



**AN EXPLORATION OF THE ASPIRATIONS AND
MOTIVATIONS OF MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATION
STAFF AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

By

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for the degree of Masters in Education

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DECLARATION

I, Ishana Gangaram, declare that this dissertation is my own original work and is the result of my own investigation. This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Higher Education) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa and has not been submitted previously, in part or full, for any other degree or to any other university. Words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNED:

DATE:

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to gain insight and understand the aspirations and motivations of mid-level administration staff towards their roles and functions and tasks in the higher education environment. In exploring aspirations and motivations, I considered how mid-level administration staff describe their roles and responsibilities, what motivates them to perform or execute their roles and responsibilities and their aspirations in relation to their future in the higher education institution. I ascertained from the literature review that academic research on administrative employees in higher education was limited. The theoretical framework that underpins this study is Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. As the study has a qualitative approach, a purposive sampling technique was engaged and focus group interviews was the method of data collection. The textual data analysis involved coding and categorizing of the information. This study generated descriptive indications of mid-level administrative staff aspirations and motivations. The findings highlight the personal imperatives that direct mid-level administration staff aspirations and motivations. The study also revealed the emergence of professionalization of administration in the higher education institution and evidenced community of practice. A positive overall account and elaboration of the work itself and the responsibility for the work and its outcomes indicated that participants described their roles and responsibilities positively. This study concluded that the work itself, recognition, responsibility, achievements, advancement and status are key factors that contribute to motivation. The other factors of organisational and administrative policies, supervision and interpersonal relations contributed to motivation but to a lesser extent. Mid-level administration staff also expressed positive sentiments in relation to their aspirations for the future at the higher education institution.

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The Focus Group Participants

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CHAPTER 1:

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into and to understand the ‘aspiration’ and ‘motivation’ of mid-level administration staff in relation to the roles they play and functions and tasks they perform in a higher education environment undergoing major changes.

This chapter provides an overview of the dissertation by explaining the background, context, focus, purpose and rationale of the study. The three critical research questions that drive this study are highlighted. An overview of the forthcoming chapters and what to expect in the discussion to follow is provided. Finally, some limitations of the study are mentioned.

1.2 CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Colonisation and apartheid separated South African citizens. This ideology of separation was entrenched in political, social and economic institutions. The advent of political and social democracy in South Africa in 1994 gave impetus to radical reforms in education. The restructuring of education meant a redress of past inequalities and assurance of future social justice. With the advent of democracy in South Africa, changes in government regulation saw a review of the size and shape of higher education institutions and this resulted in a reduction from 36 to 21 institutions (Council on Higher Education, 2000; Council on Higher Education 2004 and Council on Higher Education, 2016). Part of that reduction was brought about by merging institutions. This process was partly informed by the political agenda to transform institutions. Hence institutions created under apartheid for different race groups were brought together. It is not part of the scope of this study to explore all the issues related to this, but only to note that it had a major impact on not only the size and shape, but also the operations, the culture and the processes within institutions.

This study was conducted at one higher education institution that underwent many transformational changes which resulted in reorganisation and restructuring of staff. The institution was formed, after an initial incorporation of a teachers college, from the result of a merger of two universities in 2004. The two universities were deliberately established by the

apartheid government to provide tertiary education for separate/different racial groups. One of the universities was an historically disadvantaged university limited to one campus and the other was an historically English speaking university with several campuses. The merger resulted in the establishment of a new institution with five campuses.

Emanating from the merger, the overlap of faculties, departments, units and central administrative functions in the institution were reconsidered many times over. The recommendations of an external panel of experts that reviewed the structures within the institution, was that a college model should be implemented. The institution moved from a faculty based to a college/school based model in 2011. The college model is an organisational structure that cluster the traditional faculties into operational units where the decision making in terms of administrative operations is devolved to college/school. Inevitably, administrative staff were affected by these major moves. During the period 2012 to 2014, the institution underwent a radical restructure of its administrative arm. In this re-organisation process new administrative roles were created and existing administrative roles were reinvented. The new structure signalled the move to a professionalization of administration. The changes required a reshuffling of staff and positions. All administrative staff, irrespective of level, had to apply for positions in the new structure.

Peromnes is the job evaluation or grading system that the institution has engaged to determine salary scales. The Peromnes job evaluation system is widely used in South African tertiary educational institutions (Raju, 1998). The six factors considered in the Peromnes job evaluation system are problem-solving, pressure of work, job impact, consequences of judgement, educational qualifications, training and experience required and the aggregate score is applied to a sliding scale to determine job grade and remuneration structure (Raju, 1998; Mabapa, 2017).

Mid-level administration refers to staff that fall within the Peromnes salary grades 8 to 12. The Peromnes salary grades ranges from 1 to 17, with 1 to 7 considered to be managerial staff and 13 to 17 lower level administrative staff. (Raju, 1998; Mabapa, 2017). This group of mid-level administration staff was identified as the target population for this study because it comprised the bulk of the administrative staff in the institution. My rationale for considering the aforementioned salary grades as the largest was based on my professional experience, as I was

privity to the institution's human resources information pertaining to staff activities reports, staff compensation budgets and organisational structure documents. The institution's Division of Management Information confirmed the statistical information. However, during the period 2013 to 2014 when data was collected, written confirmation of this information could not be ascertained from the institutions Human Resources Division. Post the 2012 to 2014 reorganization and restructure, the institution continued to reshuffle staff and positions in order to refine its administration arm. Hence, it was difficult to ascertain current updated information from Human Resources Division. This study focused on staff reactions ten years after the major upheavals. Changes have been many and ongoing consequently affecting staff and their attitudes.

I have worked in an administrative capacity at a higher education institution for almost 20 years. During this time, I have witnessed numerous changes in the higher education environment and in the recent past drastic changes, particularly at the institution I am employed at. However, despite all the uncertainties and changes, I noticed that many mid-level administrative staff have weathered the changes and have chosen to remain in the employment of the higher education institution. Hence, it made me wonder what the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff.

Administration in higher education has both specialist and generalist orientation. Administrators with a specialist orientation are associated with professional fields such as human resources, public relations, financial management and accountancy; whereas administrators with a generalist orientation are involved in academic support and student services functions (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). General clerical or administrative services and the specialist administrative professional fields expand beyond the higher education environment. Therefore, from this perspective, I want to understand what it is that keeps mid-level administrative staff employed at the institution and/or in the higher education environment if there are specialist administration employment opportunities in other sectors. The target population in this study comprised of mid-level administrators in specialist and generalist orientation.

The term mid-level administrative staff is used to define the occupational class under study. This is the target population of this study. However, it should be noted that the literature refers to the same target population by different nomenclature (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Szekeres, 2006; Oplatka, 2009; Szekeres, 2011; Graham, 2012). The various classification used are general staff, professional staff, non-academic staff and support or technical staff.

As an administrator in a higher education institution, there was a personal imperative that drove this study. However, this was not the only motive for undertaking this study. A preliminary review of the literature revealed that research in the field of higher education administration focused predominantly on gender issues, leadership and management, changing environments, the role of academics, academic administration issues, government policy and educational reform (Szekeres, 2006; Oplatka, 2009; Szekeres, 2011) but from initial searches, research on administrative staff in the higher education environment is appears to be limited. Globally the discussion and research relative to administration in higher education tend to focus on corporatization of higher education in terms of the views of academia; the commercial, financial and economic logic and the role and nature of the administrative functions and practices in general (Steck, 2003; Szekeres, 2006; Clay, 2008; Weinberg and Graham-Smith, 2012). The distinct role of administrative staff in higher education is briefly glossed over and in some instances neglected. The study I undertook aims to understand the roles and responsibilities of administration from the individual perspective of administrative staff. I am also of the view that the study might be useful to inform the institution's Human Resources Division in policy formulation and/or review process since it is context specific. This study focused on staff reactions ten years after the major upheavals. The ten years at this institution were particularly turbulent. In light of the ongoing changes affecting administrative staff and their attitudes it would be useful to re-look at the impact of the changes in the context of administrative staff whose areas of work and positions have possibly changed further.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff three research questions provided the framework within which to direct the study

1. How do mid-level administration staff describe their roles and responsibilities?

2. What motivates mid-level administration staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities?
3. What are mid-level administration staff's 'aspiration' in relation to their future in higher education?

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE REMAINDER OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 2

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is discussed in this chapter. Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory is elucidated as it was deemed relevant to this study in relation to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors that determine an individual's motivation to work and perform (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). The concepts of 'motivation'; 'aspiration' and 'job satisfaction' were also defined in relation to their meaning in this study.

Chapter 3

This chapter comprises the literature review, which presents an overview of the somewhat limited international literature in relation to administrative personnel in the higher education environment. Topics relevant to mid-level administration such as corporatization of the university, the shifting milieu of higher education, and globalisation in higher education and professionalization of administration are explored.

Chapter 4

In this chapter the design of the study and the methodological approach undertaken to conduct the study is explained. As the study is exploratory, a natural line of inquiry locates the study in the interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative approach adopted is elaborated. The sampling technique and data collection method used in the study are delineated together with ethical consideration and limitations.

Chapter 5

The data gathered from the focus group interviews is presented in this chapter. The data that emerged from the data collection process was coded and interpreted via content analysis. The data analysis in relation to Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory is illuminated and presented graphically with excerpts so that the data is meaningful.

Chapter 6

This chapter comprises a discussion on the findings from the data gathered. The discussion of the findings is considered with due cognisance of the theoretical framework that underpinned this study and aspects from the literature review. The discussion entails interpretation and understanding the ‘aspiration’ and ‘motivation’ of mid-level administration staff in relation to the three research questions that guided this study.

Chapter 7

In concluding the study, this final chapter ends with recommendations and a summary of the findings of this study as a conclusion of this dissertation.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the nature, scope and timeframe of the study, it was localised to a particular institution that could be easily accessed. Therefore, other institutions of higher education are not represented in the sample that participated in this study and it would be incorrect to extrapolate and generalize findings. The aim of this study is not to generalize the findings but rather to describe and understand the findings within a very specific context. Another limitation in this study could be the gender profile of participants as there are more female participants than males. This study did not attempt to understand ‘motivation’ and ‘aspiration’ in the context of gender. It must also be noted that the researcher in this study is working from an insider’s knowledge and has experience of being employed as a mid-level administrative staff at higher education institution and therefore strives to guard against researcher bias and aimed to maintain fair representation of information.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concepts of ‘motivation’, ‘aspiration’ and ‘job satisfaction’ are defined in relation to their meaning in this study and the theoretical framework that underpins this study is discussed in this chapter. Herzberg’s Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory is elucidated. The theory is deemed relevant to this study as intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors illustrate an individual’s motivation to work and perform (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002).

2.2 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

The concepts of ‘aspiration’, ‘motivation’ and ‘job satisfaction’ are referred to continuously throughout the study. In order to understand how these concepts are used, a definition and explanation is given below.

Aspiration

‘Aspiration’ is considered a synonym of ambition and in the context of the research is viewed as a strong desire to achieve something high or great (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009). The concept of ‘aspiration’ has its roots in psychology and links with achievement motivation theory (Benjema, Miller & Williams, 2002). In defining ‘aspiration’, McClland as cited in Benjema, Miller and Williams (2002) states that achievement motivation theory describes a conscious desire to perform well and reach high standards of excellence via establishing and acquiring goals.

Motivation

In the context of this study, ‘motivation’ is deemed to be a stimulus or drive and can be defined as a force or influence that causes someone to do something (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009).

Job Satisfaction

Volkwein and Zhou (2003) tested a model of administrative staff 'job satisfaction' at one higher education institution and Smerek and Peterson (2007) examined how to improve 'job satisfaction' among non-academic employees at a university. These two studies were positioned around Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory and defined 'job satisfaction' as an indicator of an individual's feeling or attitude towards work (Smerek & Peterson, 2007 and Volkwein & Zhou, 2003). It can be inferred that 'job satisfaction' and 'motivation' are symbiotic.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In exploring the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff, this study draws on work motivation theories. There are a number of competing theories on work motivation, which attempt to explain the behaviour of people in organisations, each theory with its limitations. Some popular and commonly known motivation theories are Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory, McGregor's Theory X, Theory Y Model, Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Ching, 2015; Ramlall, 2004).

Studies that reviewed literature on motivation theories indicate that evolution of newer theories of motivation built on the basic principles of older theories that may be deemed out of date and old-fashioned (Ching, 2015; Ramlall, 2004). Herzberg acknowledged that from a methodological perspective his study contained many aspects that were open to being copied by future investigators (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959).

Ching (2015) in his review of literature on motivation theories, provided an historical overview. The review delved deep into the multiple theories of motivation and considered the rise of modern theories of motivation yet still posited that principally there were two basic types of motivation, that is intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors form the fundamental tenets of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory.

Herzberg's renowned article 'One more time: How do you motivate employees?' was first published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1968 and expands on the discussion of motivation and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1968). Although this article is openly available, over a million copies have been sold and it is the most requested article from the *Harvard Business Review* (Wesley, 2012). Wesley (2012) also noted that Herzberg's book *Work and the Nature of Man* (1966) was named one of the ten most important books on management in the 20th century (Wesley, 2012). It can be surmised that Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory is still much referred to in contemporary times.

In the field of positive psychology, despite claims that Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory might be considered dated, emerging research evidences the use of the basic tenets of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Sachau, 2007). A study that examined the fit between Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory and contemporary research on happiness, intrinsic motivation and materialism discussed the benefits and relevance of the theory in present day (Sachau, 2007). Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) sought to examine whether Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory still resonated in modern society almost 50 years after it was first posited. The results from the study found that the factors linked to intrinsic satisfaction (motivation) were deemed more important than money and recognition in stimulating employees to contribute ideas (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005). The study suggests strongly that Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory still has a place nearly 50 years after it was first developed. In 2004 a study looked at the implications for employee retention within organisations by undertaking a review of employee motivation theories (Ramlall, 2004). Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory was one of the motivation theories reviewed in this study.

In light of the reviews and studies perused, I perceive that framing this study with Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory is applicable and relevant in current times. I will argue that Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory is a simple, yet powerful tool which still forms the cornerstone of motivational practices today. The theoretical framework that forms the foundation for this study is therefore Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. The two factors of motivation and hygiene contextualize this study and the key variables of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation guide the study by providing the basis from which to answer the three research questions directing this study. The key variables identified

in Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory are regarded as appropriate in exploring the relationship between variables and the data collected and providing an explanation of the resultant findings.

2.4 HERZBERG'S TWO-FACTOR MOTIVATION THEORY

To explore the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff at a higher education institution, as stated above, various work motivation theories were considered and Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory was considered as being most applicable.

Herzberg's theory emanated from his famous survey of 200 accountants and engineers which found that intrinsic components or job content led to satisfying experiences and extrinsic components or job context led to dissatisfaction when not present but when present did not necessarily motivate workers (Ramlall, 2004; Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002; Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg, et.al., 1959). The theory lists motivating factors as satisfiers and hygiene factors as dissatisfiers and claims that motivation is not a single dimension but rather two distinct and separate sets of factors or variables (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). The motivation factors are the work itself, recognition, achievement, responsibility, opportunity for advancement and possibility of growth (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). The hygiene factors are salary, benefits, job security, working conditions, status, company policy and procedures, supervision, interpersonal relationships (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002).

Roles and responsibilities of mid-level administration staff can be illustrated by work activities and the nature of work. Deliberation of the job content highlights inferences on motivating factors. The environment and conditions under which work is conducted, it could be surmised, would impact on 'aspiration' and 'motivation'. In understanding the background and circumstances of the job context hygiene factors are explored.

Herzberg sought to understand how work activities and the nature of an individual's work influenced motivation and performance (Steers, Mowday & Shapiro, 2004). The theory looks at how work motivation is influenced by the extent to which a job is intrinsically challenging and provided opportunities for achievement and recognition (Steers, et.al., 2004). The theory postulates that workers will experience satisfaction (motivation) in the presence of both

satisfiers and dissatisfiers and the removal of factors that bring about dissatisfaction results in placating the workforce rather than motivating them (Ramlall, 2004). The motivation factors relate to a set of intrinsic conditions that speak to the job content in terms of the work itself, recognition, achievement, responsibility, opportunity for advancement and possibility of growth (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). From my perspective, the work itself refers to specific tasks performed whereas recognition could be deemed appreciation for good performance while achievement considers academic progress and professional development and training to up skill and responsibility relates to a sense of autonomy and control over the job. The opportunity for advancement and possibility of growth refers to career paths and progression.

The hygiene factors relate to a set of extrinsic conditions that speak about the job context in terms of salary, benefits, job security, working conditions, status, company policy and procedures, supervision, interpersonal relationships (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). In its relevance to this study, I deem the hygiene factors in relation to salary and benefits refer to regular payment and rewards; job security is self-explanatory (stable employment); working conditions refer to physical environment; company policy and procedures are written guidelines of the organisations intentions; supervision relates to management and leadership style and interpersonal relationships consider social interactions. It should be noted that these hygiene factors can be influenced by intervention strategies of the organisation (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). This research uses Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory to frame understanding of 'motivation' and draws on the identified factors that influence 'motivation' and 'aspiration'.

TABLE 2. 1: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS IN RELATION TO STUDY

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS	CONSTRUCTS IN THIS STUDY
Motivating Factors (<i>Intrinsic</i>)	
Work itself	Specific tasks performed
Recognition	Appreciation for good performance
Achievement	Academic progress and professional development/ training
Responsibility	Sense of autonomy and control over the job
Opportunity for advancement and Possibility of growth	Career paths and progression
Hygiene Factors (<i>Extrinsic</i>)	
Salary and benefits	Regular payment and Rewards
Job security	Stable employment
Working conditions Status	Physical environment Position / authority
Company policy and procedures	Written guidelines of the organisations Intentions
Supervision	Management and leadership style
interpersonal relationships	Social interactions

Above is a tabulated presentation of the theoretical constructs of motivation and hygiene factors in relation to the constructs of this study. As such, therefore, these will be discussed further in the methodology chapter.

The intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect ‘aspiration’ and ‘motivation’ might also be affected by expansion or enrichment of duties in the form of addition of tasks or being given more responsibility. In the context that this study focuses on it is precisely not only the changing of tasks, but also the expansion of many of the tasks and responsibilities that may affect staff the attitudes and which have motivated this study. Kreitner and Kinicki as cited in Ramlall (2004) focus on horizontal and vertical loading where horizontal loading consists of addition of tasks of similar difficulty and vertical loading is where a worker is given more responsibility. Herzberg’s theory argues that a worker will be motivated if the job is enriched and there is opportunity for achievement and recognition, stimulation, responsibility and advancement and that motivation

can be increased through basic changes in the nature of the employees' work (Ramlall, 2004). The enrichment and expansion of work duties and tasks impact employees 'aspiration' and 'motivation'.

Some of the criticisms levelled against Herzberg's theory were that it is too narrow and simplistic, the methodology required people to look at themselves retrospectively, and little attention was given to testing the motivational and performance consequences (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). In the current study, mid-level administrative staff are not required to look at themselves retrospectively. In the data collection stage, the focus group participants discussed and explored their current work environment and at times reflected on the past. This study aims to understand 'motivation' and 'aspiration' hence no consideration was given to testing the motivational and performance consequences. Rowley (1996) commented that satisfaction and motivation were terms used interchangeably when referring to Herzberg's theory. There is also an assumption that increased satisfaction leads to an increase in 'motivation' although noting that the distinction between satisfiers and dissatisfiers is useful and so too is the recognition that some factors contribute to positive motivation while others minimize dissatisfaction (Rowley, 1996). However, despite the criticisms Herzberg's theory has been widely engaged in practice and has gained popularity in organisations (Ching, 2015; Wesley, 2012; Sachau, 2007; Ramlall, 2004; Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an understanding of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory and defined the concepts of 'aspiration', 'motivation' and 'job satisfaction'. Scholarly literature on 'motivation' or 'job satisfaction' in higher educational was also perused. In understanding Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory I acknowledged locating this study in what may be perceived as a dated theory. However, I found that studies and articles that reviewed motivation theories over a period of time still viewed Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory as relevant in current times. Studies from the fields of Industrial Psychology and Business Management have used Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory as their standpoint (Ching, 2015; Cerasoli, et al., 2014; Wesley, 2012; Smerek & Peterson, 2007; Sachau, 2007; Volkwein & Zhou, 2003).

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises the literature review which spans national and international literature in relation to issues and factors deemed to impact on administrative personnel in the higher education environment, however information found was limited. Matters relevant to mid-level administration such as corporatization of the university, shifting milieu, impact of globalisation on higher education together with discussions about professionalization of administration, expansion of administrative roles and tension between administrative and academic staff are explored. Some studies on 'job satisfaction' related to 'motivation' are also reviewed.

3.2 OVERVIEW

Post 1994 South African higher education has seen many changes in educational reform policies. In the era of colonisation and apartheid education was segregated hence measures aimed at redressing past inequities, increasing access, transforming the sector in relation to race and gender, along with decolonising the curriculum have impacted directly on higher education institutions (Council on Higher Education, 2000; Council on Higher Education, 2004). The reduction of higher education institutions from 36 to 21 resulted in changes in the institutional landscape and concomitant to this were the global issues that were emerging. An audit review of the institutions five years after the radical reform resulted in further changes for some institutions. In this same period, as changes in the South African higher education system took place, the world was also being altered by innovative thinking and new information technologies.

In the field of higher education administration, issues such as corporatization of the university, shifting milieu and globalisation of higher education dominate (Council on Higher Education, 2000; Council on Higher Education, 2004; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Oplatka, 2009; Szekeres, 2006). These issues invariably filter down and affect the roles and responsibilities of administration staff. Note that these concerns have dominated literature in higher education since 1980s and continues to do so (Darkwa & Mazibuko, 2000; Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012). Matters emanating from the broader issues pertinent to this study are moves to increase

administration professionalism, expansion of administrative roles and tension between administrative and academic staff in terms of distinction of roles.

3.3 CORPORATIZATION

Corporatization looks at the manner in which higher education institutions start to operate like a business, bringing issues of accountability, commercialization, productivity and efficiency and its effects to the forefront (Williams, 2003).

Corporatization can be viewed as a move to transform universities from government subsidized institutions to sellers or suppliers of teaching and research services. Administrative staff at higher education institutions provide a vast array of services to academic staff and students to support teaching and research programmes. Corporatization challenges administrative staff to consider academic staff and students as consumers of the institutions product and services.

The notion of corporatization tended to be synonymous with the considerable change that has occurred in the way universities portray culture, practices, policies, and workforce strategies fitting to corporations (Steck, 2003). Literature on the subject of corporatization in higher education noted a tendency to adopt practices common in the corporate environment and to propagate a market agenda (Currie and Newson, 1998). Corporatization was viewed as a threat to the fundamental values of the university and institutional character yet at the same time university administrators looked to the corporate sector for operational guidelines (Steck, 2003). In his article, Steck (2003) aimed to deconstruct the term 'corporatization' or 'entrepreneurial' to illustrate the vast meanings the term covered and sought conceptual clarity on the term corporatization in relation to the university. He concluded that corporatization of the university would make it difficult to protect traditional academic values as corporate values are not academic values.

At the institution in which this study was conducted, the provision of administrative services was often tailor made to meet the diverse needs and interests of the academic staff and students. Participants in the focus group interviews expressed this. The extent to which administrative support was provided also depended on the culture of the institution. The unique culture of the institution can be likened to the corporate culture of business. Standardising administrative

services in order for the institution to operate like a business has its challenges for the higher education sector. While administrative services were tailor made for departments/disciplines/units within the institution, it seemed that efforts similar to those in the business sector, were being made to standardise administrative services across and/or within the institution so that each departments/disciplines/units operates on business principles.

The changes in Australian higher education institutions led to a more corporatized environment and influenced the work perceptions and constructions of working life of administrative staff (Szekeres, 2006). Szekeres (2006) commented that the common response to global external pressures, in countries, which have large public education system, was the tendency to corporatize the universities. Corporatization entails the university operating more like a business and as a result, the structure, language and terminology used by administration staff had changed. Therefore, notions such as commercialization, productivity and efficiency had come to the forefront (Szekeres, 2006; Clay, 2008). Szekeres (2006) purported that corporatization has become a critical issue in recent times. Key concepts and activities from the corporate world such as strategic planning, organisational restructuring, focus on budget and resources and the need to increase efficiency and obtain higher productivity has come to the forefront (Szekeres, 2006). The resultant impact on administration highlighted the importance of emergent professional roles (Szekeres, 2006).

Stemming from the notion of corporatization, another study examined the extent to which administrative staff perceived academics and students as internal and external customers of education (Pitman, 2000). This study was in line with management techniques to move toward a more corporate university structure. Pitman (2000) looked at customer service as a business concept in universities but noted that it went beyond the normal service transaction and took on a wider focus. He elaborated that the different value systems and cultures that were present today in Australian universities affected the perception of customers in different ways, such as the genuine belief by administrative staff that they were part of an educational process for students and had a personal relationship with academics rather than a business relation made a positive difference. The findings of the study revealed that administrative staff's perceptions of academics and students as customers were distorted by administrative staff stereotyping their customers (Pitman, 2000). Administrative staff felt that their customers had a low opinion of the importance of their service and that administrative staff's value in the organisation was not

recognized (Pitman, 2000). The study argued that in spite of management techniques the unique relationship between administrative staff and academics and administrative staff and students must be maintained (Pitman, 2000). He cautioned that approaches to improve customer service must be undertaken with due consideration to the atmosphere, environment and related factors of the institution. However, development of general management skills would be a more beneficial step in the direction of improving quality service (Pitman, 2000).

In a review of literature, on the subject matter of corporatization of the university and its impact on or implications for administrative staff, I found that articles and studies undertaken in Australia dominated. However, a few articles from a South African perspective surfaced but these articles did not focus on administrative staff in higher education. The impact the emergence of enterprise or corporatization had in the South African higher education environment was considered by Scott in Williams, (2003). Although the article looked at enterprise from an educational perspective, it is worthy to note that the author stated that external demands and pressure of market forces led to the adoption of first world approaches and models. Note that moves towards mass higher education, institutions adopting marketing agendas and consumerist tendencies are the hallmarks of first world approaches (Currie & Newson, 1998; Scott, 2002; Williams, 2003). There are a number of arguments as to whether first world or European approaches and values can be transplanted into a different context (Currie & Newson, 1998; Darkwa & Mazibuko, 2000; Scott, 2002; Williams, 2003; Oplatka, 2009; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). Thus, the adoption of first world approaches and models of corporatization without consideration into developing countries and their administrative processes is potentially destructive and as such is problematic.

Another South African perspective, that was critical of corporatization of the university, was expounded by Weinberg and Graham-Smith (2012). The article questioned the survival of collegiality in a corporate university and viewed it as a mode of governance. The authors adopted a view that corporatization of the university would result in the loss of autonomy, identity and distinctiveness which set the university apart from other organisations. While every business values its autonomy, I am of the view that a certain degree of autonomy at higher education institutions was necessary to create or retain the sense of scholastic collegiate and academic freedom that promotes academia. In light of this perspective, I am doubtful that the influence of corporatization of the institution on administrative services would augur well

on the academic side. The sense of community and independent spirit of the university would be lost and replaced with managerial activities and profit driven motives (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012). Corporatization is described as 'regulating and intensifying production to satisfy growing consumer demand and maximize large scale profits' (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012, p70). The lecturer is seemingly reduced to the equivalent of a white collar employee whose job is to produce qualified graduates and useful knowledge via research profits (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012). The article makes no mention of the effects of collegiality in a corporate university in relation to administrative support staff but states that 'administration is now a product as significant as teaching and research (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012, p74). I agree with the authors because, at the institution that this study was undertaken, the move to corporatization entailed an organisational restructure between 2012 and 2014 which resulted in increased administration work load on academic staff due to the institution-wide reduction of administrative services staff and assimilation of those functions across a broad spectrum. Kenny and Fluck (2014) considered the effectiveness of academic workload models in an institution. They noted that the reduction in government funding together with managerial systems designed to make the institution more efficient placed additional administrative pressure on academics (Kenny & Fluck, 2014).

The views of the American Association of University Professors on corporatization at universities globally and corporatization's subsequent threat to academic freedom is noteworthy (Marklein, 2015). In this vein, the American Association of University Professors highlighted that issues such as the allure of corporate funding, increased privatization, commercialization of research and growth in the administrative staff were factors that extended beyond the United States of America (Marklein, 2015). The issue of growth of administrative staff has relevance to the study undertaken as matters such as professionalization of administration and expansion of roles affects staff 'motivation' in terms of roles and responsibilities and aspirations for the future.

The rise of corporatization made it necessary to weigh the concerns against potential benefits of corporatization. The concerns considered the paradox of transforming students to consumers against the fact that cost saving measures might affect the quality of education students received and the influence corporate funders or partnerships had on research (Clay, 2008). The potential benefits highlighted the university's increased attention to be efficient, the upshot of set

benchmark and targets and underscored that the university would no longer be isolated from industry (Clay, 2008). The potential benefits highlighted are factors that would impact on the 'motivation' and 'aspiration' of administrative staff in higher education.

It can be inferred from Currie and Newson's (1998) work that the move to corporatization was a long-standing item of the agenda of higher institutions. The debate whether universities should be government subsidised institutions or sellers and suppliers of higher education and research services is ongoing. Literature on corporatization in higher education institutions focuses on business and consumerist infiltrating the higher education domain as opposed to the traditional university educational practices (Steck, 2003; Clay, 2008; Marklein, 2015). From the literature reviewed, it is noted that the move to corporatization of the university was global. The changing nature in the workforce at higher education institutions tended to weigh heavily towards administration. (Steck, 2003; Clay, 2008; Kenny & Fluck, 2014; Marklein, 2015). I view the changing nature of the workforce as having a symbiotic relation with the changing environment and is thus relevant to this study.

3.4 SHIFTING MILIEU

The changing nature of the higher education environment invariably impacts on administrative staff in higher education. The majority of the studies on educational administration conducted focus on the institution as a whole and are in Australia, Western Europe or North America but seldom in other parts of the world and South African studies tend to focus on the transformation agenda (Currie & Newson, 1998; Williams, 2003; Oplatka, 2009).

Oplatka (2009) conducted a historical overview of scholarly literature in the field of educational administration. This review spanned five decades and looked at the knowledge development in educational administration as a field of study by reviewing papers/articles from three prominent journals. The study found that there were recurring themes despite there being constant changes in the higher education landscape. Some of the themes alluded to were the continuous and ongoing changes in government policy that leads to new legislation and reforms in education. Repeated criticism stated that the field of educational administration is disconnected and fragmented but dialogue was ongoing, expansive and diversified yet the discussion lacked clear direction and mostly responded to government policy (Oplatka, 2009).

Apart from government policy and educational reforms, another factor that contributed to the shifting milieu of higher education environments was the fast moving pace of information and communication technology. With the heightened trend of technological advancement came innovative processes, which led to revolutionising the manner in which higher education institutions operate (Ruiz, Minter & Leipzig, 2006; Tham & Werner, 2005; Darkwa & Mazibuko, 2000). There were claims that new information technologies and technological developments undermined the role of academics yet increased the power of administrators (Steck, 2003). Technological advancements have changed the higher education environment in terms of the institutions or universities operational models and the concomitant upsurge in administration.

Academic programs and delivery mechanisms have changed; courses are packaged in a similar fashion to wholesale products for retail, and research work is seen as income generation hence, there has been a change in the culture of the university and this is reflected in the manner it is internally managed and how the university regards its workforce (Steck, 2003). Emerging technologies have provided opportunities for adaptive learning and collaborative learning (Ruiz, Minter & Leipzig, 2006). Developments in the use of internet technologies for the purpose of teaching and learning have modernised higher education institutions. Various terms that refer to internet technologies are e-learning, web base learning, online learning, distributed learning, computer assisted instruction, and internet based learning (Ruiz, Minter & Leipzig, 2006). Delivery platforms set up to administer and maintain the aforementioned internet technologies require a distinct amount of administrative staff involvement.

The infrastructure is important when creating or re-shaping the learning environment (Tham & Werner, 2005). However, in Africa apart from inadequate infrastructure there are technological constraints like access to connectivity being an ongoing challenge and lack of trained professionals to support delivery platforms (Darkwa & Mazibuko, 2000). It should be noted that technological advances in developed and developing countries vary due to factors such as infrastructure, resources, finances and so forth.

Conversations on the manner in which the higher education settings or environments are changing differs in developed and developing countries. In developed countries universities faced the challenge of continuing to exist while plagued by worldwide financial crisis while developing countries have to deal with their own national and regional issues that impact on the institution (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). Issues that developing nations face in relation to that country's national economic, political and social agenda (Darkwa & Mazibuko, 2000). The issues are specific to the environment in which they occur and are localised and specific to the geographical location. In South Africa the redress of historically disadvantaged students is ongoing and there are issues of human capacity development challenges and financing (Council on Higher Education, 2000; Council on Higher Education, 2004).

Another factor to consider, apart from the aforementioned substantial broader issues influencing the shifting milieu of the higher education environment, is the workforce of the academic institutions. There is a notable difference between the workforce in the higher education sector and other sectors. The changing dynamics of the workforce in higher education has implications for academic and professional identities and the manner in which roles of the workforce have expanded and diversified (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). Slee and Hayter in Williams (2003) looked at a strategic innovative approach to income generation for teaching and research. Their study described a core group of support staff tasked with the responsibility of raising large scale resources and outlined how this collective strategic activity was enterprising. The study highlighted that the manner in which the university was being forced to operate was due to the changing environment.

In exploring the work of administrative services staff (from a view of professionally skilled and trained service) Graham (2012) outlines their contribution as transforming spaces and identities, with particular reference to learning spaces. Changes in technology and the expectation of a new generation of students have brought about changes to learning spaces (Graham, 2012). Learning spaces are not only viewed as physical but also virtual. Higher education administrators are directly involved in attending to changes in learning spaces thus the nature of their work has changed. Institutions need to explore and understand how to shift to the new spaces (Graham, 2012).

In the shifting milieu of higher education there are four areas institutions seek to advance their standing according to Williams (2003). One is to improve efficiency, two is offer better quality of service, three is to actively market the institution and its services and four is collaboration (Williams, 2003). These areas, where administrative staff perform the tasks, are directly affected. In order for the higher education institution to progress, the institution has to identify opportunities in the open market and act decisively to advance the institution's standing. From the discussion above it seems that efficiency, quality and service can be considered key factors in the shifting milieu in which higher education institutions operate.

The changing environment in higher education demands proficient and efficacious financial and bureaucratic administration and management. The higher education workforce has responded with the emergence of a professional administration cadre. Paralleled to changes in the higher education environment is intense competition in the global sphere that affects the traditional culture of the university.

3.5 GLOBALISATION

A simple definition of the word globalisation is a growth to a world wide scale (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009). A complex definition of globalisation views it as an ideological concept that embraced a worldwide interconnectedness in terms of political and economic ideas and processes being organised and integrated (Currie & Newson, 1998; Williams, 2003). The implications of globalisation on higher education is a prominent topic of interest in many countries (Currie & Newson, 1998). In his review of the field of educational administration Oplatka (2009) noted the dominance of globalisation during the period 2000 to 2007.

Global processes that impacted on the higher education sector refer to the emergence of global markets, alignment of local, regional and national economies, international politics, technological advances, infrastructural changes, privatization, massification, competition and revolutionary conceptions of time and space (Currie & Newson, 1998). With particular reference to the South African higher education landscape, massification was a political mandate but has to be considered in the context of globalisation (Council on Higher Education, 2000). Programs were put in place to increase participation rates through massification and debates

about planned expansion in comparison to massification were ongoing (Council on Higher Education, 2004). One of the social imperatives that drive change within the global economy is widening of participation of students whether it be from a local, regional or international context.

External pressure forces universities to assimilate global practices. Globalisation can be deemed to have brought the free market into universities. Economizing the university has led to several changes. Changes in the concept of time and space made it essential to combine the local needs of higher education institutions with the global demands (Council on Higher Education, 2000; Scott, 2002). The continuous changes in technology make it essential and compulsory to combine the local, regional and global spheres (Currie & Newson, 1998; Williams, 2003). Universities were pitted against each other by the practice of benchmarking and commercialization of research (Williams, 2003). Global politics and economy have definitely affected the way higher education institutions operate and are managed. There is no doubt that the resultant effects of global processes affect the daily tasks of academic and administrative staff.

Development and events in the South African political environment were influenced by globalisation (Kishun, 2007). According to Kishun (2007) globalisation presented challenges and opportunities for transforming higher education. Global practices such as massification, and international collaboration are noted to impact directly on the institution. Kishun, (2007) noted that in South Africa the move to shift from the elite to the mass was compounded by access. He stated that South Africa had more higher education institutions than other countries in the Southern African developing region therefore there was an influx of a higher number of international students and staff from the region. In light of the increased recruitment of international students and emphasis on international collaboration one has to question whether administrative staff are equipped to deal with the resultant effects.

Global conditions will continue to transform and higher education institutions will face changes that force it to operate in a competitive market driven environment therefore it is essential the staff were nurtured and their potential enhanced to deliver quality education and research (Graham, 2012).

3.6 PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ADMINISTRATION AND EXPANSION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES

Considering the effects that globalisation has had on higher education, the changes in the higher education environment and corporatization of the university, the emergence of new occupations by virtue of the external demands on higher education administrative staff can be expected. The definition of an occupational mandate is considered 'a socially conferred right to perform a given set of tasks' (Nelson & Barley, 1997, p. 619). The occupational class of higher education administrators has an occupational mandate to perform administrative tasks that support the institution and academic endeavour. The growth in the roles of administration staff at higher education institutions can arise by the addition of new tasks to existing roles or the creation of new positions or tasks performed as an act of kindness becoming a regular request or practice. Thus issues pertaining to professionalization of administration and expansion of administrative roles are worthy of exploration.

Studies stated there was little recognition of the existence of administration staff as a definable occupational grouping beyond the administration staff themselves (Whitchurch, 2006; Whitchurch, 2008a). Rosser (2004) stated that mid-level administrators/managers were the unsung professionals in higher education as they were often not recognized. Szekeres (2011) noted that the invisibility of administrative staff addressed in her 2004 paper still existed to an extent despite moves by administrative professionals to claim their space in higher education. The literature noted that there was a trend, especially in Australia and the United Kingdom, to recognize administration staff in higher education as professionals (Whitchurch, 2006; Whitchurch, 2008a; Whitchurch, 2008b; Szekeres, 2011). The term professional staff was used in the literature to describe the occupational class commonly referred to as support staff or administrative staff or non-academic staff.

Nelson and Barley (1997) looked at fledgling occupations from the concept of 'hiving-off'. Hiving-off refers to a recognized professional occupational class allocating some of its more repetitive, routine or mundane duties to existing occupations or others (Nelson & Barley, 1997). It was from this practice that roles were expanded and new occupations emerged. The study investigated paid and volunteer emergency service workers and looked at professionalization of the tasks done by volunteers in terms of occupational formation and moves to get paid

employment. The occupational class of higher education administrators evidenced an expansion and growth in the roles and responsibilities of administration staff at higher education institutions (Whitchurch, 2006; Whitchurch, 2008a; Whitchurch, 2008b; Szekeres, 2011).

Administrative staff in academia tended to be moving into new spaces due to the ever increasing complexity of the institution and the regulatory environment it operated in (Szekeres, 2011). Szekeres 2011 study followed on from her 2004 study and she commented that senior managers at the top level were not solely appointed from the academic cadre as was previously the case and the number of administrative staff at middle and higher levels had increased thus there was notable changes in the administrative staff profiles. Szekeres (2011) recognized the rise of a new occupational class or functional area that of research administrators and noted that they straddled across academic and administrative tasks and as such distinctive roles have become blurred.

Whitchurch (2006) noted a shift in identities of administrative staff; a movement beyond the conventional domain and assumptions of the occupational class. Higher education institutions have complex missions that involve mass education, regional and international markets and internal and external boundaries have become fluid (Whitchurch, 2006). Roles and identities of administrative staff were changing thus the emergence of hybrid multi professionals who work across boundaries and contribute to the formation of new fields of knowledge (Whitchurch, 2006). She noted that administration tends to focus on movement away from academic administration to devolved management but literature tends to focus on boundaries and opposition between administrative and academic roles (Whitchurch, 2006). Now boundaries were less clear cut yet literature had not identified the cross boundary involvement and roles of administrative staff in projects which characterized the universities operations in local regional and global spheres (Whitchurch, 2006). Whitchurch (2006) developed a model with four domains i.e. knowledge, institutional, sector and project. The knowledge domain represented knowledge and skills associated with academic administration; institutional domain looked at the agenda that shapes the culture and mission of the institution; sector domain focused on professional accreditation to sectors outside the university and niche professionals within the university and project domain considered cross functionality and permeability across internal and external boundaries. The individuals working in the project

domain lacked status consciousness, did not show an interest in organisational and professional structures to express their identity but rather created an identity to do the projects (Whitchurch, 2006).

A later study of administrative staff in the United Kingdom focuses on changing roles and identities of administrative staff and categorization of those identities (Whitchurch, 2008b). The paper introduces the concept of 'third space', which was a cross between academic and administrative tasks and functions. Administrative staff at higher education institutions usually had specialist and generalist roles and then there were the purely academic roles; however with the changing times there has been a rise of administrative and academic cross functions (Whitchurch, 2008b). This involved mixed teams who work on projects. This situation had evolved due to needs of the environment but there were no formal structures (Whitchurch, 2008a; Whitchurch, 2008b). Individuals were interpreting their roles more actively and were moving laterally across boundaries thus contributing to development of the 'third space' (Whitchurch, 2008b).

Dobson and Conway (2003) attributed the expansion of administrative roles and moves to increase administration professionalism directly to corporatization. However, changes in university work and the resultant impact on administrative staff has not been explored with the same vigour as its impact on academic staff. This discrepancy in research attention was attributed to there being little recognition of the existence of administration staff as a definable occupational grouping beyond the administration staff themselves (Dobson & Conway, 2003).

Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) noted that trends towards professionalization of administrative staff were apparent in the restructuring of the workforce in higher education. They found that expansion of administrative roles was in terms of status creation and role accretion. Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) also pointed out that professional administration in higher education could be divided into specialist and generalist orientations. The authors described a framework for professionalization as entailing a common basis, these include an increase in the requirements for formal qualifications, formalization of networks and an increase in formal status of administrative positions (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). Whitchurch (2008a) found that administrative staff were moving laterally across functional and institutional boundaries to create new professional spaces, knowledge, relationships and legitimacies and suggested that

the roles of administrative staff were more complex and dynamic than mere organisational charts or job descriptions. Szekeres (2006) maintained that there was a range of administrative roles that require specific skills such as human resources, institutional planning, student academic administration, student support, finance, et cetera. However, Rosser (2004) identified four traditional areas serviced by administrative staff, namely academic support, business/administrative support, external affairs and student affairs.

According to Kehm (2006) a person appointed to mid-level management positions in higher education were either directly appointed from within the field of higher education or was an external expert from a particular professional field. Kehm (2006) cited Hanft's conference presentation in Kassel in 2005, which described emergent learning, continuing education and staff development and professional education and training as forms of professionalization of administrative staff. She outlined some post graduate qualifications offered at masters level at universities in Europe. Many of the activities and tasks currently being counted as part of the new higher education professions have informally existed for some time (Kehm, 2006; Kehm, 2012). Professionalization of administrative staff entails developing a framework and codifying activities via a process of credentialing or accreditation (Szekeres, 2011). However this occupational class is not yet at a stage where a person can choose to embark on a career in higher education.

3.7 TENSION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE AND ACADEMIC STAFF

It is often perceived that the administration and management at universities hamper students' academic progress through paperwork, procedures and/or processes. Academic staff challenge bureaucracy attempting to ensure students are not disadvantaged and the academic endeavour does not digress from an educational focus, while administrative staff retreat to bureaucratic rigidity as a defence when there are tensions between administrative process and the academic endeavour (Pitman, 2000). This ongoing tension continues and worsens in instances where the academic staff are the supervisors of the administrative staff.

Dobson and Conway (2003) argue that tensions between academic and administrative staff emerge because both groups have developed quite distinct ideas of their roles. Yet at the same time, Graham (2012) notes the blurring of traditional roles. Thus role and identity is a contentious point for academics and administrative staff. The tension was also highlighted by

Welsch and Metcalf (2003) in that administrative staff perceived academic staff in terms of stereotypes in a negative way. Perhaps the perception of the administrative staff is based on personality and there is little evidence offered that the personality of the respondents was assessed.

Pitman (2000) noted the relationship between academic and administrative staff was an area of potential conflict due to administrative staff sometimes becoming victims of academic snobbery and academic contempt for bureaucracy. Szekeres (2011) lamented that there was still a wide divide in terms of equal representation for academic and administrative staff on university decision-making structures. Also contributing to the tension was the issue that senior management at the university was no longer confined to the academic fraternity because highly qualified professional staff were being appointed (Szekeres, 2011). Tensions arose in the supervisor-employee relationship when academic staff looked down on administrative staff. This was evidenced in a study by Jo (2008) who investigated reasons or causes that led to voluntary turnover of mid-level administrative staff at a higher education institution. Administrative staff whose work were not noticed by academics felt undervalued thus creating tension (Szekeres, 2011).

3.8 JOB SATISFACTION – MOTIVATION

Studies on ‘job satisfaction’ and ‘motivation’ of staff in higher education focused mainly on academic staff. Research looking at the administrative staff of higher education is limited and relatively rare because firstly, universities focus on teaching and research and secondly, most research is done by academics on their areas of interest (Ching, 2015; Smerek & Peterson, 2007; Ramlall, 2004; Volkwein & Zhou, 2003; Pitman, 2000).

However, I found two studies that considered ‘job satisfaction’ among administrative staff in higher education but the studies were conducted in the United States of America. Volkwein and Zhou (2003) tested a model of administrative staff ‘job satisfaction’ at a higher education institution. Smerek and Peterson (2007) examined how to improve ‘job satisfaction’ among non-academic employees at a university. The studies of Smerek and Peterson (2007) and Volkwein and Zhou, (2003) considered ‘job satisfaction’ in relation to Herzberg’s Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory (refer to page 8). Closer to home, in Gauteng, South Africa, a

recent study by Chinomona (2016) in which approximately 300 academic staff in higher education institutions participated considered the background and history of 'job satisfaction' to develop a conceptual model. The model indicated that there was a positive relation between 'job satisfaction' and three constructs i.e. employee development, employee motivation and employee communication (Chinomona, 2016). However, this study focused only on academic staff.

I found it interesting that in understanding the various aspects and determinants of 'job satisfaction' Bozeman and Gaughan (2011) touched on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors are the tenets of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which forms the theoretical framework of this study as, alluded to in Chapter Three. In the study by Bozeman and Gaughan (2011) which sought to understand academic staff 'job satisfaction' in relation to determinants of the characteristics of the individual, the work context and interaction with the institution. The study tested 12 hypotheses formulated in accordance with the determinants of 'job satisfaction' being investigated. Data was statistically analysed and findings presented in descriptive and comparative formats. The findings of the study indicated that academic staff 'job satisfaction' is similar to other occupations in respect of the pay level in terms of market value (being paid what one is worth) and having the respect of co-workers and colleagues. Although Bozeman and Gaughan's (2011) work does not consider administrative staff in higher education it has relevance in that it focuses on academic staff in the higher education environment and a comparison is drawn with administrative/managerial occupations in industry.

Two other studies conducted in South Africa that used administrative staff in higher education in their sample were by Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) and Van den Berg, Manias and Burger (2008). Although these studies focused on the concept of work engagement among employees at higher education institutions they are important because studies that consider the administrative workforce in higher education in the South African environment is limited. Work engagement was defined on three dimensions i.e. vigour, dedication and absorption (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Van den Berg, et al., 2008). Both studies defined work engagement as the opposite of job burn out, used the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale as an instrument and included academic and administrative staff.

However Van den Berg, et al. (2008) neglected to report on administrative staff although they comprised of 54% of the sample and instead focused the discussion of findings on academic staff. These researchers rejected the hypothesis that job related factors inclusive of resources and demands be used to predict a significant percentage of the variance in work engagement. Another relevant study was that of Renkema, Schaap & van Dellen (2009) who studied the intentions of administration staff to participate in job-related and/or career-related development activities, which were underpinned by psychological variables such as attitudes towards development activities; self-efficacy; 'job satisfaction'; organisational commitment and management support. Although the study did not focus on 'job satisfaction' totally, it revealed that administration staff were more inclined to undertake developmental activities that enhanced their current job performance rather than development activities that aided in changing workplaces (Renkema, et al., 2009).

A United States study by Jo (2008) aimed to identify key factors that led to voluntary turnover amongst mid-level women administrative staff in higher education. 'Job satisfaction' and turnover are linked to an extent and the study carries an undertone of 'aspiration' and 'motivation' though not explicitly stated. Mid-level women administrators are typically the largest group of workers in a higher education institution (Jo, 2008). The study identified mid-level administrators as either academic or non-academic support personnel who reported to a higher top level officer but did not distinguish or differentiate the responses of academic and non-academic staff. The investigation was also limited in that it was confined to staff who resigned from a particular institution. It can be inferred that findings cannot be generalized therefore the study merely described and explained the findings. The findings revealed that administrative staff left because they were frustrated as they had no authority to make decisions but were held responsible for outcomes, they felt unappreciated, there was lack of recognition for contributions made, situations changed and work load got heavier and there was a general lack of future opportunities (Jo, 2008). The importance of the three key constructs of supervisory skills, growth opportunities and flexible work life policies for mid-level administrative staff is highlighted in an attempt to provide insight to academic organisations to mitigate voluntary turnover (Jo, 2008) This study highlights the implication of a combination of motivation and hygiene factors as alluded to in Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation Theory.

Higher education institutions are becoming pressurized into responding to external demands for institutional improvement and accountability. The focus on institutional effectiveness illustrates the changing nature of the higher education environment. Welsch and Metcalf (2003) list four variables that impact on institutional effectiveness, namely: internal versus external motivation; depth of implementation; definition of quality and level of involvement. The variables of internal versus external motivation and level of involvement are deemed relevant to the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff. Welsch and Metcalf (2003) sampled administrative and academic staff on their motivation to improve quality and their perceived level of involvement. However, it should be noted that the bias was more towards academic staff. The aim of Welsch and Metcalf's (2003) study was to determine the impact of the four variables listed in relation to academic and administrative support for institutional effectiveness activities. Findings supported that the culture of the institution, the extent that staff felt personally involved, a holistic across the board approach to implementation and demonstrated definition of quality affect support for institutional effectiveness activities (Welsch & Metcalf, 2003). Institutional effectiveness is geared by motivation, which is stimulated by internal interest (the institution itself and the staff), or external mandates which comprise of the environment and external bodies (Welsch & Metcalf, 2003).

Rosser (2004) claimed that in spite of the difficulties administrative staff levels of satisfaction was attributed to their relationship with students and academic staff. Szekeres (2011) cited Graham who claimed that although administrative staff were generally satisfied, the opportunity for advancement was poor and assumed that the competitive edge falls away thus attracting new staff might be easy but retaining staff difficult.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This literature review highlighted issues deemed to be relevant to the study. In the review, I briefly outlined corporatization in higher education institutions, the shifting milieu of the higher education institutions and the concept of globalisation in the higher education. Within these substantial broader issues, I mentioned studies that touched on educational policy and reforms, considered the impact of technological advancements, looked at national and regional issues that affected developed countries as opposed to developing countries and outlined moves for massification. These are substantial issues that I deem impact on the job functions of mid-level

administrative staff at higher education institutions. The relevance of studies in the higher education environment that examine 'aspiration' and 'motivation' and the literature on the nature of the work and work itself in relation to mid-level administration staff relate to this study in that these form a base from which to draw explanations for the findings of this study. The research around administrative staff at higher education institutions is limited. Hence, the literature is dated and fragmented. I drew on literature which attempted to explain, understand and/or researched administrative staff in the higher education environment. This review explored topics linked to 'motivation' within different organisations deemed relevant to understanding the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff. The review also explored notions of professionalization of administration, expansion of administrative roles and tension between administrative and academic staff because these are considered to influence the 'motivation' to work. Finally, I wrapped up the review by outlining literature on 'motivation' or 'job satisfaction' in the higher educational setting. This review highlighted that literature on 'motivation' or 'job satisfaction' on administrative staff in higher education institutions was limited and mainly focused on academic staff. The following chapter outlines the methodology engaged to conduct the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of setting out a research design and methodology is to give the study format and meaning (Henning, Rensburg & Smit, 2004). It is a strategy of how to answer the research questions.

This chapter begins with an outline of the research design, which covers the reasoning for the study to be located in the interpretive paradigm, the adoption of the qualitative approach for this study and the methodology chosen for this study. The sampling techniques and data collection method employed to conduct the study are discussed and justified. The data analysis process is outlined and the limitations and ethical considerations are elucidated.

4.2 INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

There are many paradigms in research but the positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms are deemed to be the most prevalent and prominent yet distinctly different from each other (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Henning, et al, 2004; Neuman, 2000; Willis, 2007). Each paradigm has its limitations but at the same time some overlap can be noted. The purpose of research in the positivist paradigm is to explain so as to predict and control, while in the critical paradigm one seeks awareness and transformation and the interpretive paradigm views the purpose of research as understanding and reconstructing meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2000; Willis, 2007). For the purpose of this study the interpretive research paradigm is engaged and an explanation of its relevance follows.

This study explores the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff at a higher education institution. I believe that locating this study in the interpretive research paradigm gives it direction as the aim is to gain insight and to understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff towards the roles they play and functions and tasks they perform in a higher education environment. In considering the exploratory stance I have taken for the study it is deemed appropriate to situate this study in the interpretative research paradigm as it has allowed for in depth understanding and interpretation of data collected in a specific context.

The interpretive research paradigm views reality as not just out there, but created out of intentional interaction and based on the individual's definition of that interaction (Neuman, 2000). It can be reasoned that knowledge is constructed in relation to the frames that shape meaning, multiple perspectives and is context dependent (Henning, et al., 2004). In the interpretative paradigm viewing the state of affairs through the lens of the participants and the resultant interpretation or meaning systems gives dynamism to the interaction as it unfolds (Cohen, et al., 2007). Interpretivism has a practical orientation which is concerned with the manner individuals handle their practical everyday life and emphasizes human interaction implying that the work of any researcher is subjective and value laden (Neuman, 2000). Methods that are typically qualitative allow for flexibility are within the ambit of the interpretative paradigm (Carcary, 2009). This study aims to understand 'motivation' and 'aspiration' of mid-level administration staff; therefore, the interpretation, understanding and expressions of the focus group participants in relation to the context of their work life are important to this study.

4.3 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The foremost approaches to research are quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach focuses on the relationship between components or variables and uses methodological approaches that are numerical and statistical in nature whereas, the qualitative approach focuses on processes and meaning and uses methodological approaches that allow for in depth or broader understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Henning, et al., 2004).

I adopted a qualitative approach to the study. The research was conducted in a natural setting, an established higher education institution in which the mid-level administration staff were employed. Direct and indirect observation and conversation about functions and tasks performed, discussions with groups of staff in their broad institutional context led to the production of data that is empirical (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Cohen, et al., 2007; Henning, et al., 2004). To gain insight and understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff towards the roles played and functions and tasks performed; the natural setting of a higher education environment provided the basis to observe the interaction of participants in focus groups that led to production of data which is highly detailed and descriptive. Qualitative inquiry is deemed to stem from initial curiosity in observation of the

world at large or emerge from a researcher's direct experience or just general interest in a topic or practice (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). My observation of mid-level administrative staff turnover and tenure gave rise to my interest to gain insight and to understand what it is that keeps mid-level administrative staff employed at the institution and/or in the higher education environment.

The methodological approach in a qualitative study aims to capture information from the inside position (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Henning, et.al., 2004). Being employed as a mid-level administrative staff member at a higher education institution gives me insider knowledge. I am aware of researcher bias but I am in a position to capture in-depth information. The benefit of being an insider as a researcher is familiarity with the subject matter, with the context and the particular political, social and interpersonal relations that can affect the topic. It is also being in a position to recruit a population sample befitting the aims of this study. Interpreting qualitative data entails reflection on the entire research context and a researcher's reflexivity is a major strategy for quality control in qualitative research (Tesch, 1990; Krefting, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I engaged reflexive practices (in the data analysis process) as detailed in Tesch's Eight Step Model (see Table 4.6). To guard against researcher bias the recorded and transcribed notes of the focus group interviews were sent to the focus group participants to verify the contents. In the data analysis stage, I used conditional formulas in Ms Excel to identify and highlight repetitive words and phrases from the transcriptions and notes. Hence, reflection on the data collection and interpretation process.

4.4 METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the practice of how researchers conduct the inquiry and is concerned with the particular methods or specific ways used to attain or acquire knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Henning, et.al., 2004). In order to answer the critical research questions I elected to source the data from the population of mid-level administrative staff, the occupational class that this study aims to understand and the research strategy of focus group interviews was used to collect data. The methods of sampling and focus group interviews are discussed in this chapter.

4.4.1 Sampling Technique: Purposive Sample

Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies and can be defined as a selection of units or cases based on the specific purposes associated with answering the research question (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Teddlie and Yu (2007) also stated that in purposive sampling a person was intentionally selected for the significant information that they were able to provide that cannot be gained from other selections. The sampling strategy engaged in this study stemmed from the research questions that are being addressed in the study so that clear inferences can be made from the data collected.

The sampling strategy used was purposive sampling as the study was confined to a particular higher education institution and targeted a specific group of individuals. A purposive sample is not representative of the wider population and findings generated from this sample cannot be generalised. However the aim of purposive sampling was to obtain or attain in depth information from individuals who were in a position to provide it (Cohen, et al., 2007).

The sample was drawn from the population of staff within the Peromnes salary grades 8 to 12 who have been employed at the institution for five years and more. These are mid-level administrative staff. The Peromnes salary grades ranges from 1 to 17, with 1 to 7 considered to be managerial staff and 13 to 17 lower level administrative staff. The reason for considering participants who are employed at the institution for five years or more is based on my assumption that this length of permanent status implied stability in the position (refer to page 2 for an explanation of the Peromnes salary grades).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify and invite participants based on the specific purpose of the study. Purposive sampling allows for the researcher to use personal judgement in selecting the sample (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). A list of mid-level administrative staff was obtained from the higher education institution's Human Resources Division and participants who fell within the criteria of being employed at the institution for five years or longer across the institution from the various disciplines, departments, divisions, schools or units were invited to participate in the study. Since mid-level administration staff tend to work across the institution (i.e. often across disciplinary lines) there was an assumption that it did not matter which discipline, department, division, school or unit the participants worked in as mid-level administration staff work across the institution.

Therefore, it was presumed that a focus group on each campus would be diverse and reflect specialist and generalist roles. It was not about becoming specific about how work differed across disciplines. The aim to understand what motivated staff in professional fields and staff in academic support and student services functions. I also felt that the need to traverse the generational gap and as such included mid-level administration staff who had longer tenure at the institution were included in the sample selection. Mid-level administration staff with more than five years were selected as I deemed this to indicate stability in career or work.

The initial design of the study envisioned a sample size of 50 participants as being the sample size. I anticipated five focus groups, each consisting of 8 – 10. I deliberately chose to work with slightly inflated numbers since there would most likely be some non-respondents, or some might drop out before the process was complete. This was an over recruitment of participants as participation was dependent on the individual's availability and willingness to participate in the focus group discussion onsite at the campus that the individual was located. The number of participants that should ideally comprise a focus group is merely a guideline and advocates of focus group argue that the primary objective of focus groups is to obtain relevant data in a short timeframe effectively (Cohen, et al., 2007; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, 1997).

Upon actually conducting the study, it was difficult to get individuals to participate. This was attributed to the major restructuring and change that the higher education institution was undergoing at the time the sampling and data collection for this study was being done. However, through persistence and reworking the selection of the purposive sample (explained below) a sample of a total of 24 participants was obtained. Reworking the sample meant going back to the list from the Human Resources Division to identify potential participants from the specific Peromnes grades who were located on the specific campus and inviting them to the focus group interviews. To ensure a varied discussion on 'aspiration' and 'motivation', staff in professional fields and staff in academic support and student services functions were selected (refer to page 3 for definition specialist and generalist orientation roles). The sample size is deemed to be appropriate as the aim of the study is to explore and gain insight and to understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff at a higher education institution and not to infer generalisations.

4.4.2 Data Collection Method: Focus Group

The focus group strategy is considered to be an appropriate data collection method for this study because focus groups generally comprise of individuals who are either collectively different or similar, the discussion on a topic is in-depth, it allows for a variety of responses, generates data quickly and is economical (Cohen, et al., 2007). It caters for exploring the subjective experiences of participants in relation to predetermined research questions and participants have specific experiences of or opinions about the topic under investigation (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993). Focus groups can be used in exploratory studies and is effective as a stand-alone method of data collection in its own right (Morgan, 1997). A crucial feature of focus groups is interaction because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language used pertaining to an issue and the values and beliefs about a situation begin to emerge (Kitzinger, 1994). This interaction allows participants to ask questions about and to each other. Another benefit of a focus group is that it can elicit information in a manner that allows the researcher to find out why an issue is salient and what is salient about it (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups allow for the researcher to pose probes and follow up questions based on the responses of participants and the direction of the discussion. Probing why certain points are salient and what makes it important adds richness to the data gathered and gives it depth and detail. The drawbacks of the focus group are that quieter participants might be ignored while louder participants dominate the discussion or the discussion could veer off the topic or the number of participants that actually participate are fewer than anticipated (Cohen, et al., 2007). The relationship between supervisors and subordinates could also bring about power and status differentials thus limiting the conversation; however, the onus is on the moderator to circumvent this (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Cohen, et al., 2007). It is possible that focus group participants constrain or influence each other yet similarly they can respond to each other's comments, support or disagree with one another and in turn create more energy and thus more data (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Cohen, et al., 2007).

In this study the participants were connected by their occupational class therefore they were collectively similar but heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, tenure and a range of other factors. I believe that by virtue of interaction the focus group discussions generated a wider range of responses as compared to individual interviews. The focus group allowed for individual differences and a range of responses within a group. Also, the focus group as an

instrument addressed the constraining issues of time and cost for the level of this study. In the actual collection of data five focus group discussions were conducted. Each focus group session was approximately an hour long and was held once only at each of the four campuses and the one training site. The tabulation shows the composition of each focus group. Each focus group comprised of the number of participants that turned up on the day.

TABLE 4. 1: FOCUS GROUP 1

Focus group ONE – was held on campus 1 and had 5 participants

Participant No	Gender	Peromnes level	Job title	Year at institution
1	Female	8	Principal Faculty Officer	12
2	Female	10	Administrative Officer	7
3	Female	10	Administrative Officer	6
4	Female	10	Human Resources Officer	7
5	Female	11	Assistant Administrative Officer	5

TABLE 4. 2: FOCUS GROUP 2

Focus group TWO was held on Campus 2 and had 5 participants

Participant No	Gender	Peromnes level	Job title	Years at institution
1	Female	9	Personal Assistant	14
2	Female	10	Faculty Officer	16
3	Female	10	Human Resources Officer	6
4	Female	10	Committee Officer	9
5	Female	11	Assistant Administrative Officer	19

TABLE 4. 3: FOCUS GROUP 3

Focus group THREE was held on Campus 3 and had 5 participants

Participant No	Gender	Peromnes level	Job title	Years at institution
1	Female	9	Personal Assistant	14
2	Female	10	Faculty Officer	16
3	Female	10	Human Resources Officer	6
4	Male	11	Assistant Administrative Officer	9
5	Female	11	Assistant Administrative Officer	19

TABLE 4. 4: FOCUS GROUP 4

Focus group FOUR was held on Campus 4 and had 5 participants

Participant No	Gender	Peromnes level	Job title	Years at institution
1	Male	9	Senior Technician	18
2	Female	10	Administrative Officer	5
3	Female	11	Finance Officer	23
4	Female	11	Assistant Administrative Officer	13
5	Female	11	Assistant Administrative Officer	11

TABLE 4. 5: FOCUS GROUP 5

Focus group FIVE was held on a training site at a provincial hospital and had 4 participants.

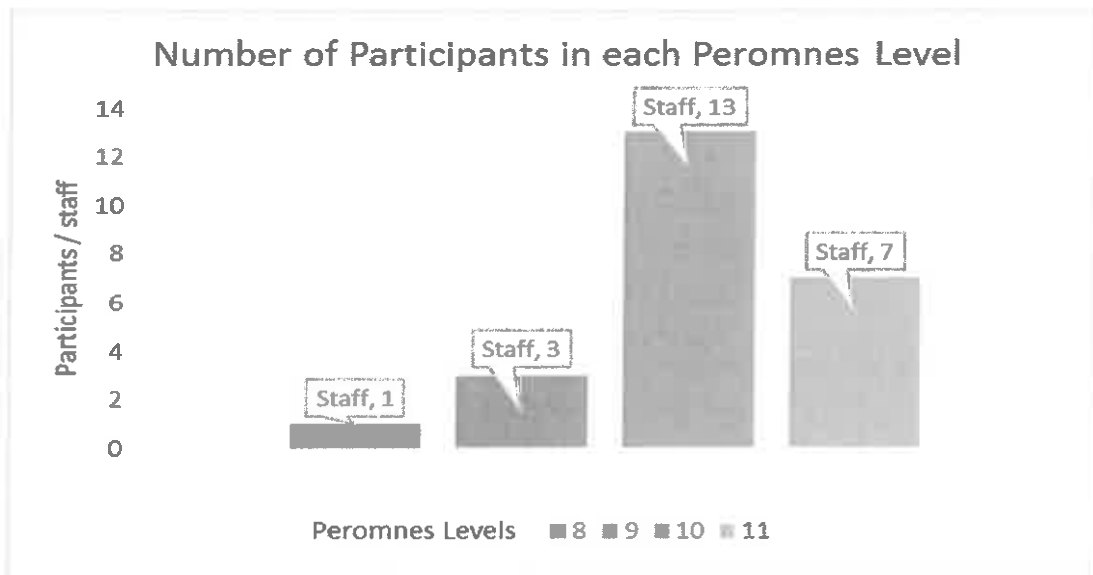
The administrative staff are permanently based at this location.

Participant No	Gender	Peromnes level	Job title	Years at institution
1	Female	10	Administrative Officer	32
2	Female	10	Administrative Officer	26
3	Female	10	Administrative Officer	14
4	Male	10	Technician	8

Focus group five was not planned in the study initially but invitation to participants and response received resulted in its formation. It is worth noting that the data obtained from this focus group is rich in detail and description.

The diagrams that follow are aimed at providing a visual presentation of the focus group composition. As this is a qualitative study the information provided in the graphs are not analysed in detail. The information is merely presented as contextual background information.

DIAGRAM 4. 1: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH PEROMNES LEVEL



The graphical presentation indicates the number of participants within each of the specific Peromnes level the study aimed to target. It can be noted that majority of the participants were from the Peromnes levels 10 and 11.

DIAGRAM 4. 2: TENURE

The number of years participants have worked at the institution is represented below in a bar graph. Staff who work for 5 years and more indicate stability in their position and deemed knowledgeable about the institution and their work.

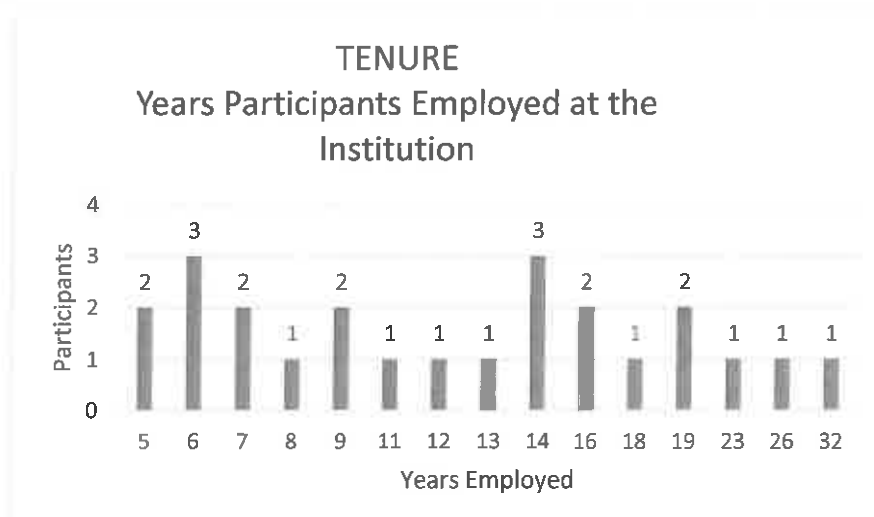
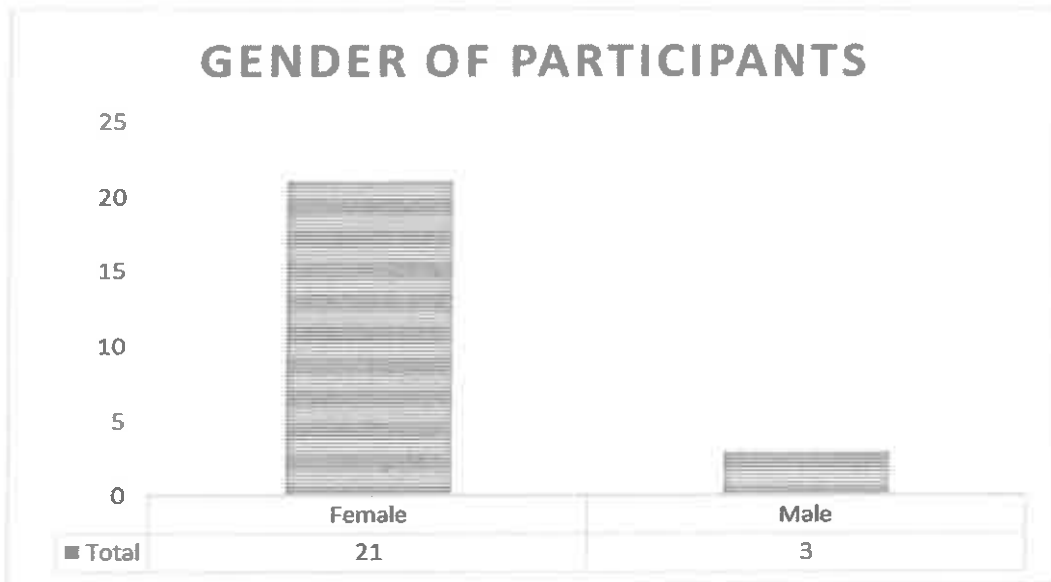
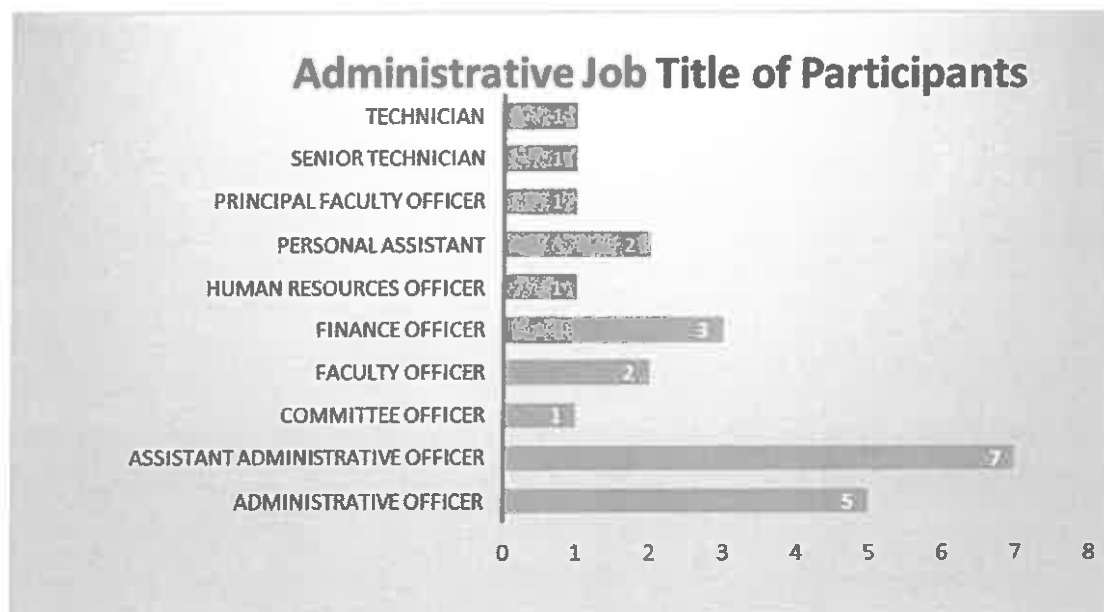


DIAGRAM 4. 3: GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS



The graph above indicates the number of males and females that participated in the study. The low participation rate of males in the study could possibly influence the findings.

DIAGRAM 4. 4: ADMINISTRATIVE PORTFOLIO OF PARTICIPANTS



The participants are grouped according to the administrative portfolio each occupied. The graph above counts the number of participants from each administrative portfolio that participated in this study.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

The focus group entailed a discussion on 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff. Each focus group of 8-10 invited individuals was steered by a focus group guide as per *Annexure A*. The guide comprised of three questions that directed the discussion. Each discussion was approximately 2 hours. After welcoming the participants and introducing myself, I described the nature and purpose of the study thereafter I posed the question to start the discussion and when necessary offered probing questions to stimulate the discussion.

I am employed as a mid-level administrative staff member at a higher education institution hence I have insider knowledge and was aware of researcher bias when moderating the focus group discussion. As the moderator of the discussions, I was conscious of not letting my views and opinions direct the discussions and with this in mind I kept my interventions to a minimum. This allowed the participants views to predominate and for them to lead the discussion. In selecting the sample, most of the participants selected did not perform the same duties and tasks as me. The work position that I occupy is senior and separated from the duties and tasks of most of the participants. I maintained distance by allowing the discussion to flow and remaining quiet but watched that the discussion remained reasonably within the focus of the study. When required, I asked probes and follow on questions. I drew on my skills as a minute taker in meetings to maintain a professional stance hence limiting the researcher bias. The tape recorded discussions were transcribed and the notes recorded in discussions were sent to the focus group participants to verify the contents. This refers to member checking. Member checks is one of the strategies that points to credibility in terms of accuracy and authenticity of data gathered (Krefting, 1991).

As noted previously, focus groups have shortcomings and to minimize this I used facilitation techniques to counteract the drawbacks anticipated. My supervisor, Dr Frances O'Brien, introduced the facilitation techniques I drew on to help me as I have assisted her in focus groups she facilitated for her own research. The role of the researcher as moderator is demanding and challenging but good interpersonal skills and being non-judgmental and adaptable is crucial (Morgan, 1997).

The discussions of focus group 1, 3 and 4 were tape recorded and transcribed and the transcription was sent back to participants to verify that it was a correct reflection of the discussion. The aim of doing this verification was to minimize researcher bias. However, in the other focus groups the participants requested that their voices not be recorded. Some of the participants in group 2 and 5 did not want their voices recorded for personal reasons. The participants were willing to participate in a general discussion where I took notes. Due to the nature of the study and the time constraints I elected to conduct the focus group in the manner requested by the participants. Recording the discussion via note taking did not pose a problem due to my professional experience in minute taking and committee administration. I worked in the capacity of a Committee Officer at a higher education institution for a period of three years. I typed my handwritten notes and circulated to the participants to verify.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Qualitative research allows for an open ended approach where data can be analysed in respect of the research questions (Cohen et al., 2007). Analysis of data is a diverse process. A technique common to qualitative research is to identify categories and themes from the data gathered and logical and systematically arrange the data into categories and themes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Tesch, 1990).

In this study, analysis was conducted on textual data i.e. hand written notes and transcripts from the focus group interviews. The first step in analysis of the data was done by reading and re-reading the transcripts in order to familiarize myself with the data. With this approach I had time to reflect on and engage with the data from a different perspective as compared to when I was moderating the focus group interview. This allowed me to make sense of the data collected and identify categories and themes so that it could be aligned to the research questions. This engagement with the data is a reflective interface between the researcher and data (Cohen et al., 2009). The generation of categories or themes were directed by the theoretical framework that guides this study.

Content analysis is an approach in qualitative research that systematically analyses textual data and maybe guided by theory or relevant research findings to generate categories or themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Henning, et al., 2004; Cohen, et al.,

2007). In light of the exploratory nature of this study, I deemed content analysis appropriate. In content analysis, meaning is drawn from the content of the textual data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Henning, et al., 2004; Cohen, et al., 2007). The data that emerged from the focus groups was categorized and thematically analysed. Huberman and Miles in Denzin and Lincoln (1994) referred to the process where data is summarized, coded and broken down as reduction while Tesch (1990) described this as decontextualization. Decontextualisation and recontextualisation is based on data reduction and interpretation (Tesch, 1990). The key characteristics of Tesch's Eight step model that rendered it suitable for this qualitative study; is that the process is cyclic, the activity is reflexive, it is comprehensive and systematic but not rigid, it allows for data to be arranged in meaningful units while catering for a link to the theoretical framework that guides the study and the data is arranged according to a system that emanated from the data itself. (Tesch, 1990).

The data analysis process was adapted and guided by Tesch's Eight Step method. A tabulated summary of the process engaged is provided:

TABLE 4. 6: TESCH'S EIGHT STEP MODEL

A tabulated summary of this provided below:

<p>Step 1 : Getting a sense of the whole : an overview of the data collected</p> <p><i>The hand written notes and the transcripts of the recorded discussions were read and re-read in order to familiarize myself with the data</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Clean Up of Data</p> <p><i>I did not engage with this step of the process as I did not want to lose the richness and detail of the raw data collected.</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Development of a classification system - categories and themes</p> <p><i>During the numerous readings of the hand written notes and transcripts I highlighted common ideas and frequent expressions and made notes in the margins to arrange the data into meaningful units</i></p>
<p>Step 4: Formulation of Categories</p> <p><i>The meaningful units were grouped together into categories. I then considered the categories in line with the theoretical constructs of the study i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic factors outlined in Herzberg's two factor motivational theory</i></p>
<p>Step 5: Theme Formulation</p> <p><i>Themes are formulated along the lines of the theoretical constructs of the study</i></p>
<p>Step 6: Grouping of Data</p> <p><i>The categories or meaningful units with similar ideas are grouped together under the relevant themes. This led to a preliminary analysis where categories or meaningful units which did not fall into the identified themes could be identified</i></p>
<p>Steps 7: Recording the data on paper</p> <p><i>I wrote up the themes and categories in table</i></p>
<p>Step 8 :Data verification</p> <p><i>I read and checked the data that I had recorded on paper</i></p>

4.7 RIGOUR

There are no set or rigid methods for conducting a qualitative study. However there are conventions and criteria of rigour for assessing it (Henning, et al, 2004). Mashall and Rossman (1999) allude to procedures to ensure rigour by reference to the works of Lincoln and Guba (1985); Maxwell (1996) and Creswell and Miller (2000). Constructs of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability define rigour (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Credibility refers to the accuracy and authenticity of data gathered (Krefting, 1991). Some of the strategies used to indicate credibility were member checks, participants prolonged engagement in the field and reflexive practice of the researcher (Krefting, 1991). In this study, the hand written notes I typed and the transcripts of the recorded focus group interviews were sent back to the participants to verify accuracy. Participants were selected on the basis of working at the higher education institution for a period of five years or more. The first step of data analysis process I followed stipulated that I read and re-read the hand written notes and transcripts. This resulted in me reflecting on the data gathered.

Dependability refers to the research process and whether the study can be repeated although it might not yield the same results (Krefting, 1991). Dependability is indicated by detailing the data collection method, the delineation of the data analysis process and interpretation of the data (Krefting, 1991). A detailed description of the methodology and research process is outlined in the study.

Confirmability refers to the neutrality or objectivity of the researcher in the research process (Krefting, 1991). I was aware of researcher bias and ensured that I reflected on the data so as to maintain objectivity. I used Tesch's Eight step data analysis model and was guided by the theoretical framework of the study (Tesch, 1990).

Transferability refers to generalisation of the findings of the study (Krefting, 1991). The aim of this study is to gain insight and understand and as such the findings are relative to the context and specific to the phenomenon being studied. The study is localised to a particular higher education institution and targets a specific population in that institution therefore the findings cannot be generalised. However, the findings might resonate with other studies or institutions in similar contexts.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A researcher has to 'consider how the research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes abide by ethical principles and practices' (Cohen. et al., 2007, p.51).

Formal ethical approval was granted by the Humanities and Social Science Ethics Committee on 14 September 2010 as reflected in *Annexure C*.

Participants were required to complete an Informed Consent form (*Annexure B*) which delineated the purpose and scope of the study and stipulated that the recorded tape and data collected would be stored for a period of five years and thereafter the tape would be incinerated and all written documentation will be shredded. Participants were also informed that all information provided will be kept strictly confidential and they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any stage and their decision not to participate would not result in any form of disadvantage.

The ethical considerations for this study are issues of access, consent, anonymity and confidentiality. In conducting the study I negotiated access by corresponding with the Human Resources Director so that the institution was aware of the study and permission from an authorized structure was sanctioned. I also fully informed the participants about the nature and purpose of the research and advised them of the option to withdraw from the study at any point in time with no negative consequences to themselves. All participants completed an Informed Consent form (*Annexure B*). Anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed in the sense that neither the names of participants nor the institution would not be used in the data analysis or the research report. An ethical choice was also presented when participants requested not to tape record the focus group discussion. I elected to accede to the request so that the conversation could continue.

4.9 LIMITATIONS

As this study was localised to a particular higher education institution and targeted a specific population within it; it would be impractical to generalize the findings. However, as elucidated in Chapter One the aim and purpose of the study is not to generalize the findings but rather to interpret, describe and understand the findings. This study allows others in similar situations to

identify or reflect on their experiences. The findings of this study are specific to the environment in which it is conducted, but may resonate with aspects of other studies or institutions in similar contexts.

‘Focus groups require skilful facilitation and management by the researcher’ (Cohen. et al., 2007, p.51). As a mid-level administrative staff at a higher education institution I had to put on the hat of a researcher and guarded against personal judgement and inferences bearing in mind that the focus group was the stand-alone method of data collection employed. I maintained professionalism and objectivity as minute taker and moderator during the focus groups due to my experience and training in professional committee administration thus minimizing researcher bias. As a researcher, I was open to different perspectives and took into consideration the opinion of the focus group participants.

It was difficult to obtain focus group participants due to the organizational restructure the institution was undergoing at the time. I overcame this by reworking the purposive sample as explained earlier (see page 37). Time constraints for data collection also proved challenging however, through continued persistence, follow-ups and getting permissions from line managers, I was able to secure a sample size on each campus.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reasoned why I have located the study in the interpretive paradigm and assumed the qualitative approach for this study. Stemming from the stance I have taken for the study; the methodology chosen is detailed. An explanation of the purposive sample is provided. Delineation of focus group as the data collection method employed to conduct the study is presented. A detailed description of the data analysis process is provided. The issue of rigour is addressed. I also discussed the ethical considerations and the limitations are elucidated.

The following chapter gives a presentation of the data gathered. The data gathered is voluminous and rich in detail.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter outlined the design of the research and the data collection and analysis process followed. In this chapter the focus is on reporting the analysis of data obtained during the course of the study.

5.2 PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of this study was to gain insight into and understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff towards the roles they play and functions and tasks they perform in the higher education environment. In Chapter Two the theoretical framework that underpins this study was discussed. Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory provided the broad themes for categorization of the data and served as a guide in the analysis process. The data will be explored using content analysis. Content analysis is a way for methodically connecting and relating written, spoken or visually communicated messages into logical and practical units (Tesch, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Cohen et. al., 2007).

The themes were extrapolated from Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory and were predetermined into extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Herzberg, et.al., 1959). The textual data was grouped into categories as presented to in the tabulation that follows. A detailed presentation and interpretation of the themes and categories in relation to the textual data focus on answering the research questions.

1. How do mid-level administration staff describe their roles and responsibilities?
2. What motivates mid-level administration staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities?
3. What are mid-level administration staff's 'aspiration' in relation to their future in higher education?

This study adopted a qualitative approach and the data gathered is highly detailed and descriptive. To analyse the rich textual data gathered, a systematic analysis of the content was carried out. Qualitative research proponents indicate various approaches to analysis of data; one

being content analysis (Tesch, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Henning, et al., 2004; Cohen, et al., 2007). I deemed content analysis appropriate for the nature of this study because the data gathered from the focus group interviews was rich in detail and description. The actual spoken words of the participants provide the information from which understanding of 'aspiration' and 'motivation' is extracted.

To analyse the content of the data gathered from the focus group discussions I listened to the tape recordings numerous times and reviewed the notes I made while conducting the focus groups. This exercise familiarized me with the textual data and aided in grasping the substance of the data. I extracted the phrases and words commonly repeated in each of the focus groups conducted i.e. three transcripts and notes of two groups. I deemed the repetitive and reiterative phrases and terminology to be valuable perspectives of the participants. Guided by the three research questions I noted and highlighted phrases articulated repeatedly in the subjective experiences of participants and their specific opinions or views.

The process where data was summarized, coded and broken down to develop meaningful units led to categorization and thematic analysis as mentioned by Huberman and Miles in Denzin and Lincoln (1994). As previously mentioned in the preceding chapter, a key characteristic of Tesch's Eight step model is that the process was cyclic and activity was reflexive hence it was comprehensive and systematic and allowed for data to be arranged in meaningful units while catering for a link to the theoretical framework that guided the study (Tesch, 1990).

To develop meaningful units that gave rise to the categories I noted all the repeated phrases in a spreadsheet and used the conditional formulas feature in MS Excel to identify common words that occurred frequently in repeated phrases. The repeated phrases with common words became meaningful units and were further scrutinised to formulate the categories listed in Table 5.1. Where I had searched a word and the repeated phrases had too many of the same words in one phrase; I elected to add a word or look for another common word in that set of repeated phrases until I was able to establish a category. The aim was to obtain textual data that was readable and understandable but not lose the essence of what was being alluded to in the focus group discussion.

5.3 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

TABLE 5.1 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The tabulation is a description of the themes in terms of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors described in Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory and the categories derived to present the data gathered into systematic meaningful units.

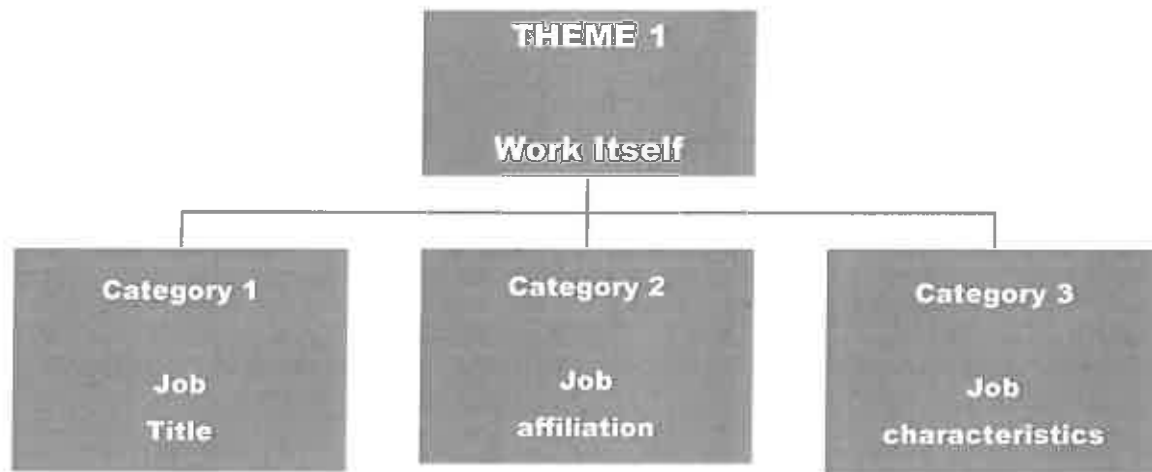
INTRINSIC FACTORS	
THEME	CATEGORY
Work itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Job Titles ➤ Job Characteristics ➤ Job Affiliation
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Professionalism ➤ Strive for Excellence ➤ Provide Continuity
Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acknowledgment For Performance ➤ Awards – Merit and Long Service ➤ Appreciation and Gratitude
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accountability ➤ Autonomy ➤ Ownership
Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Job Enrichment ➤ Job Rotation ➤ Promotion

EXTRINSIC FACTORS	
THEME	CATEGORY
Organisational and administrative policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information Dissemination ➤ Written Policy and Other Documents ➤ Decision Flow Process ➤ Academic Structures
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Type of Supervision ➤ Relationship With Supervisor
Interpersonal relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Peer Relations ➤ Teamwork ➤ Social Interaction
Working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Atmosphere ➤ Physical Environment
Job security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loyalty ➤ Tenure
Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knowledge ➤ Qualification
Salary and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conditions Of Service ➤ Salary ➤ Rewards

Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory highlighted five intrinsic factors and seven extrinsic factors. These factors were identified as the themes to slot the categories that emanated from the textual data.

In presenting the data from the focus group interviews, I highlighted the theme, gave an indication of the words I found repeated in the focus group transcripts and my notes and identified the categories that emerged. To substantiate the categories I have listed in italic the excerpts from the focus group transcripts and my notes that contain the repeated words. This was done so as not to lose the essence of the subjective experiences of participants and their specific opinions or views that they described.

DIAGRAM 5.1: THEME 1: Work Itself



In order to understand the nature of the work itself and its relation to ‘motivation’ I looked at words such as ‘job’ ‘work’ ‘duties’ ‘tasks’ ‘function’. The categories that emerged from the textual data analysis were ‘job title’, ‘job affiliation’ and ‘job characteristics’.

In the category job title mid-level administration staff viewed their roles in terms of their occupational class grouping. The ‘job title’ descriptions depicted their roles.

Communicator, Manager, Administrator, Counsellor, Finance Officer, Human Resources Officer, Personal Assistant, Faculty Officer, Technician.

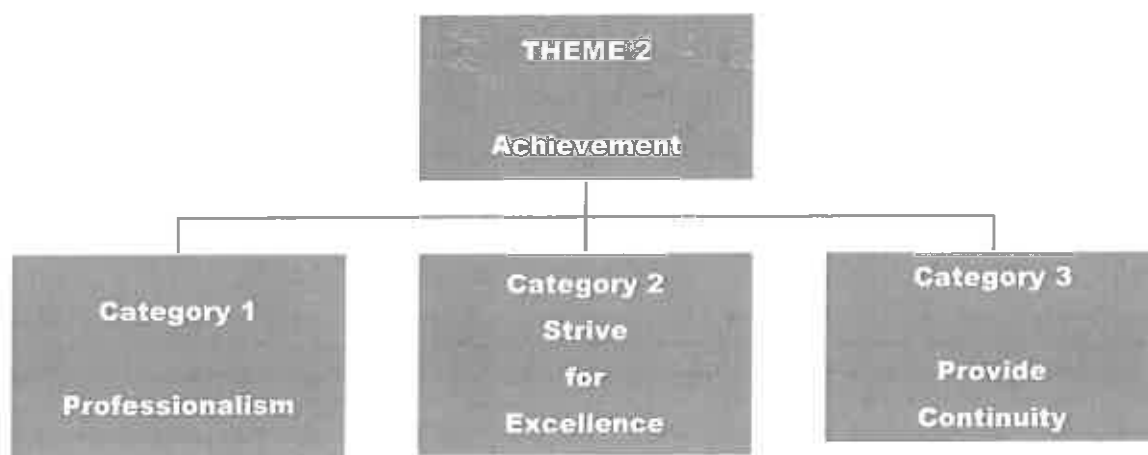
The opinions and views expressed in the focus groups indicated how mid-level administrative staff perceived their roles and responsibilities in relation to their involvement with the duties and tasks of the job. The participants also tended to express their views on the connection they felt towards their jobs. This gave rise to the category ‘Job Affiliation’.

In this study the population sample of mid-level administrative staff were connected by their occupational class and were collectively similar but heterogeneous in terms of age, tenure and a range of other factors. The data gathered indicated that the meaning and purpose of work differed for individuals but understanding of job characteristics were evident. This study was unable to establish whether gender influenced ‘job title’, ‘job affiliation’ and ‘job characteristics’ as there were only three male participants.

The extracts below from the focus group transcripts illustrate how mid-level administration staff viewed meaning and purpose of work. Participants description and understanding their skills, abilities, duties and tasks linked to how they viewed their ‘job title’, ‘job affiliation’ and ‘job characteristics’.

- *I put my skills and abilities to use everyday*
(Group 1 Transcript)
- *There are different components to the work I do*
(Group 3 Transcript)
- *I have good knowledge of the structures and task*
(Group 3 Transcript)
- *My core function is to ensure all administrative matters are dealt with by the relevant people*
(Group 3 Transcript)
- *I perform specific duties for student academic administration*
(Group 4 Transcript)

DIAGRAM 5.2: THEME 2: Achievement



Under the theme of achievement; the categories of being professional, striving for excellence and providing continuity came to the fore. Key words used in analysing data were ‘continuity’

'efficient' 'quality' 'excel' 'accomplish'. Some excerpts of textual data surmises how achievement motivates mid-level administration staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Professionalism, excellence and continuity come across as indicators that demonstrate 'motivation' and/or 'aspiration' relative to the theme of achievement. Achievements could be personal in nature or lead to public recognition.

- *It's good to hear that 'I am efficient'*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *Provide continuity in doing the job as academic staff change but administrative staff remain same*

- *There is an empowering nature to the work we do*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I take ownership of my job and produce high quality work*

- *I get frustrated if I hit stumbling blocks and cannot accomplish what needs to be done*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *I had a feeling of accomplishment*

(Group 4 Transcript)

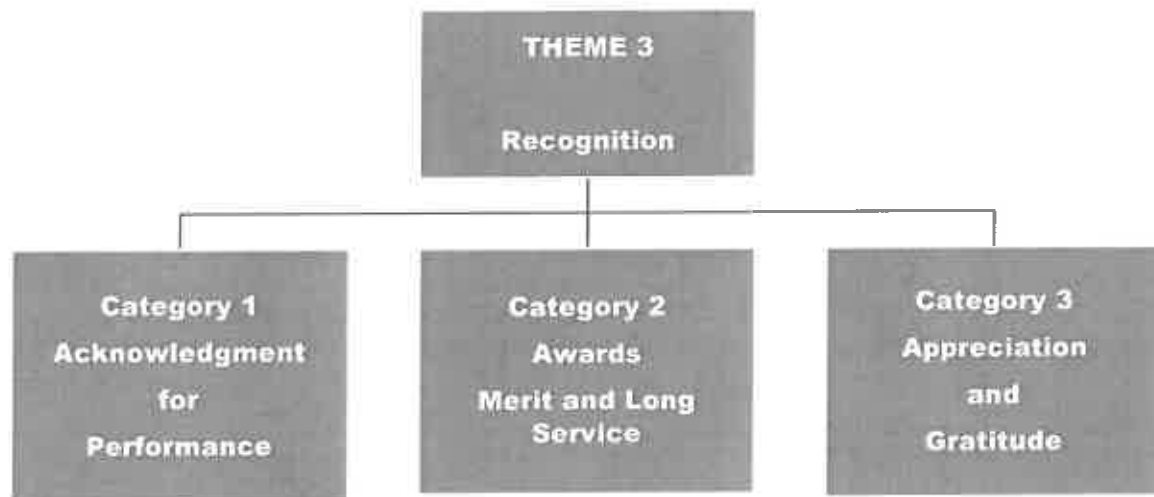
- *Accomplishing tasks gives high morale and makes me more dedicated*

- *There is a feeling of achievement and a sense of pride in seeing our students graduating and enrolled for PG or hearing or reading about them moving forward in their careers*

- *To be efficient and find a newer better way of getting job done*

(Group 5 notes)

DIAGRAM 5.3: THEME 3: Recognition



In the theme of recognition the categories acknowledgment for performance, merit and long service awards and appreciation and gratitude came through as factors of 'motivation' that mid-level administration deemed significant in terms of fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. The categories display a sense of pride for being acknowledged which in turn spurs 'aspiration' and 'motivation'.

Words frequently repeated were 'performance', 'appreciation', 'acknowledge', 'gratitude', 'gift', 'recognise', 'reward', 'long service' Here under are some phrases extracted from the textual data.

- *Through me collaborating with other departments, processes were changed to improve productivity and efficiency... this was mentioned in meetings and to other staff members*
- *I was presented with a long service framed certificate in front of all my colleagues and academics*
- *I received a gift as a token of appreciation*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *made contribution that was aligned to the organisation's goals and received an award*
- *Students give gifts like chocolates or toiletries just for helping them but I tell them that I am just doing my job*

(Group 2 notes)

- *My peers acknowledged me for job done well done and management rewarded me for my contribution*
- *I was honoured at a function and given a token of appreciation and long service award*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *My performance is linked to rewards so I aim to get a high score on my performance review*
- *The professor was grateful for my assistance*
- *I was praised for my efforts*

(Group 4 Transcript)

- *Regular team meetings and social gatherings make us appreciated*

(Group 5 notes)

The phrases here under extracted from the textual data indicate that a lack of recognition might give rise to demotivation. It can be inferred that when performance is not recognised and appreciation or gratitude lacks or is absent the likelihood of demotivation can be apparent.

- *What demotivates me is when I go the extra mile in my job and don't even get a 'thank you'*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *I also get very demotivated when I have come up with an idea and it does not get acknowledged but is accepted and used in the department and someone else gets the credit for it.*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I get demotivated when I work my butt off and I don't get acknowledged*

(Group 5 notes)

The data analysis also evidenced, as per extracts, that mid-level administration staff who were recognised had ‘aspiration’ for their future in higher education.

- *My feedback was valued and I was placed in an acting role for the job*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *People tell me how I have performed overall and recognise my contribution and achievements*

(Group 2 notes)

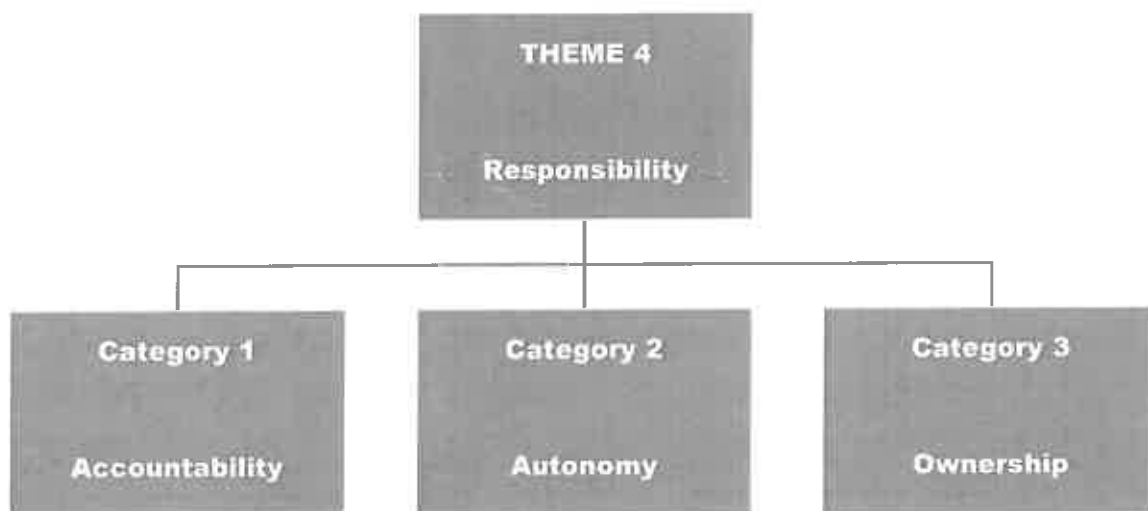
- *My manager has positive remarks and discussed my career plans*

(Group 4 Transcript)

- *Able to voice opinion and give comments to people in higher positions than me and they notice my potential worth*

(Group 5 notes)

DIAGRAM 5.4: THEME 4: Responsibility



The categories of accountability, autonomy and ownership supports the theme of responsibility. In the discussions, participants came across as being answerable and liable for their work indicating a sense of responsibility. Participants also expounded the extent of independence they valued in their job or work tasks and the level of possession they claimed for the job.

Key words used in analysing data were 'accountable', 'autonomous', 'ownership', 'responsible' and 'judgement' The extracts from the textual data indicate how, in relation to 'motivation', mid-level administration staff viewed their roles and responsibilities from the perspective of being accountable, working autonomously and taking ownership of the tasks and duties of the work itself.

- *I am responsible for how resources are used*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *We are accountable for the amount of resources a person is given and the extent it is utilised*
- *I was responsible for funds for the Admin Forum*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I feel responsible for empowering them to make decisions relating to their job the most prominent factor in motivating them*

(Group 3 Transcript)

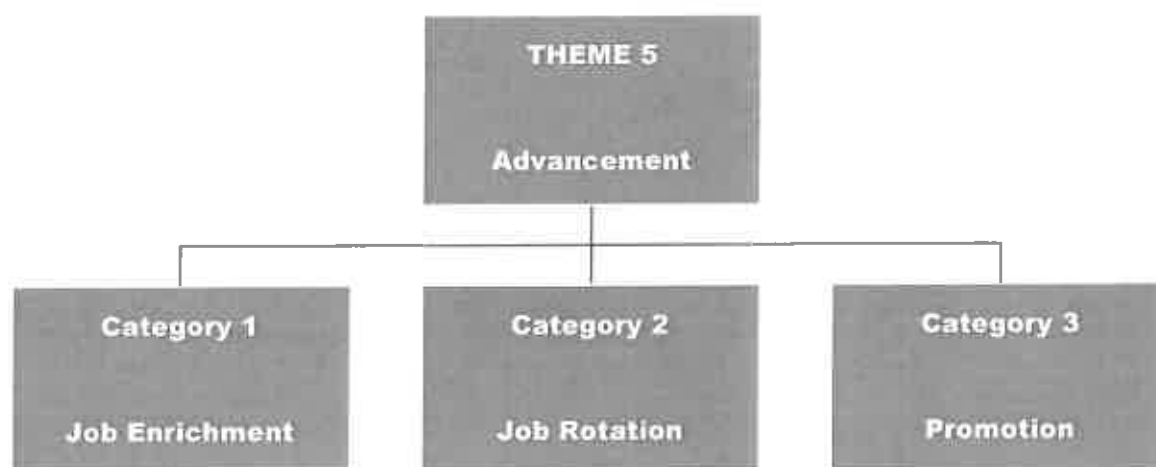
- *This is the very important unit because it over see the quality of teaching and learning*

(Group 4 Transcript)

- *Have the freedom to use own judgement*
- *Able to work autonomously*
- *Entrusted with the responsibility to prepare and support decisions of the management, establish services, and actively shape the core activities*

(Group 5 notes)

DIAGRAM 5.5: THEME 5: Advancement



Under the theme of advancement, the categories of job enrichment, job rotation and promotion become apparent. Promotion refers to possible opportunities in the future giving rise to ‘aspiration’. Job enrichment entails expanding the scope of duties and tasks and job rotation is where one move about laterally to obtain exposure to various duties and tasks. It is assumed that job enrichment and job rotation lead to ‘motivation’. Key words used in analysing data were ‘future’ ‘various tasks/duties’ ‘different tasks/duties’ ‘growth’ ‘studies’ ‘training’ ‘opportunities’. Extracts from the textual data indicate how the theme of advancement relates to mid-level administration staff’s ‘aspiration’ in relation to their future in higher education.

- *I am planning to further my studies*
- *You don't stop studying especially when there are opportunities available*
(Group 1 Transcript)
- *feel positive about the future in the organisation because there are various different admin positions to apply for*
- *Knowing there is future potential growth gives us something to look forward to*
- *During performance management meetings I discuss my future development with my manager*
(Group 2 notes)
- *I take on various tasks and duties because in case of promotion*
- *My manager delegates some of her tasks to me*
- *I am a Human Resources Officer with an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology*
(Group 3 Transcript)

- ' In future I can apply for positions...'
- I help out when my colleagues are on leave or sick

(Group 4 Transcript)

- In one department we have different staff doing different types of admin job we swap tasks sometimes
- I do not intend to study further no incentives

(Group 5 notes)

Stemming from the textual data above I deduced that inference could be made to concepts such as career paths, succession planning, focus on growth and potential, cross functional tasks, lateral movement and training and development which led to the formation of the categories of job enrichment and job rotation.

DIAGRAM 5.6: THEME 6: Organisational and Administrative Policies



In the higher education institution the organisational structure and decision making bodies that govern the institution were clearly defined and stipulated in the statute of the institution. The theme of organisational and administrative policies is pertinent to the higher education institution as specified policy documents on information dissemination, process for written policy and other documents, decision flow processes, academic structures and protocols on communication channels impact on organisational culture which in turn impacts on

'motivation' and 'aspiration'. Common words were 'strategic plan' 'policies' 'guidelines' 'protocols' 'communication'

- *I have to do things as per the policy ... cause the Deans change and then someone is acting*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *External communication is easier then internal communication We need to follow processes internally*
- *The University has a strategic plan which is given to all staff*
- *We get instruction from the decision making bodies or committees*
- *Decisions from committees are communicated to us by our line manager*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I need to speak or email my line manager first ... I cannot email the Dean directly*
- *The direction of my work is influenced by policy and guidelines*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *In our institution we have a lot of beauracracy processes and procedures take long due to paperwork'*
- *The Handbook is our Bible It has all the rules, regulations, decisions, processes*

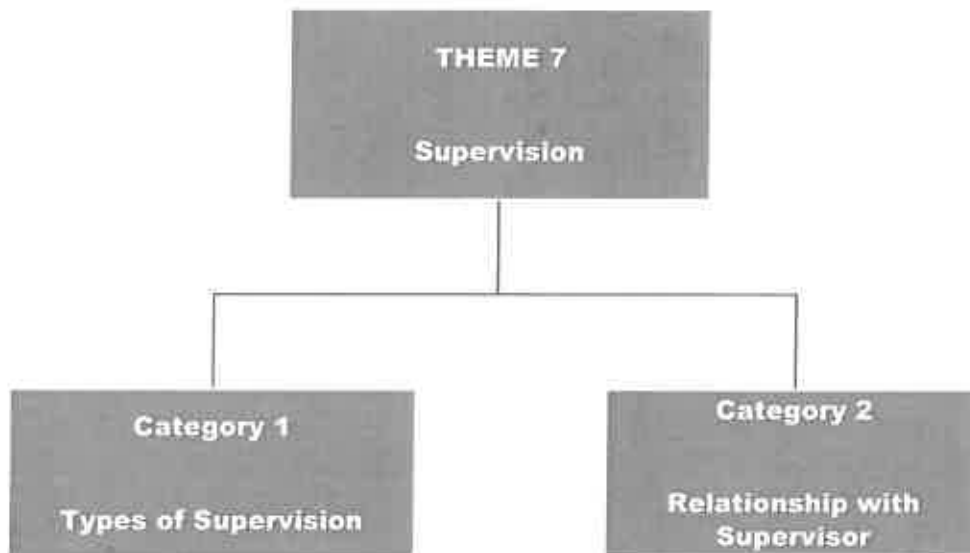
(Group 4 Transcript)

- *There is a hierarchical structure even for the flow of documentation. It must pass from one desk to another desk before final approval*
- *Policies and procedures keep us informed of what to do academically for students*
- *We are presented with guidelines on how to address academic matter*

(Group 5 notes)

I found that from the data gathered, mid-level administration staff gave an indication that their roles and responsibilities, to a certain extent, were directed by the organisational and administrative policies.

DIAGRAM 5.7: THEME 7: Supervision



The theme of supervision has two categories identified; the categories were types of supervision and relationship with supervisor. The repeated words searched were 'academic' 'manager' 'feedback' 'direction' 'instruction' 'communication' 'delegation' The textual data gave an indication of the nature of supervision and how mid-level administrative staff viewed various types of supervision and relationship with supervisor or line manager in relation to mid-level administrative staff roles and responsibilities. Supervision was associated to the organisational structure in terms of lines of reporting in a hierarchy and as relational association with people within the organisation. Hence the type of supervision and relationship with supervisor were relevant categories to 'aspiration' and 'motivation'.

- *As a line manager I aim to give clear direction on tasks*
- *In managing my performance my manager and I should set specific goals and realistic targets*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *I do my work and just go to them (line manager and academics) for approvals or signature*
- *I hate when my academic leader does not say anything after attending an important meeting*
- *Not getting feedback after meetings is demoralising*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I think receiving feedback positive or negative from supervisor is important*
 - *I have worked here so long I sometimes know more than my manager and the academic*
- (Group 3 Transcript)**

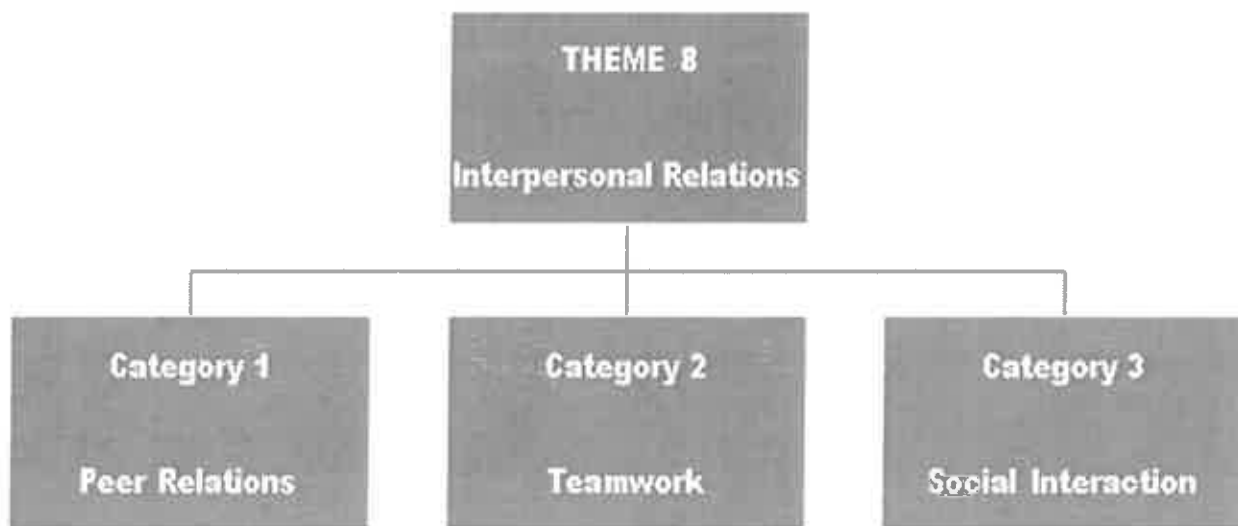
- *My line manager should have constructive criticism*
- *We are like a family even my line manger*

Group 4 Transcript)

- *There should be acceptance of staff comments by academic and line manager*
- *My line manager should give admin staff support and guidance and I do the same in return*
- *It is difficult and confusing when line manager and academic leader has issues and their relation is not good*

(Group 5 notes)

DIAGRAM 5.8: THEME 8: Interpersonal Relations



Under the theme of interpersonal relations common words such as ‘peer’ ‘relation’ ‘team’ ‘co-workers’ ‘colleagues’ ‘interpersonal’ were identified. The categories that emerged from the textual data were peer relations, teamwork and social interaction.

- *I have come to realise that yes we work but respect, morals, principles and values among colleagues and teams at the work place plays a very important roles in our lives*
- *... a lot of social interaction because of the nature of our work environment ... dealing with student activities like open days, orientation, sports day, etc.*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *Giving and receiving respect from co-workers is very important*
- *We constantly interact with each other to execute tasks*

(Group 2 notes)

- *We have good team spirit*
- *.... Because I work with academics they have knowledge about thingsI can get help with personal problem at work*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *Regular team meetings and social gatherings make us appreciated*

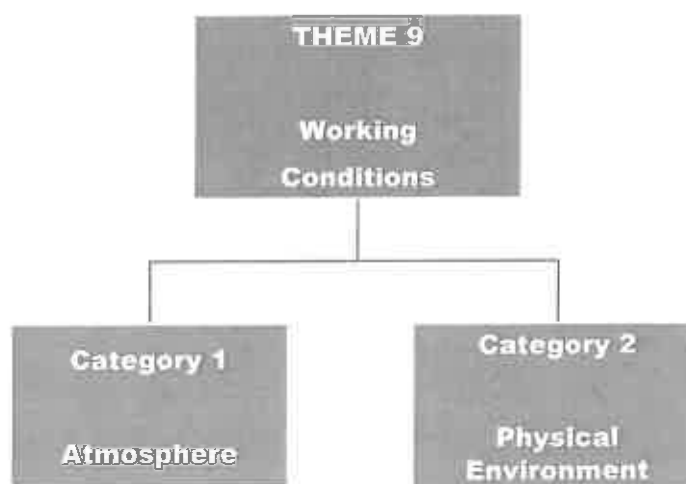
(Group 4 Transcript)

- *Team focus on fixing problem or finding solution rather than finding fault and blaming*
- *Confidentiality, hard work, commitment, patience and good interaction with the Head of Department and colleagues all contributes towards the smooth running of the unit*

(Group 5 notes)

The excerpts from the focus groups indicated that mid-level administration staff viewed their roles and responsibilities enmeshed within interpersonal relations at various levels and facets. Interpersonal relations like teamwork, peer relations and social interaction are deemed to impact on ‘motivation’ to work because the nature of human beings is to associate and connect in any environment.

DIAGRAM 5.9: THEME 9: Working Conditions



The atmosphere and physical environment were two categories that arose under the theme working conditions. The key words repeated were 'work environment', 'atmosphere' 'hours of work', 'equipment', 'furniture'

- *Sometimes we work hours long than we supposed to because meetings finish late but we don't get paid*
- *Our line manager has the discretion to give us time off for the hours worked*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *My office environment is friendly and welcoming to visitors, students and staff*
- *The space in my office is dark and cold*
- *I think the space is too big for my office*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I have flexibility to work around hours of work I leave to pick my child from school*
- *Our common lounge is a relaxing and comfortable space We have nice furniture*
- *The pressure we are put under during exam time is a lot but I can handle that environment because I have been doing for a long time*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *The official hours of work are 08h00 to 16h30 but some of us start work at start at 07h30 and finish at 16h00*
- *We have new furniture*

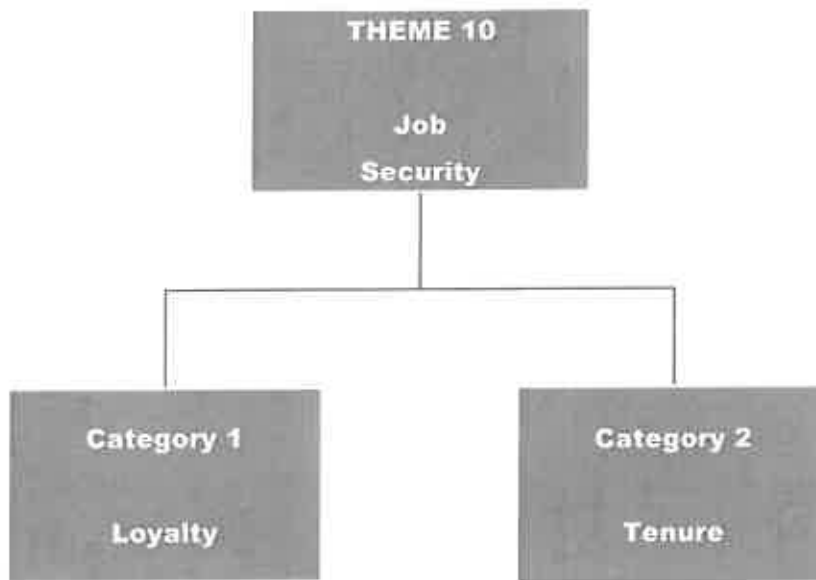
(Group 4 Transcript)

- *equipment and resources to do the job*
- *Accessibility to equipment in the off campus training sites like hospitals and clinics*
- *During exams the atmosphere is fast paced but I like it*

(Group 5 notes)

The above extracts indicated mid-level administration staff's impression and opinions of the physical space and their work environment or atmosphere.

DIAGRAM 5.10: THEME 10: Job Security



Under the theme, job security the two categories that stood out were loyalty and tenure. The following excerpts indicated loyalty and tenure in terms of years of service. The key words were ‘long service’ ‘loyalty’ ‘retire’

- *given an opportunity I can excel in any position because of my dedication and loyalty to the university*
- *I was presented with a long service framed certificate in front of all my colleagues and academics*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *I consider myself a loyal employee*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I was honoured at a function and given a token of appreciation and long service award*
- *The pressure we are put under during exam time is a lot but I can handle that environment because I have been doing for a long time*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *I consider my years of experience an indication of my loyalty to the institution*
- *In my job as Finance Officer I am planning to further my studies*

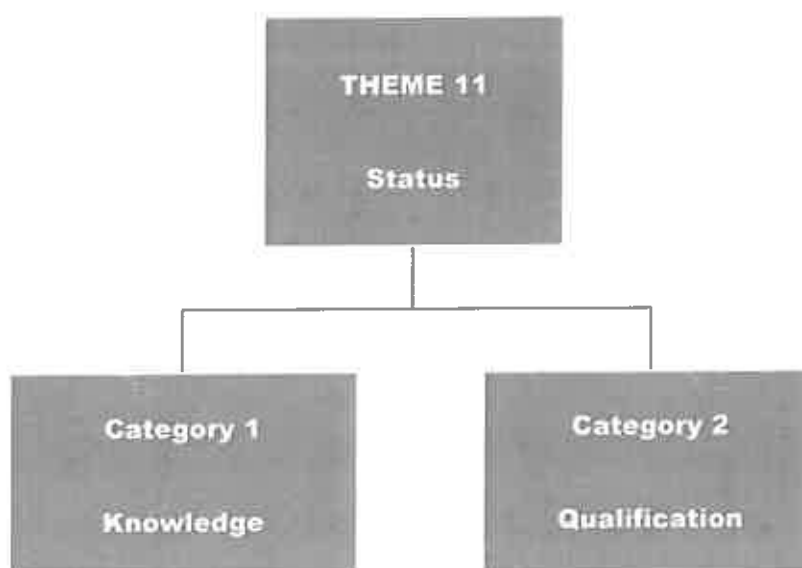
(Group 4 Transcript)

- *I enjoy working in my department which I am doing in 32 years now..... I have built up executive assistant and secretarial skills*
- *Seeing out my retirement with employer*
- *At my age since I will be retiring in 5 years time I don't see myself going places*

(Group 5 notes)

Mid-level administration staff tend to indicate through loyalty and tenure that job security leads to 'aspiration' for the future. With the shifting milieu related to the transformation agenda in the higher education landscape and the resultant change in patterns in the work environment it seems that indicators like having a long service history and considering working till retirement age for the institution display a 'motivation' to work regardless of the changing dynamics of the workforce in higher education.

DIAGRAM 5.11: **THEME 11: Status**



The categories of promotion and qualification leads to the theme of status. Repeated words that came to the fore in the data analysis were 'knowledge' 'decision' 'academic' 'responsible' 'degree'

- *I find it embarrassing if I don't know how to assist a student or academic on an administrative matter*

- *I am currently working towards my degree*

(Group 1 Transcript)

- *I have worked here so long I sometimes know more than my manager and the academic*
- *I was asked many times to give talks at the Admin Forum*

(Group 2 notes)

- *I have good knowledge of the structures and task*
- *I feel responsible for empowering them to make decisions relating to their job the most prominent factor in motivating them*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *I have my degree in Law but at my age since I will be retiring in 5 years time*

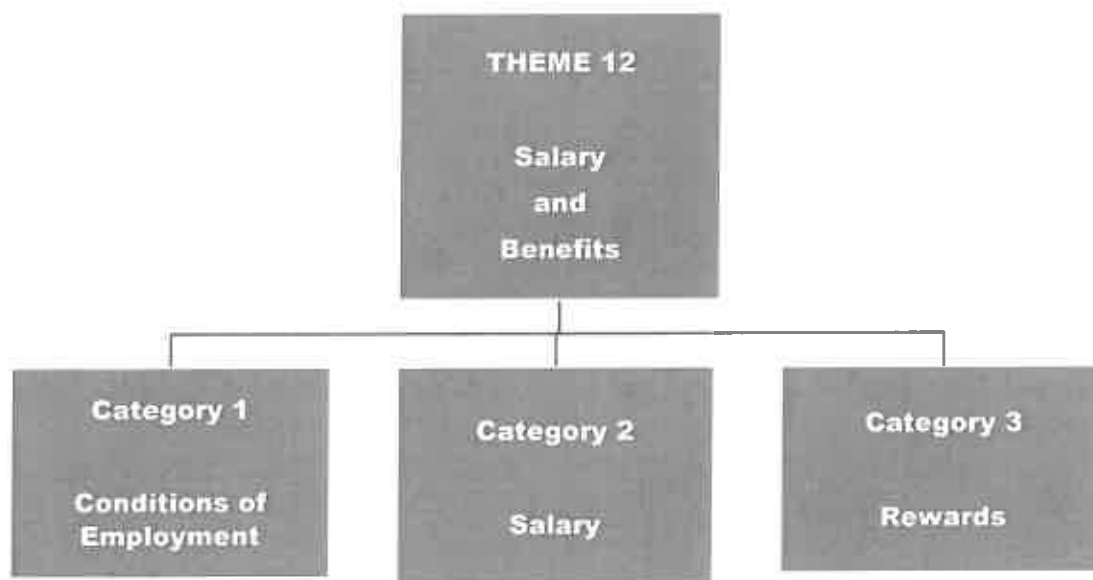
(Group 4 Transcript)

- *entrusted with the responsibility to prepare and support decisions of the management, establish services, and actively shape the core activities*
- *There should be acceptance of staff comments by academic and line manager*

(Group 5 notes)

The response of mid-level administration staff evidenced that the theme of status affects their 'motivation' in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. It also inferred mid-level administration staff aspirational goals.

DIAGRAM 5.12: THEME 12: Salary and Benefits



Under the theme salary and benefits; categories emerged were conditions of employment, salary and rewards. The repeated words in the data analysis tended to be ‘performance’ ‘study’ ‘rewards’ ‘pay/salary’ ‘hours of work’

➤ *Our salary is lower than industry but our benefits are good*

➤ *You don't stop studying especially when there are opportunities available*

(Group 1 Transcript)

➤ *During performance management meetings I discuss my future development with my manager*

➤ *I think I get paid ok for what I'm doing*

➤ *I think working in higher education motivates you to study further because you know you have remission of fees*

(Group 2 notes)

➤ *In managing my performance my manager and I should set specific goals and realistic targets*

➤ *My pay is little but the medical and housing subsidy helps*

➤ *My peers acknowledged me for job done well done and management rewarded me for my contribution*

(Group 3 Transcript)

- *My performance is linked to rewards so I aim to get a high score on my performance review*
- *In managing my performance my manager and I should set specific goals and realistic targets*

(Group 4 Transcript)

- *I work Monday to Friday*
- *The flexible hours to work*

(Group 5 notes)

Mid-level administration staff gave the impression that the performance of their roles and responsibilities were motivated by conditions of employment, salary and rewards to a certain extent. It was evident that ‘motivation’ and ‘aspiration’ were influenced when the institutions reward and benefit structure was suitable to mid-level administration staff personal goals.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I endeavour to highlight any relationship between the theoretical framework, literature reviewed and the presentation of data in the previous chapter. This study set out to generate descriptive indications of mid-level administrative staff's 'aspiration' and 'motivation'. The discussion of the findings aims to elaborate on and explain answers to the research questions posed in this study.

This study aimed to gain insight and understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff by finding answers to the following research questions

2. How do mid-level administration staff describe their roles and responsibilities?
3. What motivates mid-level administration staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities?
4. What are mid-level administration staff's 'aspiration' in relation to their future in higher education?

6.2 DISCUSSION

To understand the roles and responsibilities of mid-level administrative staff this study focused on some sources of motivation, which were germane to the accomplishment of work. From the information gathered and data analysis, I found that the manner participants in this study tended to describe their roles and responsibilities reflected the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors outlined in Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. The participants' responses were consistent with the elements of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation that being the work itself, achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, organisational and administrative policies, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, job security, status and salary and benefits.

A robust overall account and elaboration of the work itself and the responsibility for the work and its outcomes indicated that participants reflected a positive attitude to their work and roles. The positive attitude of participants was indicated by how participants expressed the

meaningfulness of the duties and tasks and inter personal relations. This positive attitude reflects the outlook participants have in relation to their position at the institution. I found that there was a tendency by participants to define their roles and responsibilities in a positive manner and there was an indication that participants were mostly content with their work. This is indicated by participants' responses in Chapter Five. [*There is a feeling of achievement and a sense of pride in seeing our students graduating and enrolled for PG or hearing or reading about them moving forward in their careers (Group 5 notes)*] The positive attitude of participants suggests that the work itself and the responsibility for the work does not necessarily motivate employees but when present may also prevent employees from becoming unhappy (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg, et.al.,1959). [*I have come to realise that yes we work but respect, morals, principles and values among colleagues and teams at the work place plays a very important roles in our lives (Group 1 Transcript)*] Achievement, recognition and advancement in their roles also led to participants describing their roles and responsibilities having interesting possibilities. [*feel positive about the future in the organisation because there are various different admin positions to apply for (Group 2 notes)*] This indicates that participants have aspirations for their future. 'Aspiration' relates to achievement motivation theory hence the link between 'aspiration' and 'motivation' (Benjema, Miller & Williams, 2002). Achievement motivation theory takes into account recognition for performance and high standards of excellence through establishing and acquiring goals (Benjema, et. al., 2002). [*In managing my performance my manager and I set specific goals and realistic targets (Group 3 Transcript)*] Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory looks at how work motivation influences the extent to which a job is intrinsically challenging and provides opportunities for achievement and recognition (Steers, et.al., 2004). [*People tell me how I have performed overall and recognise my contribution and achievements (Group 2 notes)*] The opportunity for achievement, recognition and advancement impacts on 'motivation' hence the sense of accomplishment, being recognised and basic changes in the nature of work infers that participants generally found fulfilment from their roles and responsibilities. Participants viewed their roles and responsibilities in terms of operations and governance of the institution [*The Handbook is our Bible It has all the rules, regulations, decisions, processes (Group 4 Transcript)*], which was directed by organisational and administrative policies, supervision and interpersonal relations, and as such these factors affected their standpoint on 'motivation'. [*There is a hierarchical structure even for the flow of documentation. It must pass from one desk to another desk before final approval (Group 5 notes)*] Job security and status featured as

strong indicators of 'motivation' in the findings. [*I consider myself a loyal employee (Group 2 notes)*] Working conditions, salary and benefits as motivators were present in the discussion but not elaborated on as much by participants [*My pay is little but the medical and housing subsidy helps (Group 3 Transcript)*] In my analysis of the discussions, I found that some participants found status and perhaps prestige in being affiliated with the institution. [*I was presented with a long service framed certificate in front of all my colleagues and academics (Group 1 Transcript)*] However, it came across that most participants felt more linked to the various disciplines, departments, divisions, schools or units they were located in and were content with responding to their colleagues and attending to the disciplines, departments, divisions, schools or units internal needs. [*I enjoy working in my department which I am doing in 32 years now (Group 5 Transcript)*]

In this present study, the administrative portfolio of the participants illustrated in Chapter Four (Diagram 4.4.) indicated the various occupational classes of the focus group participants. The occupational classes of finance officer, human resources officer, committee officer, personal assistant and technician were not limited to the higher education environment and such these occupations often require a course of study to become certified practitioners in the occupational class. [*I am a Human Resources Officer with an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology (Group 3 Transcript)*] However, administrative officers and faculty officers do not necessarily have the same requirements. [*I have built up executive assistant and secretarial skills (Group 5 Transcript)*] Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) propose that professional administration at university is divided into specialist and generalist orientations. Specialist orientations refer to specific occupation classes such as human resources, finance and technical whereas generalist orientation refer to clerical and secretarial administration. The findings of the current study reveal that mid-level administrative staff employed at the higher education institution in specialist orientations jobs such as finance officer, human resources officer, committee officer, personal assistant and technician were content with their roles and responsibilities in the higher education institution. [*feel positive about the future in the organisation because there are various different admin positions to apply for (Group 2 notes)*] Under the themes of job security and status in Chapter Five, participants expressed that they elected to remain employed at the institution although they had experience and qualifications related to specialist orientations roles which would enable them to find employment outside the institution. [*I have my degree in Law but.... at my age since I will be retiring in 5 years time (Group 4 Transcript)*]

I found that participants remained employed at the institution because they understood the institution and its structures, had job security and opportunities to progress in their career. [*In my job as Finance Officer I am planning to further my studies (Group 4 Transcript)*] Participants also evidenced that they endeavoured to further their studies in their field of their specialist orientation while remaining in the employ of the institution.

From the data gathered in the present study it was evident that the meaning and purpose of work differed for individuals. [*There is an empowering nature to the work we do (Group 2 notes)*] Participants whose occupational class had a generalist orientation, such as faculty officers and administrative officers, exhibited evolving definitions of their roles and responsibilities while participants with specialist orientation displayed satisfaction that they were practicing their profession at a higher education institution. [*I feel responsible for empowering them to make decisions relating to their job the most prominent factor in motivating them (Group 3 Transcript)*] This could be due to participants understanding of and relation to their job title and their perception in terms of their connection or affiliation with their job. The findings indicated that mid-level administration staff had a good understanding of the job characteristics of their work. [*There are different components to the work I do (Group 3 Transcript)*] The participants expressed that they experienced meaningfulness from the work itself. [*I had a feeling of accomplishment (Group 4 Transcript)*] It can be reasoned that distinct personal imperatives associated with the 'motivation' and hygiene factors of Herzberg's theory drive mid-level administrative staff to remain in their jobs. [*I put my skills and abilities to use everyday (Group 1 Transcript)*] It is also evident that mid-level administrative staff were motivated because they understood the core purpose of their roles and responsibilities within the institution. [*I have good knowledge of the structures and task (Group 3 Transcript)*] The perception among mid-level administrative staff that their duties and tasks contributed to the academic endeavour at the institution could be deemed to spur 'motivation'. Participants' portrayal of their understanding of the work itself displays intrinsic conditions that speak to the job content in terms of 'motivation'. [*There is a feeling of achievement and a sense of pride in seeing our students graduating and enrolled for PG or hearing or reading about them moving forward in their careers (Group 5 notes)*]

The findings indicated that the nature of the work was challenging and intrinsically rewarding hence the 'motivation' to work featured strongly but varied widely in participants. Participants expounded the variety of work, core functions, knowledge structures and skills and abilities required to perform duties and tasks. [*My core function is to ensure all administrative matters are dealt with by the relevant people (Group 3 Transcript)*] Participants also highlighted that the complex components of the work itself fluctuate over time and dynamic work

circumstances and situations spur 'motivation'. [*feel positive about the future in the organisation because there are various different admin positions to apply for (Group 2 notes)*] Smerek and Peterson (2007) conducted a study that examined how to improve 'job satisfaction' among non-academic employees at a university. The study concluded that the level or extent that elements of the work itself satisfy the needs of an individual would determine their 'motivation'. [*through me collaborating with other departments, processes were changed to improve productivity and efficiency... this was mentioned in meetings and to other staff members (Group 1 Transcript)*] Hence, it is posited that the mid-level administration staff describe their roles and responsibilities in terms of the work itself, which is an intrinsic motivating factor of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory. Intrinsic motivating factors are basic, essential and inherent. One does something because one finds it interesting and internally satisfying.

While reviewing the impact of 'motivation' on the role and responsibilities of mid-level administrative staff I came across a paper by Whitchurch (2008b) which introduced the concept of 'third space'. This concept referred to an emergent hybrid domain between academic and administrative tasks and functions. Employees at higher education institutions tended to be more active in interpreting their roles and moved laterally across boundaries to contribute to the development of the hybrid domain or 'third space' (Whitchurch, 2008a and Whitchurch, 2008b). The results of the data analysis of the current study undertaken, predisposes the concept of 'third space'; therefore it is discussed. [*Knowing there is future potential growth gives us something to look forward to (Group 2 notes)*] In the focus group interviews, participants mentioned providing continuity due to changes in the academic leadership/staff, collaboration with other departments/disciplines and expressed aspirations for future growth and opportunities. [*Provide continuity in doing the job as academic staff change but administrative staff remain same (Group 2 notes)*]

Participants relied on established roles and structures in the institution to define their roles and responsibilities yet in the same breath implied that their roles and responsibilities were changing. [*I take on various tasks and duties because in case of promotion (Group 3 Transcript)*] The findings evidence undertones of a new professional identity forming but this was not fully voiced. [*My feedback was valued and I was placed in an acting role for the job (Group 1 Transcript)*] During the period the data was being collected for this study the institution was

undergoing a restructure. Some participants were directly affected by the restructure while others were not at that point in time. There was much sensitivity surrounding the restructure. As I was directly affected by the restructure, to guard against researcher bias, I elected not to explore or expand on the impact of the restructure in the focus group interviews. The aim of this study was to explore and gain insight and understand mid-level administrative staff 'motivation' and 'aspiration'. The restructure was one episode among many episodes of change that had occurred at the institution. What is pertinent to this study stemming from the restructure is that it led to all non-academic staff being referred to as professional service staff and as such, the concept of 'third space' is relevant. [*Provide continuity in doing the job as academic staff change but administrative staff remain same (Group 2 notes)*] At the time the data was collected, the concept of professional service was relatively new and perhaps not fully understood by some participants. It is evident from the data analysed in the current study that mid-level administration staff had 'aspiration' in terms of role and responsibilities to bridge the gap and traverse between academic and administrative tasks and functions. [*Entrusted with the responsibility to prepare and support decisions of the management, establish services, and actively shape the core activities (Group 5 notes)*] In the focus group discussions, some participants mentioned promotion as future potential growth and development through furthering their studies. [*Knowing there is future potential growth gives us something to look forward to (Group 2 notes)*] Some participants expressed the 'aspiration' to extend their body of knowledge through formal education however they did not elaborate on whether or not their 'aspiration' to acquire knowledge was linked to their 'motivation' to endeavour into academia or remain in administration. [*I am planning to further my studies (Group 1 Transcript)*] Participants expressed that their 'motivation' was spurred by the possible opportunities for advancement within the institution but did not elaborate much further. [*Able to voice opinion and give comments to people in higher positions than me and they notice my potential worth (Group 5 notes)*] This noncommittal response from some participants imparts a view that mid-level administrative staff have work experience and were academically qualified nonetheless they were suspended in a hybrid domain or 'third space' attempting to carve a professional identity.

At the institution in which the current study was undertaken, the data indicated that participants' roles and responsibilities were directed by the institutions organisational and administrative policies. [*In our institution we have a lot of beauracracy processes and procedures take*

long due to paperwork' (Group 4 Transcript)] The influence the institution's organisational and administrative policies had on 'motivation' was not easily understandable. The participants in the current study concurred that policies, guidelines, decisions documents and communication protocols directed their work responsibilities yet the participants did not give an indication whether it motivated them or affected their aspirations for the future. [*I have to do things as per the policy cause the Deans change and then someone is acting (Group 1 Transcript)*] An explanation for this is in Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which states that extrinsic factors lead to dissatisfaction when not present but when present did not necessarily motivate workers (Ramlall, 2004; Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002; Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et. al., 1959). Company policy and procedures is an extrinsic hygiene factor of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory.

Participants in the current study described their roles and responsibilities by highlighting knowledge through work experience and on the job training together with academic qualifications. [*I am a Human Resources Officer with an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology (Group 3 Transcript)*] This indicated that status from the extrinsic hygiene factors of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory was a motivating factor. It can be presumed that knowledge and education bring about competency, which in turn gives status. The participants in this study felt motivated when they were given status hence it can be inferred that the participants were largely satisfied/motivated with their job. [*I was asked many times to give talks at the Admin Forum (Group 2 notes)*]

In understanding the data from the focus group discussions, it was evident in the various themes that participants were motivated to fulfil their roles and responsibilities based on the service they provided to students and academics. Participants expressed that ownership of their work/jobs, sense of belonging, being recognised, doing something worthwhile, or making contributions as factors that motivated them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In the discussions participants indicated being the providers of service to academics and students but appeared to acknowledge that their roles were supportive and secondary in nature to academic roles yet participants did not refer to academics and students as their customers or clients. [*entrusted with the responsibility to prepare and support decisions of the management, establish services, and actively shape the core activities (Group 5 notes)*] It is interesting to note that although participants in this study alluded to there being a divide and difference in the

culture of working between academic and administrative staff at the institution; participants did not categorically state it as a demotivating factor. In the focus group discussion, participants laboured the point that the manner in which academic staff communicated lacked detail in certain instances and topics administrative staff deemed important were not viewed on the same level of importance for academic staff. [*I hate when my academic leader does not say anything after attending an important meeting (Group 2 notes)*] Participants also raised relaxed adherence to deadlines and lack of follow up on the part of academics as annoyances. However, in the analysis of the data I found that participants had not positively identified these nuances as de-motivators. It can be deduced that the perceptions of academics and students on mid-level administration staff's provision of service impacts on 'motivation'. Hence, the factors of achievement, recognition, responsibility, supervision, status and interpersonal relations motivate mid-level administration staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

In the higher education environment, there is a lack of academic research on the work life or roles of administrative staff and their interaction with academics and students. Pitman (2000) examined the extent to which university administrative staff perceived academics and students as customers. Administrative staff know that they play a vital role in teaching and learning in higher education but are aware of the different value systems and culture that exists hence the tendency to develop personal relationships rather than formal business relationships (Pitman, 2000). [*This is the very important unit because it over see the quality of teaching and learning (Group 4 Transcript)*] At the institution in which this study was conducted, the provision of administrative services was often tailor made to meet the diverse needs and interests of the academic staff and students. [*It is difficult and confusing when line manager and academic leader has issues and their relation is not good (Group 5 notes)*] The 'motivation' to work is enmeshed within the extrinsic hygiene factor of interpersonal relations. Participants opinions of their interactions and working with academics and students were paradoxical. It seemed that participants 'motivation' was dependant on perhaps the task at hand or which individual they had to work with or attend to. This finding was supported by a recent South African study that developed a conceptual model of 'job satisfaction' among academic staff. The study focused only on academics but found that specific individual and situational characteristics influenced 'job satisfaction' (Chinomona, 2016).

The move to standardise administrative services across and within the institution so that each department/discipline/division/school/unit operated on business principles was evident in the

responses of participants. The trend to corporatize higher education leads to professionalization of administration. Roles and responsibilities have become more defined for higher education administrators, indicating a shift in identities of administrative staff. Participants in the current study acknowledged that their responsibilities were directed by being knowledgeable and proficient thus giving an indication of professionalism. Some research highlighted the changing nature of roles and identities of administrative staff and the emergence of new professionals (Whitchurch, 2006; Whitchurch, 2008a; Whitchurch, 2008b; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). Most studies were conducted outside of South Africa. In South Africa, higher education institutions have seen many transformational changes and in particular, the institution at which the current study was undertaken, was formed as a result of a merger of two universities. As alluded to in the introduction in Chapter One (page 1), the ideology of separation was entrenched in political, social and economic institutions of South Africa. Higher education institutions were at the forefront of changing this. It can be assumed the factors such as the work culture, ethos and environment play a role in determining the 'motivation' of administrative staff to create and profile their identity. Perhaps in light of the overwhelming political and social changes, participants in this study considered their 'aspiration' and 'motivation' to work on a more personal level than as an occupational class endeavouring to establish identity within the higher education environment. In reviewing, the literature it seemed that South Africa lagged behind in attempts to corporatize higher education and professionalization of administration (Pitman, 2000; Steck, 2003; Clay, 2008; Szekeres, 2006, Marklein, 2015; Chinomona, 2016).

The higher education institution in which this current study was undertaken had undergone a restructure subsequent to the merger. This restructure was a move to corporatize the institution and involved a move away from academic administration to devolved management. According to Steck (2003), the notion of corporatization tended to be synonymous with change that occurs in the way universities portray culture, practices, policies, and workforce strategies fitting to corporations. In this transition mid-level administrative staff formed part of the occupational class referred to as professional services at the institution. The transition from being referred to as administrative staff to professional services staff tended to be easily assimilated for participants who had specialist orientation roles at the institution i.e. finance officers, human resources officers, technicians, committee officers. [*In my job as Finance Officer I am planning (Group 4 Transcript)*]

This could be attributed to the fact that these participants were able to identify with a profession or occupational class that went beyond the institution. In the focus group discussions participants who had specialist orientation roles often referred to their academic qualifications when defining work itself and on the job experience when explaining the job content or context. [*I am a Human Resources Officer with an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology (Group 3 Transcript)*] Whereas participants who had generalist orientation roles such as administrative officers and faculty officers struggled to come to terms with the new structure. In the focus group discussions, these participants displayed difficulty in defining their status in the institution. [*Entrusted with the responsibility to prepare and support decisions of the management, establish services, and actively shape the core activities (Group 5 notes)*] Overall, I found that most participants in this study were able to operate and work in the environment despite the challenges of change. [*Confidentiality, hard work, commitment, patience and good interaction with the Head of Department and colleagues all contributes towards the smooth running of the unit (Group 5 notes)*] This was attributed to the fact that participants viewed the institution as a historical landmark that was unlikely to dissolve thus indicating steadfastness in a changing environment. [*Knowing there is future potential growth gives us something to look forward to (Group 2 notes)*] Participants posited being motivated by describing their hybrid of work tasks, strive for excellence, moves to professionalism and responsibility in terms of accountability, autonomy and ownership. [*I take ownership of my job and produce high quality work (Group 3 Transcript)*] Although participants gave an indication that they were subtly making moves to create a professional identity and despite moves and changes in the higher education institution to professionalize administration; most participants in this study gave the impression that they still viewed their role as supportive and secondary to academic roles. [*I feel responsible for empowering them to make decisions relating to their job the most prominent factor in motivating them (Group 3 Transcript)*] Findings in this study indicated that ‘motivation’ in terms of participants creating a professional identity did not feature as strongly as compared to participants being recognised for their manner in which they conducted their roles and responsibilities. [*Through me collaborating with other departments, processes were changed to improve productivity and efficiency... this was mentioned in meetings and to other staff members (Group 1 Transcript)*] Participants in the focus group were connected by their occupational class and had similar work interests but some did not express the need to share experiences and practices to grow and develop a

professional identity. However, the focus group discussion revealed that most participants were motivated by appreciation, recognition and the self-fulfilling nature of their work. [*My peers acknowledged me for job done well done and management rewarded me for my contribution (Group 3 Transcript)*] Some participants expressed a sense of belonging and allegiance to the discipline, department, division, school or unit they were assigned to or located in. They felt that although their work was mostly administrative in nature it contributed to the body of knowledge and functioning of that discipline, department, division, school or unit. This could be attributed to the concept of professional service as an occupational class being new to the participants. Another reason could be that innately participants tended to identify with their discipline, department, division, school or unit more strongly than with their fellow administrative colleagues.

In analysing the data I found that a few participants with very long tenure 6-10 years, at the institution referred to an old social working group called 'Admin Forum'. A historical review of both institutions prior to the merger revealed that both institutions had social working groups called 'Admin Forum' that was specifically for administrative staff. These participants spoke about 'Admin Forum' passionately and gave an impression that it gave them status and recognition in the institution. In the focus group discussions, some participants expressed that their extensive knowledge and academic qualifications gave them status and eminence among their colleagues and resulted in them being office bearers in the 'Admin Forum'. [*I was asked many times to give talks at the Admin Forum (Group 2 notes)*] Status and recognition are factors of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Participants' expressions about the working groups hinted signs of community of practice. Community of practice is a term coined by Wenger (1998). A community of practice refers to where a group of individuals with similar interest are motivated to come together to share their interests, experiences and practices and grow and develop an identity (Wenger, 1998). Although the 'Admin Forum' was a group of individuals who had similar interest who came together periodically to share interests, experiences and practices it seems that members of the 'Admin Forum' struggled to create a strong professional identity. Perhaps the drive for professional identity got lost in the merger and restructure of the institution which could be the explanation as to why creating a professional identity does not feature as a strong motivating factor. Advances in technology and the increase in the number of campus sites also played a role in the demise of the 'Admin Forum'. From participants accounts it seemed that face-to-face contact was the corner stone

the 'Admin Forum'. Hence, with the merger of the institutions and the resultant expansion, communication and processes of administration became digital and streamlined as expressed by participants in their explanations of the job content and context and work environment.

I also found that participants were prudent in their views on creating, establishing or assimilating an identity as professional services staff and were cautious with responses and statements. Participants tended to explain the work itself performed by professional service staff and classified professional services as a position in the institution perhaps because the concept was new and evolving. However, in the sub text of the focus group discussion the constant use of the words 'we', 'us', 'our' among participants hinted that sub consciously mid-level administrative staff did consider themselves a community and acknowledged a common professional identity. Also, participants spoke about their collaborations and consultations with other administrators in the various disciplines, departments, divisions, schools or unit and even other higher education institutions. [*through me collaborating with other departments, processes were changed to improve productivity and efficiency... this was mentioned in meetings and to other staff members (Group 1 Transcript)*] This is an indication that mid-level administrative staff were contemplating their identity in the occupational class of professional services. The findings suggest that a community of practice is evident but not properly channelled and harnessed by mid-level administrative staff. A similar situation presented in a study where individuals working on the project did not show an interest in organisational and professional structures to express their identity but rather created an identity that was associated with their projects (Whitchurch, 2006).

The changing dynamics of the administrative workforce in higher education has implications in relation to professional identities and the way roles of the workforce have expanded and diversified (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). The findings of the current study show advancement as an intrinsic motivator. The theme of advancement encompassed job enrichment, job rotation and promotion as aspects of 'motivation'. Participants elaborated on the expansion of existing administrative roles and the creation of new positions. [*I take on various tasks and duties because in case of promotion (Group 3 Transcript)*] Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) described a framework for professionalization of administration in higher education where the concepts of status creation and role accretion were expounded. The concept 'status creation' referred to where new positions were established that have specialised functions and the concept role

accretion referred to where new tasks are added to existing positions (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). The findings of the current study align itself to the concepts status creation and role accretion hence providing a basis for understanding of 'motivation' in terms of advancement and in relation to future 'aspiration' of mid-level administration staff. Participants in this study perceived themselves as exhibiting high achievement orientation. [*People tell me how I have performed overall and recognise my contribution and achievements (Group 2 notes)*] In analysing the data, achievement indicated that the basis of 'motivation' was the need for personal growth. [*It's good to hear that 'I am efficient' (Group 1 Transcript)*] The level of 'aspiration' of a mid-level administrative staff seemed to be closely related to their attitudes towards work and sense of accomplishment therefore it is presumed that 'motivation' is determined by the individual's route in higher education.

'Motivation' in terms of recognition features strongly in all five focus groups conducted for this study. [*My peers acknowledged me for job done well done and management rewarded me for my contribution (Group 3 Transcript)*] There was a strong association with recognition in terms of 'motivation'; be it positive or negative. Studies indicated that administrative staff were the unsung professionals in higher education and were often not recognized (Rosser, 2004; Whitchurch, 2006). In these studies recognition referred to administrative staff in higher education as an occupational class. However, the participants in the current study viewed recognition more personally and simplistically. Participants detailed recognition in terms of their own individual roles and responsibilities and expressed satisfaction in being recognised by tokens of appreciation, expression of gratitude, acknowledged for performance and given awards based on merit or long service. [*I was presented with a long service framed certificate in front of all my colleagues and academics (Group 1 Transcript)*] It is presumed that majority of the participants still viewed their roles and responsibilities as supportive and secondary to academic roles and did not fully comprehend the implications of the restructure of the institution and the emergence of the occupational class of professional services.

This study found that participants who expressed long tenure at the institution were motivated by working conditions, job security and status. This finding was drawn from the sentiments and statements expressed by the participants who explicitly stated that they have served the institution for a substantial length of time. Some participants gave the impression that being acknowledged for loyalty and tenure gave them not only job security but also status hence they were motivated

to perform their roles and responsibilities. [*given an opportunity I can excel in any position because of my dedication and loyalty to the university (Group 1 Transcript)*] Participants with less tenure exhibited 'aspiration' to grow in the institution and cited working conditions, job security and status as motivators. Participants did not elaborate on whether or not salary and benefits motivated them. Working conditions, job security, status and salary and benefits are extrinsic hygiene factors in Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Herzberg's research postulated that these factors do not necessarily motivate employees but when present merely prevented employees from becoming unhappy (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg, et.al., 1959). Therefore, in this current study the factors were taken at face value and not delved into to understand 'motivation'.

One of the striking things about this study was that participants did not overtly mention the tension between administrative and academic staff in terms of distinction of roles. Participants responses tended to minimize the potential impact tension between administrative and academic staff had on their 'motivation' to work. [*Provide continuity in doing the job as academic staff change but administrative staff remain same (Group 2 notes)*] Some participants mentioned specific instances where actions of academic staff left them feeling demotivated but in general, the tension between administrative and academic staff was briefly glossed over. [*I hate when my academic leader does not say anything after attending an important meeting (Group 2 notes)*] The participants who worked in specialist orientation roles that were not located in the disciplines/departments/schools tended to be more vocal about the divide between academic and administrative staff compared to participants in the generalist orientation roles who were located in the disciplines/departments/schools. [*My core function is to ensure all administrative matters are dealt with by the relevant people (Group 3 Transcript)*] This finding is supposed from the statements of participants in the generalist orientation roles who expressed a sense of association with the academic area of the department or discipline while participants in specialist orientation roles tended to associate and identify with their profession. It can be reasoned that the mid-level administrative staff were torn between two areas and attempted to assimilate two types of communities of practice. [*We are accountable for the amount of resources a person is given and the extent it is utilised (Group 2 notes)*] Clearly this disparity among mid-level administrative staff has given rise to issues of identity within the professional services staff component of the institution hence the undertone of tension between administrative and academic staff in terms of distinction of roles. By

comparison other studies indicated that tensions were apparent where the academic staff was the supervisor of the administrative staff (Pitman, 2000; Jo, 2008). Perhaps participants did not emphasize tensions between administrative and academic staff because they were in a group setting. The restructuring of the institution was under way at the time this study was conducted and participants were still coming to grips with the concept of professional service as an occupational class. Academic staff would no longer be the supervisor of mid-level administrative staff. Dobson and Conway (2003) believed that tensions between academic and administrative staff emerged because both groups had developed distinct ideas of their roles. Pitman (2000) noted the relationship between academic and administrative staff was an area of potential conflict due to administrative staff sometimes becoming victims of academic snobbery and academic contempt for bureaucracy. None of these views were evidenced in this study but from the data gathered it can be deduced that tenure, interpersonal relation and supervision were factors that related to how motivated mid-level administrative staff felt. At the time the focus group interviews were conducted the devolution of duties was fairly new hence the tension where academic staff believed that they were doing too much administrative work was not yet apparent.

6.3 CONCLUSION

To sum up this chapter the discussion of the findings of this study aimed to understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration in terms of their roles and responsibilities. The discussion focused on understanding 'motivation' in relation to the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Mid-level administration staff described their roles and responsibilities by expanding and explaining the duties and tasks of the work itself and how they believed achievement, recognition and responsibility motivated them to perform roles and responsibilities.

Corporatization of higher education and its concomitant professionalization of the administration was considered. The findings hinted at signs of community of practice among mid-level administrative staff but there was a lack of indication that mid-level administrative staff were passionate enough to pursue the professionalization of administration. As an occupational class within the institution, some mid-level administrative staff were of the opinion that the changes in the structure of the organisation indicated that the institution's

management acknowledged their professional status. Tensions between academic and administrative staff were reflected on but their impact was not fully explored. The findings leaned towards mid-level administrative staff taking a personal stance about their description and understanding on 'aspiration' and 'motivation' in relation to their work rather than a collective view of the profession. Mid-level administrative staff identified interpersonal relations, recognition as an individual, acknowledgement of achievement, and being accountable and responsible as factors that motivated them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. These intrinsic factors of 'motivation' indicate that the mid-level administrative staff in the focus groups were driven by personal imperatives. The extrinsic factors of 'motivation' were organisational and administrative policies, supervision, working conditions, job security, status and salary and benefits were deemed to motivate mid-level administrative staff to remain in the employ of the institution. Opportunities for advancement at the institution or future prospects in the higher education environment spurred 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff in relation to their future in higher education. The access to further studies while being employed encouraged mid-level administrative staff 'aspiration' to remain in the institution's employ. Mid-level administrative staff 'motivation' to remain in the higher education environment was highlighted by their achievement of academic qualifications, status of affiliation of working at the institution and job security.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter's focus is on recommendations emanating from the findings, possible future research and wraps up the study by way of conclusion based on the results and discussion from the previous chapters. There is an elaboration on whether the study answered the research questions.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research conducted it can be noted that mid-level administrative staff at the institution tended to explain roles and responsibilities in relation to 'motivation' in terms of their personal experiences and view; whereas by comparison the literature reviewed sought to study administrative staff in higher education in a more general manner. The participants' personal views on 'aspiration' and 'motivation' in terms of roles and responsibilities are important because they provide information that is rich in detail. The rich textual data analysed and categorised in terms of Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory applied to one institution can be re-considered with due consideration to other work motivation theories. As this was an exploratory study the depth of information gathered from the participants can be used as the foundation for further investigation. Time constraints during the data collection stage of this study was a limitation. It is presumed that a repeat of this study with a larger population will augur well as it would embrace the wider spectrum i.e. the various disciplines, departments, divisions, schools or units of the institution. The depth of information gathered while aiming to provide insight to and understanding of 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff at the higher education institution could serve as a springboard for further research. It is recommended that the study could be repeated with a larger group of participants so that it could be more encompassing and perhaps yield more diversified data.

This study aimed to gain insight into and understand 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff and as such contributed to the body of knowledge since research on administrative staff working in higher education was limited. The findings in this study highlighted the emergence of professionalization of administrative staff in the higher education

institution. In Chapter Three, I reviewed and discussed professionalization of administration and it emanated that in comparison to the United Kingdom and Australia, professionalization of administration in higher education institutions in South Africa is somewhat unheard of. In conducting this study, I did not find any professional qualification nor professional organisation in South Africa that recognises administrative staff in the higher education sector as an occupational class on its own. In my years of working in the administrative sector of higher education, I found that academic administrators often participated in training and development tailored made for the institution. This current study is perhaps one of the very few in the South African environment that has picked up on the subtle moves being made by administrative staff in a higher education institution to professionalize administration. An indication of these subtle moves is found in the expressions of participants under the themes of achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement discussed in Chapter Five and Six. In understanding the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff there was a glimpse that hinted moves to professionalize administration were apparent hence the need to monitor and follow up on this development. Time has lapsed since professional service as an occupational class was introduced to the higher education institution at which this study was initiated and this warrants a follow up study to gauge views and opinions. In finding answers to the research questions posed in this study more questions have arisen thus prompting the need for more research in this field. Questions raised were around professionalization of administration in terms of the issue of the emergence of 'third space', the adoption of first world practices in a third world environment and the development of a community of practice among administrative staff in higher education. In the literature review, Chapter Three of this study, reference is made to studies in the United Kingdom and Australia where the concept of 'third space' exist. Under some of the themes outlined in Chapter Five, participants in this study have expressed that despite their academic qualifications and work experience they felt that they were suspended in a hybrid domain. Participants' reference to sharing of knowledge and job rotation encapsulates the concept of a community of practice, which is discussed in Chapter Six. The need for further research on professionalization of administration became more apparent in the discussion of the findings rather than in the data analysis stage.

As alluded to in the findings of this study, the tenure period and age dynamics of mid-level administrative staff tended to have an influence on 'aspiration' and 'motivation' hence it is recommended that there be more discernment in terms of tenure and age in the selection of

group participants for the focus groups. The undercurrents of the focus group discussions led me to believe that there were underlying issues or views on 'aspiration' that were not fully voiced. I put this down to the fact that perhaps due to the composition of the focus group being heterogeneous (i.e. old and younger participants) and the issues of respect and cultural values; there was a reluctance on the part of some participants to speak freely. This filtered through when data was analysed and in hindsight perhaps it would be better to draw more distinction in the purposive sample such as participants be specified in terms of chronological age/tenure or divided into specialist and generalist orientation roles. This is a recommendation for future studies. As indicated earlier, a repeat of this study with a larger population will augur well hence for future research, it may be valuable to follow up on this study and conduct individual interviews to gain insight and understanding of matters raised in the focus groups.

The institution at which this study was conducted and at the time, it was in the early phases of the restructure of the institution hence the concepts of professionalization of administration and corporatization in higher education were relatively new at the time the data was gathered. Hence mid-level administrative staff were still grappling with establishing and understanding their identity as an occupational class. This prompts the recommendation for further research on professional identity of professional services staff at the higher education institution. In line with this I contemplated that the study might be useful to inform the institution's Human Resources Division in policy formulation and/or review processes since it was context specific. The emergent topics from the discussion on professionalization of administration are occupational class and professional identity. These are areas that the institution's Human Resources Division could further investigate which in all probability would assist and guide it in its functions. I also felt that findings of this study would contribute to devising and implementing tailor made motivation strategies linked to an individual's 'aspiration' for development within the institution.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to understand the 'aspiration' and 'motivation' of mid-level administration staff. In doing so the literature review conducted outlined the theory that unpinned this study and gave an overview of research conducted in relation to administrative staff in higher education. This area or field is not commonly researched therefore literature was limited hence the literature search was expanded to include corporatization of the university and relationship

between academic and administrative staff. The literature review highlighted findings and challenges faced by the different studies and provided insight into some views on Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory motivation.

The end point of the study undertaken was to answer predetermined questions on 'aspiration' and 'motivation' by getting insight and understanding of individual specific experiences and perspectives of mid-level administration staff at a higher education institution. It filtered through that there were common factors or variables that were related to individual's 'aspiration' and 'motivation'. These factors and variables were aligned to Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation–Hygiene Theory. Motivating factors were subjective hence difficult to measure therefore exploring the subjective experiences of participants was considered in accordance with Herzberg's renowned theory on motivation. According to Herzberg's Two Factor

Motivation–Hygiene Theory satisfaction and dissatisfaction were two distinctly separate factors and not on the same continuum. Throughout this study the various facets of 'motivation' were expounded and through interpretation it was reiterated that 'motivation' was not a single dimension rather it was complex and the presence or absence of factors or variables did not habitually result in satisfaction and dissatisfaction. One could be motivated despite a factor or variable being absent. This study concurred that factors and variables deemed extrinsic did not equate to dissatisfaction and/or lack of 'motivation'. Ultimately, the aim of this research was to understand the reason mid-level administrative staff remained employed at the institution despite the constant changes. It can be concluded that the institution in some way met the distinct and specific sets of factors or variables that motivated mid-level administrative staff hence they remained resolute as long as their individual 'aspiration' and 'motivation' were met.

The findings of this study concluded that 'motivation' could be understood by meaningfulness of the work itself, responsibility for the work and its outcomes, recognition for performing the work, knowledge about the work. The study delineated that where the work was designed to enhance the aforementioned factors, it was more likely that 'aspiration' and 'motivation' would increase. The extent an individual would be motivated and what type of motivation varied from individual to individual. What this study intended to achieve was to contribute to understanding the position of the mid-level administrative staff in terms of their 'aspiration' and 'motivation' in the changing dynamics of the higher education environment. The fundamental essence of what spurs the 'aspiration' and determines 'motivation' of mid-level administrative staff to

remain in the institution is the perception that continuity at the institution is dependent on administrative staff's institutional memory and knowledge. The movement to professionalize administration at the institution indicates aspirational improvements through learning and showcases an avenue to enhancing efficiency. Mid-level administrative staff gave of an image that portrayed a sense of pride and status of being associated with the institution. The study also highlighted that it was important to pay attention to how individuals feel about their jobs in order to understand their 'motivation' to work. It can be concluded that the work itself, recognition, responsibility, achievements, advancement and status are key factors that contribute to 'motivation'. The other factors of organisational and administrative policies, supervision and interpersonal relations also contributed to 'motivation' but to a lesser extent. However, it was felt that 'motivation' to work in terms of the factors of working conditions, job security, and salary and benefits were neutral. The findings further suggested that a community of practice was evident but not properly channelled and harnessed by mid-level administrative staff.

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ANNEXURE A: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Introduce myself and outline format of the focus group discussion

I am a Masters student in the School of Adult and Higher Education who is presently engaged in a research project that explores the aspirations and motivations of administrative staff at a higher education institution. I am seeking your assistance in furthering this research project. Staff from salary grades 8 to 12 has been selected to participate in the research project. As you can see there are about 10 people from the campus here. This session is approximately an hour long and is being held once only. Today's discussion will be tape recorded and transcribed and the transcription would be sent to you to verify that it is correct. After a period of 5 years the tape would be incinerated and all written documentation will be shredded. Any information provided will be kept strictly confidential. You are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any stage and your decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage.

The focus group entails a discussion on aspirations and motivations of administrative staff. The format is that I will facilitate the discussion and we start by me stating the question and the group has a discussion around that question. The discussion will be tape recorded and I will make notes as well and as I said earlier a copy of the transcription will be sent to you to check and verify that it is correct. Before we begin I must thank you for your time and co-operation. I greatly appreciate it.

MAIN QUESTIONS	PROBE QUESTIONS
Describe your job and how do you think it is perceived within the university?	Describe your roles and responsibilities
What motivates you to do your job?	Why do you play the roles and perform the functions? What demotivates you to do your job? Do you get the recognition you think you deserve for the work you do?
What are your aspirations for your future in higher education?	How does it relate to current job? What opportunities for achievement does your work provide?

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT: FOCUS GROUP

Date

Dear Sir / Madam

I am a Masters student in the School of Adult and Higher Education who is presently engaged in a research project that explores the aspirations and motivations of administrative staff at a higher education institution. I am seeking your assistance in furthering this research project and request your participation in a focus group discussion. Staff from salary grades 8 to 12 has been selected to participate in the research project. The focus group entails a discussion on aspirations and motivations of administrative staff. The focus group will consist of approximately 10 people from the campus you are located on. It is approximately an hour long and will be held once only. The discussion will be tape recorded and transcribed and the transcription would be sent to you to verify that it is correct. After a period of 5 years the tape would be incinerated and all written documentation will be shredded. Any information provided will be kept strictly confidential. You are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any stage and your decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage.

Should you require further information or clarification please contact me (Ishana Gangaram) on 084 5054438 or I am located in Room 364 Department of General Surgery, Medical School Campus. Alternately you may contact my supervisor Mrs Frances O'Brien on 031 260 2291.

Please can you sign the declaration below to indicate your voluntary participation in this research project and return it to me to via the address above.

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

