major challenges that were distinguished in higher education institutions all over the world, these include: growth in the level of globalization of educational and research activities; the mass development of higher education, which leads to financial and capacity limitations; and the new globalized labor market demands that require universities to produce graduates that are capable of being more internationally adaptable. These challenges present the state in which higher education is in today as previously highlighted that institutions are in competition which potentially leads to student mobility

which negatively impacts developing countries. An increase in higher degrees also calls for funding schemes and labour markets that are needed to absorb these numbers and government departments need assistance with this increase.

Exploring the motive behind pursuing postgraduate studies internationally is important as one is exposed to different contexts and can make comparisons. Geddie (2013) states that post graduate students are regarded as potential source of scientific brainpower and create a competitive element that is intended to attract and retaining these students. Internationally, countries benefit from the intake of postgraduate students, so the relationship is a two-way path in which both parties benefit. A study done in Canada and United Kingdom showed that students opted to further studies with the perceived multiple employment possibilities (Geddie 2013). An opportunity to have multiple employment possibilities within one's reach is an enough motivation to pursue an academic career such a lecturing and naming a few other contributory factors, which include state welfare, state-sponsored care support and migration regulations which shape attraction to certain locations (Geddie 2013). Certain factors and enticements which are mentioned above are what competing overseas countries use to attract a pool of students to further their studies.

Havenga and Sengane (2018) observe an increase in the number of professional nurses who enroll for postgraduate studies motivated by progression prospects, salary increases and decreasing chance of unemployment. Such studies however do not focus on students who went straight from undergraduate qualification to a postgraduate qualification. As such, there is a need for a study exploring the motives behind students pursuing postgraduate qualifications.

2.4 Global policies governing higher education.

Certain policies guide higher education in its implementation and each country has its own policies. Through the development of different organizations, educational systems are operated and expected to reach certain standards. Marginson (2016, p.245) highlights that “organizations such as the formation of the United Nations Education and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have created a new era for global policy making in education, opening the way to a proliferation of bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental efforts to influence and transform educational systems and set global educational standards”.

Marginson (2016) further highlights that other organizations that play a huge role in the development of international policies that guide higher education, with institutions such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Group of 8 (G8), the World Bank, the European Union (EU), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) increasingly putting emphasis in global educational exchange and policymaking. One can identify that the international policy-making process is not handled by a single entity but by several organizations that come together to the most appropriate rules and regulations to be put in place.

The growth of the transnational educational policymaking was driven by the breaking down of colonial processes and the establishment of a whole new group of independent states after challenges in the past (Marginson, 2016) which led to the changes seen today, such as globalization which influences development across the whole world. Coatsworth et al. (2015) describe globalization as the actions, events, and relations at an increasingly greater distance from the locality affect community life. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p.10) argue that while “globalization processes have been ongoing since at least the 16th century, it has set the stage for new types of power and complex plurilateral forms of influence on domestic educational systems, creating new and more globalized education policy discourses and a more formalized global policy architecture”.

Globalization had a role in development of the whole world in relations to things such as technology, data etc. it has contributed both positively and negatively in the development of different countries around the world. Globalization is playing an increasingly important role in the developing countries. The positive effects of globalization highlighted by Hamdi (2013, p.142) are improved economic processes, advanced technological developments and adoption, political influences, health systems, and social and natural environment factors”. These advantages are noted while also considering the negative which is further stated that globalization has also brought up new challenges such as, environmental degradation, destabilization in commercial and financial markets, increased inequalities across and within the world (Hamdi, 2013).

Considering both the negative and positive impact of globalization, although globalization has positively impacted in the development of different countries, but the process has been a strenuous one specially to developing countries as each country is different and would need the appropriate, effective, and unique interventions that cater specifically to their needs. Looking

at education, globalization has assisted the poor have access to education thus leading to a decrease the rates of illiteracy (Hamdi, 2013).

More people are getting educated through globalization although negatively globalized competition has forced many minds skilled workers where highly educated and qualified professionals, such as scientists, doctors, engineers, and IT specialists, migrate to developed countries to benefit from the higher wages and greater lifestyle prospects for themselves and their children. This leads to a decrease in the highly skilled labour population in the developing countries which halts the development negatively (Hamdi, 2013). Through globalization some countries experience “brain drain” whereby a certain number of skilled professionals migrate to other countries in search of better employment offers which Hamdi (2013) highlights above, some countries have been affected by this phenomenon especially developing countries.

2.5 Higher education in South Africa

Generally, the existence of past injustices such as Apartheid has driven the changes witnessed in democratic South Africa, such as the transformation in higher education, provision of higher education opportunities to the poor and the rise of black middle class. Van der Berg (2011, p.1) argues that during South Africa’s transition period, from the apartheid era to as democratic country, the education system was tasked with playing an essential role in nation-building, the promotion of democratic principles and values and as an alternative to addressing high poverty rates.

Statistics South Africa (2019) states that the envisaged role of education has yielded some positive results in South Africa such as the graduate throughput that has been contributing to the country’s economy but has yet to assist in lowering the country’s increasing unemployment rate, recorded at 29%. The increase in unemployment rate in South Africa can be viewed as a concern as the rising levels of enrolment in higher education could reflect one of the strategies used by students to escape unemployment as StatsSA (2019) also reveals that people with a university qualification stand have a higher employment rate than those with lower-level education or no education at all.

It can be argued that historically South Africa’s higher education was not accommodating to every citizen that had a desire to further their studies. Bozalek and Boughey (2012) pointed that apartheid affected the higher education system tremendously, institution was racially separated specifically for Blacks and Whites and the programmes offered in these institutions were

defined by apartheid beliefs about the roles considered appropriate for different social groups. As a result, the opportunities offered were not accessible to all and even the labour market was geared towards supporting the minority. The OECD (2012) noted that graduates are entering a world of employment that is characterized by greater uncertainty, speed, risk, complexity, and interdisciplinary working. Pursuing higher education that does not yield positive outcomes only but can be also can be influenced negatively by changing labour markets that control the careers that are in demand.

After South Africa became democratic in 1994, all the government's efforts were driven towards redressing the past injustices as the National Development Plan (NDP) (2019) highlights that higher education now provides opportunities for social mobility, it can strengthen equity, social justice, and democracy. In today's economy, higher education is increasingly important for opening people's opportunities in terms of job creation, this is the reflection that pursuing higher education has some fruitful outcomes as it opens more opportunities and can redress some the past injustices. The NDP (2019) further asserts that an "expanding higher education sector that can contribute to rising incomes, higher productivity and the shift to a more knowledge-intensive economy".

The injustices of the past were racially discriminant and as part of redressing the past injustices more opportunities have been given to those who previously had been disadvantaged. Bawa (2019, p.255) highlights that "between 1994 and 2016, the number of students in the higher education system grew from fewer than 500,000 to more than a million, the largest part of the growth being driven by the broadening and deepening participation of Black South Africans". South Africa prides itself in providing quality education to all as the NDP (2019) is driven towards the provision of quality school education, with globally competitive literacy and numeracy standards.

Looking at the state of higher education today in South Africa, it can be argued that the injustices of the past have left a lingering negative effect on how the education system is functioning. Heleta (2016) argues that while political freedom was achieved in 1994, transition to post-apartheid South Africa, structural imbalances, inequalities, injustices, and a lack of transformation remain a stumbling block to the full emancipation of Black Africans from the clutches of colonial and apartheid institutions. This is primarily visible in the lack of knowledge including various bodies and traditions of knowledge and the production of new knowledge centred on contexts. The proposition of decolonizing the curriculum is not only a strenuous,

long process but also raising the question of the willingness of changing what was done years ago.

2.6 Motives attached to pursuing higher education in South Africa

Looking at the growing surge in the pursuing of higher education, it is important to explore the motives that drive students to pursue these degrees. Exploring some motives that have driven students to pursue higher education in South Africa, we look at some of the recorded patterns in some universities as Hoffman and Julie (2012, p.1) highlights some of the “motives behind the pursuing of postgraduate studies from a study done in the University of Western Cape, 57.8% indicated a desire to expand body of knowledge while 21.1% wanted to secure better employment and compensation”.

The patterns or relationships of the economy also play a huge role in the decision-making processes because if there is the willingness to get paid more for studying further than the probability is high for more students to want to further their studies. Havenga and Sengane (2018) also observed an increase in the number of professional nurses who enroll for postgraduate studies motivated by progression prospects, salary increases and decreasing chance of unemployment.

Unemployment which has also been on the rise has influenced the decision-making processes around career development as studies exploring graduate unemployment in South Africa are also on the increase. A study done by Oluwajodu et al. (2015) showed that graduate unemployment in South Africa was caused by employers’ perceptions of the institutions that students graduated from. Dias and Posel (2007) attribute this to the skills mismatch that exists between the supply and demand of labour. The result reflected that career and educational aspirations are the main reasons why postgraduates choose to return to university after undergraduate studies (Hoffmand and Julie, 2012). The growth of unemployment particularly graduate unemployment could have everlasting negative impact on the decision-making process because individuals will not only be motivated by their own personal drive but by patterns in the labour market.

Exploring other motives, François’s (2014:19) study indicated that the main reasons for pursuing higher education qualification programmes advance professional skills, cognitive interests, intellectual and analytical skills, and most importantly, preparedness for the world of work. Some individuals further their studies with the drive to be advance, to broaden their

knowledge and become more competent in the skills they provide for society which is great for the development of any country. Ronnie and Wakeling (2015) observe that the extension of high skills within South Africa is important, particularly because of the obstacles encountered under apartheid, there is a need for universities to play a fundamental role in addressing current and future workplace needs while bettering the country in the process. The possibility of being open to more and better job opportunities seems to be one of the main motives that drive students to pursue higher degrees in South Africa without overriding the fact that some students want to personally develop themselves in their professional careers.

2.7 Challenges within the higher education sector in South Africa

The education sector, particularly higher education has been faced with a lot of challenges. Solely focusing on the South African context, this section highlights some of the main challenges that higher institutions have been faced with over the past years. The South African education system since 1994 has had to go under severe transformation aimed at redressing the past injustices. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) highlight that post-apartheid South African higher education system is challenged in the provision of access to universities, quality education and the prioritization of the previously advantaged. This was due to the reasoning that there was an expanded commitment to address disparities acquired from the past and to battle against all shapes of separation inside a system of values which maintains equity, uniformity, and solidarity (Cross and Carpentier, 2009). To address the past disparities, there was a need to transform the education system and accommodate everyone equally.

Looking at some of the main challenges faced in the higher education system in South Africa is funding. According to Scott (2009), the weight on the system is created due to the issue that funding for public higher education in South Africa is comparatively lower than in countries at a comparable stage of monetary development which shows that in South Africa funding dedicated to higher education is lower in comparison to other countries. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2016) consolidates that the arrangements for university fees reached a crisis in 2015 when the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), one of South Africa's most distinguished universities, announced an 11% fee increment in September 2015 which resulted in a blast of student protests that happened on their campuses and around other universities within the country.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (2016) estimates based on data from StatsSA, that about 30% of South African university undergraduate students can comfortably pay fees; about 25% are supported through public financial aid. Several students are dependent on financial aid and it seems each year the number increases. One can argue that the restructuring of the education system in South Africa has proved to be a futile one as it has exhausted a lot of resources that has put strain in the finances of the country, Lerbowitz et al. (2012,9) alerts that the merger of the 36 higher education institutions into 21 universities in the post-apartheid era demanded a lot of attention and funding from the country's education department.

The restructuring process also affected policy making decisions around the education system. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013, p.289), highlights that "it should also be noted that the wider tensions and challenges are embedded in emerging higher education policy in South Africa as the system has undergone fundamental restructuring". As much as the 1996 Report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) provided the framework for the reconstruction of the higher education system and laid the foundation for the government White Paper on Higher Education (Department of Education (DoE), 1997), it did not consider some of the major issues that could occur thus hindering or negatively impacting the restructuring process which includes some of the challenges with the higher education sector.

Each institution is an association of historical, financial, cultural, and geographic factors that influence its ability to teach. One institution might be more effective in encouraging students to learn to deal with difference or to develop adaptation skills, while another might be more highly resourced materially and able to facilitate students' technical skills (Lerbowitz et al., 2012). In the new South Africa, higher education institutions have had to adjust and accommodate a rainbow nation approach centered on the inclusion of all races, cultures, languages while providing quality education. According to Soudien (2008), experience of race has taken a constricted shape and is increasingly being expressed by aspirations towards class and status as seemingly education is seen as a tool to make life better.

As education became more accessible to all racial groups including those that were previously disadvantage, it gave rise to new an occurrence of new social issues. Lerbowitz et al. (2012) argue that South Africa's increasing access to higher education has resulted in the creation of admission policies targeted at the previously marginalized. As a result of these changes, an example that Cross and Johnson (2008) report on, is the conflict at a South African university

(University of the Witwatersrand) caused by students from all walks of life, advantageous and disadvantaged backgrounds experiencing campus life differently, they argued that it may impact negatively on the studies of students in campuses. If a person comes from a less advantageous background, the constant struggle for necessities could lead to some disturbance in the academic life.

Another challenge faced by South African students is the exit point system from grade 12. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) explain that Grade 12 is the exit point of formal school education in South Africa, prior to the release of these results into the public domain, there is a process referred to as standardization and implemented by Malusi which is a council that sets and monitors standards for further education and training in South Africa National Qualifications Framework Act No 67 of 2008. Thus, this process of standardization of Grade 12 results is creating challenges between original results and adjusted results and therefore is contributing to major discrepancies in the context of the reliability of the schooling system and the type of student considered for university studies (Cross and Carpentier, 2009; Mouton et al., 2012). If a student is unable to reach the standard of results required of him/her then that hinders them from entering university.

Adapting from high school level to a university level seems to also create a challenge for first entry university students. Cross and Carpentier (2009) highlight that first-year students have difficulty in adapting to the university environment as they find themselves deprived of the necessary basics needed for the pursuit of their studies added to the weakness of the level of education given at especially disadvantaged schools. Challenges such as these make the process of learning hard thus hindering the chances of pursuing higher education.

The management of higher education institutions and student representation becomes part of the issue that students are faced with when there is miscommunication between these two. Macupe (2012:7) highlights that “with five universities placed under administration in the 2011-2012 period in South Africa, the management and leadership of institutions needs serious consideration”. Further asserts that autonomous assessors were designated to examine the circumstance as annihilating reports were created that painted an exasperating picture of destitute administration, terrible administration, and money related fumble. In South Africa, committees administer institutions whereas administration, which incorporates the vice-chancellor and his/her rectorate, oversees day-by-day operations, the free assessors, who were designated at colleges that were put beneath organization, pointed out that chamber individuals

did not get to perform their duties and regularly acted improperly and damagingly (Macupe, 2012).

Globalization and international standards also guide how institutions are operating thus creating challenges as De Villiers and Ntshoe (2008, p.17) states that “globalization rests on neoliberal discourses which look at the role of the state in the economy, cutbacks in state expenditure, deregulation and liberalization”. Globalization helps in keeping countries abreast with that is taking place around them but some changes that changes that implemented do not necessarily mean that there are correct and appropriate for all countries which leads to what Slaughter and Leslie (2001) describe globalization as a set of political and economic changes that are putting pressure on national higher education policymakers to change the way tertiary education does business. As a result, higher education institutions have adopted market-like behaviors and exploitative market-based strategies to secure additional funding in the face of competition in other states (Nixon, 2004; Ntshoe and De Villiers, 2008 cited in Mouton, Louw and Strydom, 2013).

2.8 Policies governing higher education in South Africa

South Africa is governed by numerous policies that seek to address the social ills such as exclusion of certain racial groups, experienced while implementing changes that are for the greater good of the country. Historically higher education in South Africa was not accessible to all as the minority group (Whites) was at the forefront of the policies that governed education. Focusing on some of the policies introduced to South Africa post 1994 when South Africa got its freedom. Bozalek (2012) notes that “the most significant higher education policy document of the 1990s, was the 1997 White Paper on higher education (Department of Education, 1997) which addressed South Africa’s development needs through increased access and the commodification of higher education while, at the same time, calling for the development of a knowledge economy, the use of new technologies and so on, as a response to globalization and labour market needs.

Gradually time went by, the formation of other policies continued driven by the goal of creating more opportunities for the majority group (Black South Africans). Bozalek (2012) highlights that the South African Qualifications Authority (Republic of South Africa 1995) was introduced as an important element to strengthening and benchmarking South Africa’s higher education system. This policy established a National Qualifications Framework, administered by the South African Qualifications Authority, spanning both vocational and formal education.

Following the 1997 White Paper, the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (Department of Education, 2001) represented an attempt to operationalize the transformation programme for higher education (Bozalek and Boughey, 2012). Some of the policy making decisions made in South Africa are directed towards attracting students from abroad, universities can generate revenue and increase the skills pool and students from abroad who graduate from South African universities are geared towards qualifying for a seven-year work permit to encourage them to stay and work (NDP,2019).

The policy making process is a complex one as with South Africa the past needs to be considered as it shaped the system in which services are provided. Heleta (2016) states “that while all universities have had new policies and frameworks that speak about equality, equity, transformation and change, institutional cultures and epistemological traditions have not considerably changed”. The way in which policies are being implemented is a cause for them to be revised and improved so that new versions could be released. There is a need for willingness and commitment from individuals of higher powers as Department of Education (2008) states that policies might have been established but the willingness to implement them is lacking. There is a call for those with higher powers to do their duties while putting the interests of the public first.

2.9 Theoretical Framework- Capability approach

Looking at motives behind higher education in South Africa, it is important to consider similar studies that have been conducted globally to understand the similarities and differences that exist in other countries while also considering the study findings and how it correlates or differ with previous studies done exploring the same phenomena.

This study utilizes the capability approach theory and human capital theory as its framework, these two theories correlate well with this study as there highlight the capabilities of individuals and will power to strive for what best in life. The capability approach highlights functioning and capabilities of individuals as an important element to their freedom and as an asset to improve their socio-economic status. In applying the capability approach to education, Unterhalter (2009) states that the capability approach views education as the key to accessing job opportunities, which is essential in improving socio-economic conditions, both at individual and household level. The capability approach is applicable to this study because postgraduate

studies are supposed to enhance the capabilities of students and equip them with necessary skills to prepare them for the labour market.

Sen (1993, p.24) describes the “Capability Approach (CA) as a broad normative framework that can be used to evaluate a variety of aspects of well-being, and guide policies that remove obstacles which prevent people from achieving a quality of life that they have reason to value”. This approach is appropriate in this study because through education attainment, an individual has the capacity to better themselves, have good living conditions which in turn leads to a healthy well-being. Although securing a job may lead to financial security Tao (2010:2) argues that “income is an important resource for well-being but there are many components of wellbeing that are not directly acquirable with income, such as security, health and education, amongst others as well as income analyses that does not acknowledge the different physical and social conditions that affect people ‘s ability to convert the same resources into different levels of wellbeing”.

Robeyns (2003) states that well-being is regularly talked about in terms of people ‘s compelling openings to attempt the activities and exercises that they need to lock in in and be whom they need to be. Creating opportunities for people such employment, funding for their studies equips with the capabilities of being able to reach their goals. The willingness to reach a certain milestone is what drives an individual to go forward. Sen (1999) highlights that agency encompasses the goals and change a person pursues regarding her own personal values and objectives agency drives. Thus, one can make evaluations of human development based on relevant dimensions of well-being freedom, wellbeing achievement, agency freedom, and agency achievement (Sen, 1999).

The capability approach, Sen (1999) views education in the lenses of an approach that it is an all-embracing capability that assists in expanding other capabilities. These capabilities include gaining skills, opportunities that these skills afford, or gaining other intrinsically important capabilities. As such, the capability approach is important because it underscores the importance of education, and this study places such a focus on higher education in the South African context. Given that Sen views education as a means of knowledge production and dissemination in building harmonious societies, the focus on motives is essential in strengthening this view.

The choices people make can shape how they are seen in society and how they function as individuals. Robeyns (2005) also posits that a person then has a choice to turn an expanded capability set into a functioning. These choices acknowledge people's different ideas of well-being, which means that two people with identical capability sets could end up with different levels of achieved functionings based on the choices they make. As such, these assertions can be linked on to the motives and values this study seeks to focus on.

On the other hand, the Human Capital Theory views education as being important in the development of an individual and a country. This lays emphasis on education as a vital tool to improving an individual's and the nation's prospects. This led to the definition of human capital being widened somewhat so that it is not simply knowledge or skills but also "competencies," "attributes," and "attitudes" such as "reliability, honesty, self-reliance, and individual responsibility" Gillies (2017, p.5). The qualities that are possessed by the individual make it fruitful to invest in education and without certain attitudes and attributes, it becomes a challenge to utilize capital, human capital particularly. Gillies (2017) further asserts that this theory emphasizes that the more and better education individuals possess, the better their returns in financial rewards and the better the national economy flourishes.

Critiques have expressed views on the person being reduced merely to human capital, not as a life to be lived, but as mere economic potential to be exploited (Gillies, 2011). Through human capital, it is understood that education is used to make one's life productive through the skills that they have gained, and the opportunities made available to them. It is important to note that exploitation may take place through this process of productivity. The critique of human capital theory highlights that although education may be at the forefront in being used as a tool to better people's lives, it is also important not to ignore issues surrounding exploitation.

The human capital theory states that tertiary education contributes to social and economic development of individuals, this development is accounted for through four tasks which are the formation of human capital; the building of knowledge bases; the dissemination and use of knowledge and the maintenance of knowledge as highlighted by (Pouris and Inglesi-Lotz, 2014). Through these four tasks, it can be said that higher education does not only equip students with the necessary skills needed to secure employment they require but it also develops them within their personal capacity, providing more knowledge in their field of expertise and the formation of new relationships/networks that may assist them in the long run.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter explored the definitions attached to higher education not just in South Africa but globally, the state of higher education was touched on and some of the key policies such as the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) which govern the higher education system IN South Africa and how there have gradually changed over the past years. It was important to look at higher education in South Africa and how it has been shaped by the historical injustices and how it has been transformed to reverse all those injustices. The motives attached to pursuing higher degrees was explored with the challenges that most South African universities are faced with such as funding.

Policies governing higher education were highlighted in both the South African and global context. The theoretical frameworks that the study is centered on such as the capability approach and human capital theory were presented as there recognize the capabilities within an individual and the natural drive an individual must strive towards being the best with the necessary resources that are available to them. In the focus has been on graduate unemployment and not on the increase in the enrollment of student in higher education, postgraduate studies, this study focuses on the motives attached to pursuing postgraduate studies. The next chapter will discuss in detail the research methods and tools employed by the study and how there were implemented throughout the study.

Chapter Three- Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to highlight some of the research methods and tools that we implemented when exploring the motives adopted by students when pursuing postgraduate degrees at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, the chapter will discuss in detail the objectives that guided the study, the research methods used, sampling criteria and the trustworthiness was ensured in the data collection process. The study focuses on exploring the motives attached by students pursuing postgraduate degrees was guided by these objectives:

- To explore motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies.
- To assess the value students, place on postgraduate studies.
- To explore challenges facing students pursuing postgraduate studies.
- To understand views of students in the country's education system.

These research objectives informed the research methods adopted as they are aimed at understanding the motives attached by students to pursuing postgrad studies.

3.2 Research Method

The procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining, and predicting phenomena are called research methodology (Goundar, 2012). This study employs an exploratory-centered approach, which Neuman (2011) defines as a type of research whose primary purpose is to examine a poorly known issue or phenomenon and to develop preliminary ideas about it. Graduate motives are an issue that is less explore therefore this raises a need to explore these motives and gain an understanding as to why there is an increase in the enrollment to higher education in South Africa.

A qualitative approach is one of the approaches used when collecting data. Golafshani (2003:600) describes “a qualitative research as an approach that refers to any kind of research that produces findings not arrived by means of statistical procedure or other means of quantification”. Another way to look at this type of research is to understand that it focuses on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants—that it explores meaning, purpose, or reality (Harwell, 2011). The aim of this study is to obtain a greater understanding of the phenomena and contribute to existing literature.

A second approach that other researchers adopt is the quantitative approach. Kumar (2019) describes this approach as being rooted in the philosophy of rationalism, following a rigid, structured, and predetermined set of procedures to explore. It aims to quantify the extent of variation in a phenomenon and emphasizes the measurement of variables and objectivity of the process. This approach is centered on exploring how widespread the issue is but not the attitudes that people have towards that issue. Therefore, the study employed the qualitative approach as it explores the motives of pursuing higher education, not the quantity of students doing higher education.

The third approach is referred to as the mixed-methods approach. This method combines two or more methods to collect and analyze data pertaining to your research problem (Kumar, 2019). This study adopted this approach because it is time-consuming and requires more resources as both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Kumar (2019) highlights that some of the disadvantages of using a mixed-methods approach are that more data means more work and resources. More data is collected and analyzed,

The Post positivist paradigm will be utilized as it suggests that the social sciences are often fragmented, that knowledge is not neutral and that all knowledge is socially constructed (Henderson, 2011). Through this paradigm, it can be understood that the world is not viewed in a singular way but multifaceted.

3.3 Data Collection techniques

3.3.1 Primary and Secondary data

Hox and Boeije (2005, p.593) describe primary data as “data that is collected for a specific research problem at hand using procedures that fit the research problem best, after primary data is collected, new data is added to the existing store of social knowledge and when this material is made available by researchers to be reused by research community it is then referred to as secondary data”. Primary data becomes important in research because a researcher can gain an insight into the phenomena that is being studied while secondary data a researcher is able to engage (e.g., formulate hypothesis) with the data collected and utilize findings for other related studies.

Secondary data can be described as a form of source that generates new knowledge, new hypotheses, or supporting existing theories (Sherif, 2018). Using this form of data in this study is important, especially in qualitative research, which aims to produce quality rich data that

shows new insight into known or unknown phenomena. Sherif (2018) further highlights that the use of secondary data is deemed appropriate when aiming to identify additional indicators of an examined phenomenon; to reveal additional detail on the same research matter; to review a research matter from the perspective of a new theoretical framework not applied in the original study; or to answer research questions more thoroughly than in the original study through the application of a more sophisticated analytical methodology.

Collecting data through interviews alone would not have been sufficient for the study because utilizing secondary data sources helps to support the data collected and shedding more light on the phenomena that the study is centered on. The utilization of existing literature sheds light on this phenomenon and highlights what takes place with the world and compares South Africa's reality to other countries.

3.4 Research Tool

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The study utilised semi-structured interviews to obtain the required data about the motives attached to pursuing higher education. For Harrell (2009), semi-structured interviews are frequently utilized when an analyst needs to dive profoundly into a subject and to get it the answers completely. Interviews are the most used data collection method (Taylor 2005), and the semi-structured format is the most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Using the semi-structured interviews to collect data was the most appropriate tool for this study as it can be flexible as in some cases can use follow up question based on the information shared by the participant and it can yield rich data from the participant. Due to the coronavirus issues, collecting data using this tool proved to be problematic as I could not have one-on-one interviews. This resulted in the use of social media app such as WhatsApp, WhatsApp voice recorded interviews and sharing of interview schedule to be filled in by participants was used in the study to gather information. WhatsApp is commonly used by students and in this study, it did not require proximity with study participants.

3.4.2 Advantages of using semi-structured.

One of the main advantages of using semi-structured interviews is that it enables reciprocity between the interviewer and participant and enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up

questions based on participants' responses (Hardon et al., 2004; Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Polit and Beck, 2010). This allows space for participants' verbal expressions (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008). The use of semi-structured interviews allows a researcher to probe and find underlying motivations behind the participant responses, which is advantageous for the data collected and data analysis process.

3.4.2 Disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews

As much as semi-structured interviews may be deemed advantageous in producing rich, in-depth information on phenomena. Semi-structured interviews have been critiqued by researchers as a time-consuming research tool that is time-consuming, labor-intensive, and requires interviewer sophistication. Some argue that these interviews require a need to be smart, sensitive, poised, and nimble, as well as knowledgeable about the relevant substantive issues (Newcomer, Hatry and Wholey, 2015). Using semi-structured interviews is a lengthy process and requires the researcher to use the acquired necessary skills.

3.5 Sampling

This study takes place in a university setting that has students who are readily available and easy to access so the study adopted the Availability/Convenience sampling technique. Neuman (2011) describes this as a type of sampling technique that involves selecting cases that are easy to reach, convenient or readily available.

The study sample size included ten postgraduate students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and were selected across different disciplines based on their availability. Both males and females were used, different race groups were utilized to gather data that was not discriminant but inclusive to those who were available and willing to take part in the study.

3.5.1 Basic information of participant

Table 3.1: List of Participants

No of participants	Gender	Age	Degree
1.	Female	23-27	Masters in development studies
2.	Male	23-27	Masters in development studies
3.	Female	28-35	Postgraduate Diploma in Education

4.	Male	23-27	Masters in Town Planning
5.	Female	23-27	Masters in development studies
6.	Male	28-35	Masters of Commerce
7.	Female	23-27	Masters in development studies
8.	Male	28-35	Masters in development studies
9.	Female	23-27	Masters in development studies
10.	Female	23-27	Masters in development studies

Source: Author's own

This study utilized the semi-structured interview as the data collection tool. This tool was appropriate since it is flexible, and the researcher can probe to yield rich data from participants. The data collection process period started from the May 2020 and 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted through WhatsApp, 3 participants opted to fill the interview schedule which was sent through the app and 7 participants opted to record their responses through voice recorder with the researcher asking them the interview questions, this process was done to accommodate the non-contact basis as the country is faced with the coronavirus. The researcher had to follow up to ensure that the interview schedules are done in time and correctly done.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the study

Neuman (2011) describes reliability as dependability and consistency. It suggests that the same thing is repeated or recurs under the identical or very similar conditions. Validity suggests truthfulness, it refers to how well an idea “fits” with actual reality. The absence of validity means that the fit between the ideas we use to analyze the social world and what occurs in the lived social world is poor (Neuman, 2011).

Noble and Smith (2015) state that it is important for the researchers to outline personal experiences and viewpoints that may have resulted in methodological bias and clearly and accurately presents participants' perspectives. For the study to be reliable, it is important for the researcher's decisions to be clear and transparent regarding the tools used because ultimately an independent researcher should be able to arrive at similar or comparable findings (Noble and Smith, 2015).

This study accurately presented the findings and account for any biases that might have occurred during the research process to ensure validity. The study also used triangulation to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data collected as triangulation considers other viewpoints, which in this study refers to the secondary data sources. Triangulation refers to using more than one approach when researching a phenomenon, the use of multiple data sources, theories, or methods in a study (Heale and Forbes, 2013). The study used existing literature to support findings and used the capability and human capital theory.

3.7 Data analysis

The study will use thematic analysis to generate findings. Thematic analysis is described as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, and it also organizes and describe the data collected in rich detail” Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p.82). Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns and themes found within the data. Through transcription certain themes are identified and these play a crucial role in discussing the findings that emerged within the data collected.

After all the semi-structured interviews were conducted, the researcher had to analyze all the interviews using thematic analysis. Different themes were identified and narrowed down to key themes that were more emergent within the data collected. The key themes were discussed and supported by secondary data sources.

3.8 Data Quality Control

Trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Pilot and Beck, 2014). Rigor in this study was demonstrated by considering existing literature and similar studies related to the research area of interest.

Although this method has been used to ensure quality in a study, Noble and Smith (2015) argue that qualitative research has been frequently criticized for lacking scientific rigor with poor justification of the methods adopted, lack of transparency in the analytical procedures and the findings being merely a collection of personal opinions subject to researcher bias. For the novice researcher, demonstrating rigor when undertaking qualitative research is challenging because there is no accepted consensus about the standards by which such research should be judged (Johnson 2000) cited in (Noble and Smith 2015).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study participants were given consent forms that outlined what the study was about, to indicate their willingness to take part in the study and the right to withdraw. The study was ethically reviewed and approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), protocol reference number (HSSREC/00000908/2019). These components of the study ensured that the participant could feel at ease and trust that this is a trustful study under a credited institution.

The study also ensured confidentiality through safe keeping of the data and the participants' real identity changed. Neuman (2011, p.10) states that “confidentiality means that we may attach names to information, but we hold it in confidence or keep it secret from the public, we never release the information in a way that permits linking specific individuals to it”.

3.11 Limitations of the study

The pandemic of Coronavirus affected the data collection process as interviews were not done face to face but via social media (WhatsApp). Access to participants was also an issue since the institution was closed and this meant one had to rely on study groups to get contacts of members who were be willing to take part in the study.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted some of the research methods and tools employed by the study. The qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data required to get rich and in-depth data from the study participants. The sampling of the research participants was done through availability sampling using the available students at Howard College. Basic information on the study participants was presented and the ethical considerations the study undertook. The following chapter will discuss some of the key themes and findings from the study.

Chapter four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the main findings of the study and the researcher's analytical discussion of the main themes supported by existing literature. It is important to understand the process of data analysis. Mohajan (2018) describes it as a dynamic process weaving together to recognize emerging themes, identify key ideas or units of meaning and material acquired from the literature. This chapter will discuss some of the main themes derived from the primary data collected from the study through semi-structured interviews. The themes derived from the study were access to opportunities; aspirations; finances; development; knowledge and employment. These themes occurred using the thematic analysis process, whereby all the themes that occurred were narrowed down to the most occurring themes in the data collected.

4.2 Access to opportunities

Education is often viewed as the pathway to success. It is not surprising that most sampled participants are motivated by the number of opportunities available after one furthers their education. Half of the participants in the study indicated that they furthered their education in pursuit of more opportunities. Exploring some of the motives attached by other students in China, enrollment in institutions was extended to address the unemployment issue, to extend work prospects, numerous undergrad understudies sought after postgraduate ponderers since it would be simpler for postgraduate understudies to discover great employments (Wen and Sha, 2014). This reflects the relationship between the labour market and education. If there is a crisis faced, such as unemployment, the demand for skilled and specialized labour increase, thus leading to the rise in the enrollment for postgraduate studies.

Based on the theme on access to opportunities, participant 1, when asked if they think it was the right choice to further their studies, the participant stated that *“Yes, because there will be more opportunities for me to get a job. Another factor is that furthering my studies as the country that produces and encourages the power of education in Black women”*. This participant's reflections not only indicate that they are pursuing more opportunities, but also believe that education empowers people, especially for Black African women who previously had limited opportunities like this in the past. Policies in South Africa since 1994 have been aimed at transforming and redressing the past injustices such as gender inequalities and the 1997 White Paper on higher education had a vision to promote equity of access and fair chances

of success to all who are seeking to realize their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities (Leibowitz and Bozalek, 2014). It is time that women are given the platform to research academics, especially Black African women. Ramohai (2019) asserts that it is important that the social justice agendas, which put emphasis on equity and equality in higher education institutions in this country, place Black woman academics at the forefront of transformation processes, to heed state-led mandates in South Africa.

Participant 3 stated that *“I felt that once I do a degree, that would guarantee me a better life, it would mean better opportunities, which is an indication that education brings a better life and being able to impact society positively.”* This participant shared that education improves a person’s life and can empower an individual to impact society positively, i.e., inspire other young people to see that they can make something of themselves through education if they put in the necessary efforts. Walker et al. (2009) stated that when education is viewed in the lenses of the capability approach, a student can identify challenges within societies and use the skills and critical abilities learned to engage with these challenges professionally. The capability approach deems the student capable through education to positively impact in society and their livelihood.

This participant 8 shared that gaining knowledge has exposed them to other opportunities that were previously not available for them. Participant 8 indicated that *“Yes, I am gaining more knowledge, being exposed to a new career and many job opportunities”*, while participant 7 shared the same sentiment as they are pursuing opportunities in academia and research, *“I want to get into academia and research opportunities”*. Based on these views above, it can be said that furthering education does not expose one to job opportunities, only but also a variety of opportunities such as travelling, exposure to other platforms and branding yourself as individual. Although some do get opportunities, some are not so lucky. Berntson, Sverke and Marklund (2006), highlight that the openings within the labour market, for a particular person or a group of people with certain capabilities, will either make it simple or more difficult for the representative to urge a modern job.

Most participants in the study associated postgraduate studies with access to opportunities. With some inequalities that exist, not everyone has equal access. Archer and Hutchings, (2000), highlight that youth from disadvantaged homes, schools, or communities have limited opportunities compared with those who are at a better financial standing. Their opportunities

are blocked by financial problems, geographical location and even access to valuable information, and thus hindering their aspirations for higher education. The capability approach views education as the key to accessing job opportunities but looking at some of the challenges that students encounter, it is seen that these challenges hinder that access to opportunities.

Some postgraduate students have been financially excluded in some institutions because of the accumulated debt caused by not securing funding. This creates a lot of despair in students because the pressure piles up for them to look after their families. Participant 4 stated that *“education paves a way for more job opportunities, but the sad reality is that some do not have equal access to opportunities, after higher education, some settle for jobs that they did not study for while waiting or applying for what they studied for”*. To a certain extent, this leads to not working in their intended career of choice because the labour market did not absorb them. In a “study completed by the European University Association (EUA), a majority of the students from selected African universities who completed the questionnaire responded ‘Yes’ to a question about whether lack of resources was the main barrier to access to higher education (EUA, 2010:90)”. University students choose to spend more years in the institution in search of greener pastures and having hope that the more they study, the more opportunities they will be exposed to and this reflected in the responses given by the above participants.

4.3 Aspirations

In pursuit of education, some people are driven by certain goals they have set for themselves. The participants are driven by certain goals, dreams that they had while growing up. While some may be purely driven by access to opportunities, others are driven by certain aspirations highlighted below.

Motivations attached to pursuing higher education are driven by aspirations. Aspirations are formed through social interaction with people who share similar interests (Appadurai, 2004). The way one grows up and the sort of interaction they have with others motivates the decisions made. Harvey (2000) stated that higher education’s primary role is increasingly focusing on transforming students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities while simultaneously empowering them as lifelong critical, reflective learners. Participant 1 mentioned the empowerment of Black women, through which these aspirations, gender equality and access to opportunities are promoted, they stated that *“another factor is that*

furthering my studies as the country that produces and encourages the power of education in Black women”.

The enhancement of skills, knowledge and abilities does not only better an individual but also directly impacts the development of a country and its transformative ambition. This theme is linked with the objective that aims to explore the motive as to why students pursue postgraduate studies and aspirations is one of those motive that drive students to their studies.

Participant 1 states that *“Furthering your studies is one of the best decisions you can make because you will be more informative about your field and you will explore to great opportunities in terms of jobs and grow yourself into being an academic one day.”*. This indicates that this participant upholds furthering higher education as a way of self-development to become an academic, broaden their knowledge base, and sharing that with others. This may reflect that this individual promotes furthering education due to personal beliefs that other factors may have influenced, such as the drive to be an academic themselves in the future. Nowadays, venturing into academia is on the increase because the National Development Plan (2012) promotes higher education towards the development of the country. Other participants chose to chase their dreams, as indicated Participant 2, who states that *“furthering my studies has been always a dream so that what made me pursue my studies”*.

Participant 2 shared their own personal journey leading to the choice of furthering their studies as they stated that *“Growing up I have always been told that education is the key to success and also my role models where the people I grew up seeing, there were always educated so to me education is very important and I encourage young boys and girls to take their studies seriously because it is important”*. It may have always been an aspiration, but this participant was also informed by their abilities to pursue postgraduate studies. The way one perceives education and the role models they look up to plays a role in their choices as they grow up. Kniveton (2004) stated that career choices can be influenced by many aspects of family life. Participant 2 further stated that *“um doing my master’s in development studies, furthering my studies has been always a dream so that what made me pursue my studies”*.

Participant 9 shared that their aspirations led them to access opportunities that they would not have had if they did not further their studies, denoting positive outcomes. The participant stated that *“It was always a dream of mine to pursue a PhD, I am doing my current studies as a result of me being selected as one of the one hundred global young ambassadors of French candidature which was to help bring development to France”*. Graduates be the future for any

developing country. Harvey (2000) highlights that graduates play a key role as transformative agents in society and transform societies through the skills and knowledge attained.

4.4 Finances

Public funding in higher education has been aligned with government policies aimed at creating access for all, equity, and development (Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). There are some positive changes that can be attributed to pursuing higher education but there are also challenges faced by students that have affected their aspirations, such as funding, which has affected whether they get access to education or not. Mseleku (2015) attests to this by stating that higher education's commodification also sabotages youth aspirations for higher education. Participant 6 expresses her dismay about not having funding, *"I was quite surprised with the lack of assistance given to postgraduates this year. There is no funding for people like me, and the university does not seem to care"*. Being financially excluded can hinder one's aspiration and even cause some emotional and mental problems when met with challenges.

The shortage of funding seems to be a worldwide issue as most university students are affected by it. Most of the participants reflected on their financial struggles and how the journey has been to reaching postgraduate level. Participant 1 shared the financial issues they had, *"Financial crisis was one of challenges that I faced since I am coming from less-fortunate family"*. The family background or income also plays a role in access to education. Participant 1, highlights that *"although the government is attempting to bridge the gap, it seems to be not enough as others are left out"*. Lebeau et al. (2012, p.140) that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), has been helpful for many South African students, but it only assists undergraduates and a few postgraduate students, which is challenging for students who really cannot afford fees to further their studies.

Upon a personal reflection, most postgraduate students are faced with financial challenges as they were previously awarded National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) loans in undergraduate studies, but struggle at the postgraduate level because of a lack of funding. Lebeau et al. (2012, p.140) highlights that despite the government's "laudable efforts in strengthening the funding for student financial aid in real terms from year to year, demand for financial assistance nevertheless continued to outstrip supply, ultimately resulting in financial shortfalls for individual students as well as for the universities". The request for NSFAS on the fee increment, has without any doubt been the essential cause for understudy turmoil at South African institutions amid the past decade or more (Lebeau, et al., 2012).

One of the most significant student unrests is the Fees Must Fall campaign in South Africa, which aimed to address the disadvantages of students' financial needs and advocate for free education (Maphumulo, 2017). This campaign was steered challenges that exist within institutions of public higher learning. Highlighting some of the key events that took place under the #FeesMustFall movement, the protests took place within all South African universities, through these protests public awareness was raised about the decrease of funding for higher education and his awareness would not have occurred if protests had not been organized as, the state was put under pressure and in response (Langa et al., 2017). An announcement made by President Jacob Zuma about 0% fee increment for the 2016 academic year would ensure that students could be able to access higher education without the worry of increased fees (Langa et al., 2017).

Participant 2 states that *"The other challenge is the issue of funding because you cannot register while you do not have fees"*. This is an indication on how higher learning institutions are run. Having outstanding debt puts a person in the risk of financial exclusion. Participant 4 highlighted some of the structural injustices they are faced with, *"Being a master's candidate has its challenges, first and foremost, it is funding. From undergrad, most of us are funded by NSFAS, other bursaries and then we go to the phase of postgraduate. Yes, we apply, but the chances of getting postgraduate funding are minimal. There is National Research Foundation (NRF), but its funds a low percent of Humanities students and a low percent of UKZN Howard students in all the campuses, which is not enough for us"*. Although since 1994, the government pursued policies aimed at increasing admissions to higher education, particularly for students from previously economically deprived backgrounds, who were mainly be Black students, still faced with challenges of funding. Participant 6 further asserted the issues of funding and how things were in 2020 *"I was quite surprised with the lack of assistance given to postgraduates this year. There is no funding for people like me, and the university does not seem to care"*.

More funding challenges are shared as participant 9 highlighted that *"I have financial constraints; I have a large amount of student debt which I cannot afford to pay which is why I suspended my registration for this semester as I could not register even though I only have my dissertation left"*. This reflects how the current funding system is and how hard it is to secure funding for postgraduate studies. It is argued that the (National Research Foundation) NRF funding has been the main funding source of most of the programmes in the postgraduate level in South Africa, but recently has been unable to support these programmes production adequately (Herman, 2011). Participant 10 shared that they had the *"Inability to secure*

scholarships”. As part of South Africa’s transformation, providing quality and accessible education to all has been the government’s objective, which has been met by many challenges. Education being accessible to all has increased students intake each year, directly translating to more government spending. The expansion in the cost of higher education provision is not unique to South Africa, but worldwide, as public financing of higher education is generally unable to keep up with the costs and their increases in the sector (Johnstone, 2006). This is mainly due to intense competition from other competing public needs such as primary and secondary education; public health; public infrastructure; economic development; safety; and security.

The findings reflect some of the inequalities that exist within the South African education system. Participant 1 stated “*I come from a less-fortunate family*” and participant 6 stated that “*there is no funding for people like me*”, which reflects a sense of feeling inferior. Taking into consideration some of the social and economic ills that South African society faces, it is known that despite the country’s transformation since the apartheid era, there has been slower progress in funding inclusive education. The commodification of higher education has further limited the opportunities for most young people from low-income families to access higher education.

The inequalities that exist mostly highlight the challenges that surround low and middleincome households. This directly affects the access the students have to education, particularly higher education. Kirk and Day (2011) observed that most youths from low-pay families are financially constricted to access higher education and lack information about bursaries and scholarship opportunities, processes and requirement criteria that is applied to qualify for funding. The funding channels, when available, may not be enough to cater for every student. Mseleku (2015) highlights that “some studies also reveal that most of the youth in the developing countries were concerned about the limited nature of government support”. This theme is linked to the objective that explores the challenges faced by students which in this study it funding which hinders students from furthering their studies

4.5 Development

It has been said that education is the key to success, and it has always been associated with bettering or improving livelihoods. Most of the participants did associate education with development. Education does not only end with developing people and their societies but also empowers them to be better versions of themselves. Participant 1 stated that “*Another factor is*

that furthering my studies as the country that produces and encourages the power of education in Black women". Development also does not lie in bettering societies only but also the individual.

Some participants recommend others to further their education to develop themselves intellectually, thus bettering themselves as Participant 3 stated that *"I strongly commend someone who has the resources to further their education to do so because it makes you grow intellectually"*. A study in China states that mental improvement reflects understudies pick up in common cognitive competencies and abilities that are assumed to be basic for their functionings and adjustment in society (Kim and Lundberg, 2015). Functionings are deemed capabilities in the capability approach and necessary to function in societies, so intellectual development is essential in an individual's functioning.

Other sentimental views were raised by participant 4 that *"I believe education is the key to success in a way because we basically want to better ourselves; we are not happy where we are, so we want to improve ourselves individually"*. The participants went on to further state that *"The time we improve ourselves individually, we develop the capacity to improve the lives of those around us so my perspective around education is that I believe a person must study to go forward because I am not saying you cannot go forward without education, but to have a secure future you need to have an understanding that with studying I can go somewhere"*. This is similar to Lozano et al. (2012) assertion that higher education is seen as a process that advances in people's capacity to continuously update their knowledge to adapt to the needs of their jobs and the market.

Personal development is one of the benefits of pursuing higher education. Linking this to the capability approach, personal development is linked to enhancing people's capacity to critically reflect on the world and envisage desirable changes. This approach states that education is used to expand people's skills to enable them to be improve their lives (Lozano et al., 2012). It is also important to understand that although the study found that higher education is associated with development, it is also important to note that development is not straightforward and is influenced by other processes. Martinrez-Vargas, Walker and Mkhwananzi (2020) argue that the process of development is not one dimensional, instead it is virtuous cycle as functionings strengthen underlying capabilities and capabilities do the same.

4.6 Knowledge

Before South Africa became a democratic country, employment opportunities were not easily accessible to every race group. Since the country's transformative mandate, education has been one of the responses to assist in developing the country and equipping people with the necessary skills to better their lives. Van de Berg (2015), states that education is the only way out of the destitution trap for the majority of South Africans, and that improving education will lead to higher employment and financial benefits, while the improved economic growth will broaden opportunities for everyone and generate the resources required to improve education. In this study, most of the participants view education as a way of improving their lives as they will be exposed to more employment opportunities. Tomlinson (2008) highlights that success is reflected in higher individual earnings over time, as well as better career progression opportunities and wider labour market scope.

Education is a process whereby information/knowledge is exchanged. By furthering studies, more knowledge is gained, thus creating a knowledge pool. Most participants agreed that furthering their studies has made them more knowledgeable and view the world in a different way than they have before. Participant 1 shared that *"I perceive education as something that is important, and everyone must be given opportunity to education. The reason behind that is education assists us to be more knowledgeable or informative about how things should be done"*. In the process of sharing knowledge, there is growth as participant 1 further highlights that *"because it is also helping me grow as an academic and the way I view things is very different to how I used to view things when I was an undergrad now it more advanced and the way I put my arguments is very different"*.

Allowing graduates to obtain postgraduate qualifications is a way to create the link between the value of knowledge and national economic growth (Sonn, 2016). Even the way one perceives education affects the way they receive the knowledge given to them. Participant 5 shared that *"My views about education is that it is important to be educated besides that you are learning because you want to secure a job...as a person education changes the way you reason, the way you behave..."*. Gaining more knowledge may put a person at a better chance to achieve your dreams as participant 3 indicated that *"I thought broaden my knowledge in development studies as a whole will help me to achieve my desired dream"*. Gaining knowledge because of one's positive choices, participant 7 shared *"I never doubted my decision and I still want to pursue*

another qualification. I am learning a lot about marketing and research in general. For those reasons, I am happy with my decision”.

One of the many benefits of education is gaining knowledge, learning new things and being more informed about what goes around the world. Steyn (2004) indicated that learning leads to knowledge and knowledge supports and informs decisions, behavior, and actions. Most participants expressed the desire to learn more, and that pursuing higher education has given them that platform to learn more, which in turn gives them the ability to make more informed decisions. The importance of gaining knowledge not only advantageous to the individual but also to families as well. Participant 9 expressed they feel *“an education is important as it provides you with skills and knowledge that can help you improve your life and the lives of your parents and siblings.”*

A broader picture, higher education, and the exchange of knowledge through technological processes has grown, allowing information to be readily available to the disposal of others. Margison (2010, p.6963) highlights that “higher education and the worldwide exchange of knowledge have a particularly crucial role in forming a world society...this makes it more important to better understand the interface between higher education the flows of knowledge and other processes of global convergence and integration”. It is important to understand the processes of knowledge exchange and its role in shaping the decisions made and how the world is viewed. At the postgraduate level, research is used as a tool that individuals use to present the knowledge acquired. Participant 1 states that *“another aspect is to implement educational programs in societies that will help them to develop themselves”*. Higher education not only equips students with knowledge, but the necessary skills to implement and practice what has been learnt. Margison (2010) holds that education and exploration are key components educating the global world, being essential to information, the take-up of technologies, crossguest affiliation and supporting complex networks. The value placed on education is that one gains knowledge which links with the objective of values placed by students when pursuing postgraduate studies.

4.7 Employment

Pursuing postgraduate studies has always been associated with more opportunities and most of the participants have shared that they furthered their studies in pursuit of securing employment. Participant 4 shared that furthering their studies has created more job opportunities as *“.... It*

paves a way for more job opportunities.” And participant 4 further asserted that *“by furthering my studies because I think now, I stand a better chance of securing employment since I have two qualifications at my hands it not the same as going to look for something with one qualification so now, I am at an advantage and puts me at a better position to secure a job.”*

The primary role of higher education is increasingly to transform students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities while simultaneously empowering them (Harvey, 2000). Pursuing postgraduate studies puts one in a better position to secure employment, but their capabilities are enhanced, thus making them more competent in the delivery of services that they provide.

A skilled workforce positively influences the economic development of a country and puts a country in a better standing. Harvey (2000) states that a highly skilled and motivated work force is essential to remaining globally competitive. Globally countries are in a competition in terms of skills, technology and countries in the UK use government policy to make graduates more eligible for employment which is seen as a bigger strategy to improve the skills of a wider population in the UK (Harvey, 2000). Participant 5 promotes furthering education, *“I can encourage someone to continue pursuing/furthering their studies but make sure you try and find a job maybe when you are doing your honours, or you start a business because you have many qualifications”*. Other participants have had to weigh their options and choice what is best for their careers as participant 6 stated that *“I wanted to do agriculture, but I was not accepted, and I therefore opted for environmental management and economics. I thought this combination would give me a better chance to finding a job”*.

Other participants do not regret the choice of furthering their studies as their chances of being financially secured have increased. Participant10 stated that *“Yes, I have made a good choice, because I can engage in arguments in a scholarly manner, I have also increased my chances of getting employed”*. Pursuing higher education has been perceived by students to secure better employment opportunities and the belief that attaining more qualifications puts one at a better chance of securing a higher position. Bhorat, Cassim, and Tseng (2016) observed that higher education graduates obtain significantly better labour market positions than non-graduates. There is a slight advantage for those with degrees when applying for employment than those who have no degrees.

One can assert that there are more rewards in the economic sector for those who pursued higher education than those who did not. Van de Berg (2015) also highlights that higher education

brings considerable labour market rewards for individuals, and the economy is becoming more capital-concentrated and has a large finance sector. This implies the need for higher-skilled labour. Bhorat, Cassim, and Tseng (2016) argued that ‘skill-biased economic growth’ in South Africa increasingly has less labour market demand for unskilled workers, and more for skilled workers. Currently, this shows that there is a demand for more educated individuals than those who are less educated.

A study done in UK, showed a growing sense amongst students that they had to ‘do all they could’ to give themselves a positional advantage in the labour market. This was typically expressed in the importance they attached to grades, the profile of their institution and, in some cases, the extra human capital of postgraduate credentials, all of which were a potential means of achieving a positional advantage in the labour market (Tomlison, 2008). Having an advantageous entry into the labour market depends not only on the choices made in higher institutions, but also on the lower levels of school where one works hard towards a futuristic goal of being financially secured at a later stage in life. Education system has to be in line with the labour market, the experience the student gains before entering the work place environment, the participants reflected their views regarding the country’s education system, that if one furthers their education, chances of securing employment become high thus linking this to the last objectives that aims to understand the views participants have on the education system.

4.8 Conclusion

The chapter presented the main findings of the study after the data was analyzed and the process of thematic analysis took place. The key themes that were discussed were access to opportunities; aspirations; finances; development; knowledge and employment. The themes were discussed linked with the necessary literature and theoretical frameworks, the capability and human capital theory were discussed. The following chapter 5 will share the recommendation of the study and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

This study was centered on exploring motives that were attached by postgraduate students in the University of KwaZulu-Natal when pursuing postgraduate degrees. The study sought to understand students' values on education, the motive attached to pursuing postgraduate degrees and challenges faced by students when pursuing postgraduate studies. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Due to the COVID-19, the interviews were done telephonically and not face to face to adhere to social distancing. This chapter summarizes some of the main findings within the study, the research questions, and the objectives the study was centered on, the recommendations, and closing remarks.

5.2 Summary of Chapters

5.2.1 Chapter 1

This was an introductory chapter to the study, what the study was about, and its centeredness. This chapter was focused on providing the background and context of the study, the location and study rationale, the aim, objectives, research questions and the dissertation structure.

5.2.2 Chapter 2

This was the literature review chapter, focusing on some of the main terms and themes of higher education and postgraduate studies.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

This chapter was centered on discussing the research method employed by the study. It discussed the research approach used (Qualitative), the methods for collecting data, data collection tools, sampling method and the sampling size. The chapter discussed the methods used in data analysis, the ethical consideration, trustworthiness of the research and its limitations.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

This chapter focused on presenting the findings and discussing the overall meaning of the findings. The findings showcase the motives that students attach to pursuing postgraduate studies and how they differ compared to other international countries. The key themes were analysed and discussed and compared to similar findings from other countries.

5.3 Summary of the main findings

1. What are the motives behind students pursuing postgraduate degrees?

The study showed several motives that students attached to pursuing higher degrees. While it may be evident that many students felt that pursuing higher degrees puts them at a greater standing towards financial security, some are motivated purely by passion, hunger to learn more and exposure to more opportunities. These motives are reflected in the theme on aspirations as it is centered on the dreams and passion that drive students to pursue postgraduate degrees.

Aspiration Theme

2. What are the values placed on postgraduate studies by students?

This theme is in line with the research objective that explored students' motive to pursuing postgraduate studies. Many students are driven by personal motivations, role models who have walked the same path as them. It is about a personal journey of an individual and where they see themselves in the future concerning their studies.

Access to opportunities theme

Access to opportunities was one of the benefits that participants pointed to getting higher degrees. This theme can be considered a motive for pursuing postgraduate degrees because it focuses on the prospects of furthering studies. Students in the study view education as an important key element for self-development and societal development. Although some students have faced challenges along the way, they still believe in investing in education to reap greater rewards.

Development Theme

This theme is associated with the value students place on postgraduate education. Viewing education as a tool to better oneself can be considered a value as attaining education is associated with making something better. Participants expressed that education is associated with development, improving something and empowering others.

Knowledge theme

This theme represents values because it views education as a tool to gain knowledge. Knowledge is associated with attaining education as one gets a chance to learn more, develop

their skills, and become more capacitated. The capability approaches emphasize the importance of enhancing the capabilities that individuals can better their lives.

3. What challenges do students face in pursuing their postgraduate studies?

The study showed that there were several challenges that postgraduate students face in their pursuit of postgraduate studies. The lack of funding is a significant challenge that students face when transitioning from an undergraduate to a postgraduate level. The absence of other financial resources for postgraduate students formed part of the rise of the Fees Must Fall movement. The financing theme reflected a lot of challenges shared by students through the process of attaining higher education.

Finance theme

Findings in this theme showed issues that students raised regarding their challenges in paying for their fees and the emotional pressure that comes with the risk of financial exclusion. This theme can be viewed as a challenge that students face because almost all participants were faced with funding challenges.

4. What are the views attached by students regarding the country's education system?

The sampled participants shared different views regarding the country's education system, some expressed that the country has a good education system in comparison to other countries while some expressed that the system is flawed and could be improved to accommodate all those who need funding especially in postgraduate level.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends:

- More investments towards the funding of postgraduate studies because not every student has the privilege to afford academic fees.
- Investing in today's youth directly translates to investing in the betterment of any country's society. The South African government should look for various ways of

supporting youth through internships after their undergraduate studies to build up their experience.

- For South Africa, with the many social ills, the government needs to provide support and the necessary financial resources to those who aspire to further their studies.
- The study also recommends more exposure in the chosen career field, starting from the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This is because there has been a gap between the requirements from employers to the curriculum offered in the institutions.
- Bridging the gap would ensure that once a student exits the tertiary environment, they are ready to enter the workplace with enough confidence and competence to deliver at the workplace.

5.5 Closing Remarks

In conclusion, the study has highlighted some of the key themes that motivate students to pursue postgraduate degrees. Having touched on these themes, the findings reflect that higher education needs more student-centered interventions. It is important to observe that some students are more interested in gaining further knowledge to improve their lives and their surrounding communities. The empowerment of previously disadvantaged groups is also vital as some participants shared that education is used as a tool to empower their lives and that of the country's economic well-being. Although the funding challenge persists, the number of students pursuing postgraduate studies increases and leaves many students in debt because of the lack of funding.

The main aim of the study was to explore motives attached to pursuing postgraduate studies, the study explored the motives and key themes emerged from the findings therefore the study was able to achieve its main aim. Future studies could explore quantity versus quality, the increase in numbers, and the quality of graduates produced in the near future.

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APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance



17 December 2019

Miss Noxolo Patience Mavundla (213501153)
School of Built Environment & Development Studies
Howard College Campus

Dear Miss Mavundla,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000908/2019

Project title: The motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies in the Humanities: A case study of the postgraduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 05 December 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year until 17 December 2020.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Acting Chair)

/ms

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

APPENDIX B: Turnitin Report

Turnitin Originality Report

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[J. Felix Lazzaro, Alejandra Boni, Jordi Paris, Andrés Huaso, "Competencies in Higher Education: A Critical Analysis from the Capabilities Approach", Journal of Philosophy of Education, 2012](#)

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