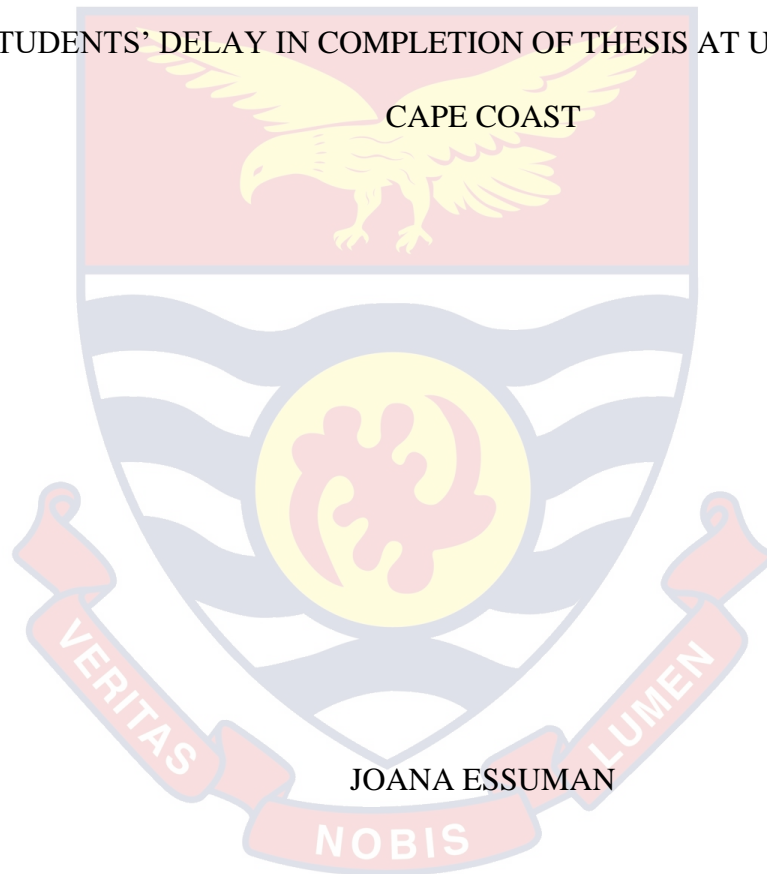


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

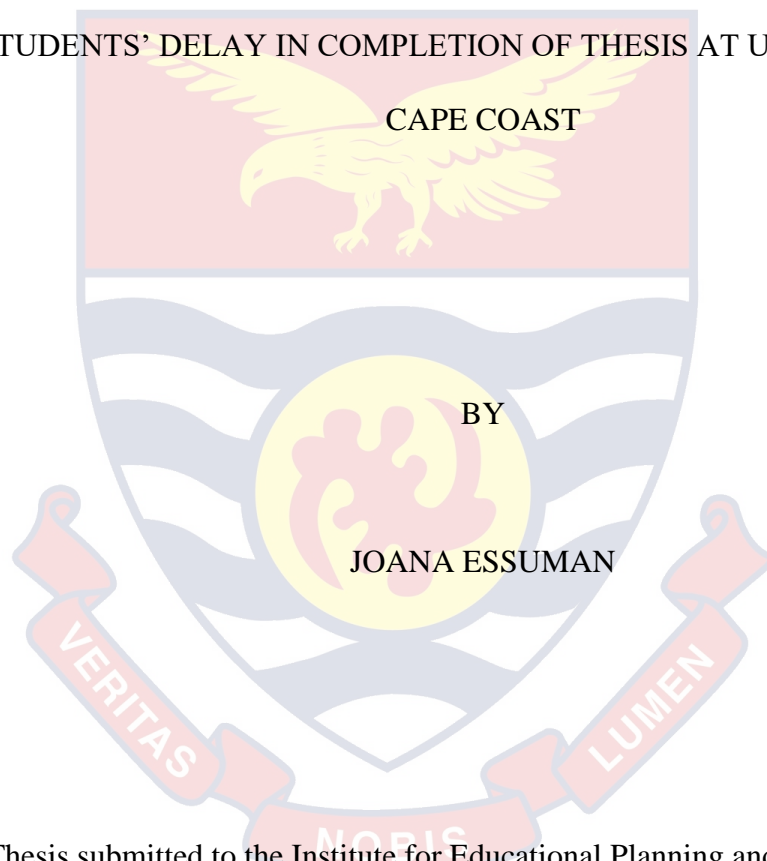
A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CAUSING MPhil
STUDENTS' DELAY IN COMPLETION OF THESIS AT UNIVERSITY OF



2020

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CAUSING MPhil
STUDENTS' DELAY IN COMPLETION OF THESIS AT UNIVERSITY OF



Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
of the School of Educational Development and Outreach, College of
Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Administration
in Higher Education

MAY, 2020

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Joana Essuman

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Dr. Marie Afua Baah Bakah

Co-Supervisor's Signature: Date:.....

Name: Dr. Alfred Ampah-Mensah

ABSTRACT

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to explore factors causing MPhil students' delay using students of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) and School of Development Studies (SDS), faculty members from IEPA and SDS, and key administrators of School of Graduate Studies (SGS), totalling 284. The purposive sampling procedure was used in selecting 14 respondents consisting of six students, six supervisors and two. The sole method of gathering data was in-depth face-to-face interviews. Transcript of recorded interviews was prepared for analysis, using thematic deductions and descriptive language. This study found that thesis writing helped in the generation of knowledge, contributed to national development and was a requirement for MPhil students to graduate. Secondly, personal qualities and commitments of students, students' concern about marital, family or health problems, employment and financial status of students emerged as some student-related factors while pressure on supervisors' time due to other commitments, supervisors' style of supervision and supervisor-supervisee relationships were the most influential supervisor-related factors that affected the timely completion of MPhil thesis. Finally, institutional policies and procedures, and the availability of teaching and learning resources in the university also affected the timely completion of the MPhil programme at the University of Cape Coast (UCC). By recommendation, students in full-time employment should seek proper study leave to be able to dedicate the required time needed for research and thesis writing. It was also recommended that the management should strengthen its strategies of speeding up MPhil students' completion of thesis writing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without resource support from my employers and individuals. Before expressing my hearty appreciation, I give thanks to God for his unrelenting grace and mercies that has seen me through my programme's course.

I am indebted to the University of Cape Coast for providing financial support through the course of study while my job remained intact. The pedagogic and professional support received from my supervisors Dr. Marie Afua Baah Bakah and Dr. Alfred Ampah-Mensah has been invaluable and no amount of words can describe my depth of gratitude. The working relationship has been superb.

The support from my husband and children Emmanuella, Richard, Oluwatobi, Funmilayo and Eniola has been emotionally reinforcing, as they contributed their quota to the successful completion of my thesis. Spiritual and motivational support from my parents, siblings and in-laws moved potential barriers and paved the way for endurance.

I am greatly indebted to Prof. Anthony Annan-Prah, Dr. Eric Anane and Mr. Theophilus Kwasi Odame Danso for the generous encouragement and support to making this work a success. Last but not the least to my friends (Ruth, Bright, Elisheba, Benedicta, Golda, and Yacoba), Directors and lecturers at IEPA, SDS, Dean and staff of SGS, UCC, it was gratifying interacting with you all when it mattered most. Eliciting your opinion on diverse issues including directions on my thesis was very inspiring, challenging and above all useful.

DEDICATION

To my children



TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Question	8
Significance of the Study	9
Delimitations	10
Limitations	10
Definition of Terms	11
Organisation of the Rest of the Study	12
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	14
Concept of Completion	14
Benefits of Early Thesis Completion and Graduation	15
Theoretical Framework	17
Vincent Tinto’s Model of Student Retention	17
Jiranek’s Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle	21
Experiential Learning Theory	24
Factors Determining Completion Among Post Graduate Masters Research Students	26
Student-Related Factors	27

Personal Qualities	28
Student Research Skills and Knowledge	30
Employment Status	31
Modality of Study (Full-Time or Part-Time Study)	32
Financial Factor	33
Students Commitment to Research Process	34
Supervisory-Related Factors	35
Responsibilities of Supervisor	37
Supervisory Style	40
Supervisor Competence	43
Supervisor-Supervisee Working Relationship	44
Institutional-Related Factor	46
Academic Environment	46
Staff-Student Ratios	48
Student Support Services	49
Teaching/Leaning Resource	52
Conceptual Framework	53
Summary of the Related Literature Review	55
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	58
Overview	58
Research Design	58
Study Area	60
Population	61
Sample and Sampling Procedure	61
Data Collection Instrument	64
Data Collection Procedures	65

Data Processing and Analysis	66
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	68
Bio Data of Respondents	68
Research Question 1: What are Supervisors and Students' Perceptions of Thesis Writing as Part of Postgraduate Studies?	69
Research Question 2: What Student Factors Contribute to Mphil Students' Delay in Completing their Research and Thesis Writing?	74
Research Question 3: What Supervisor-Related Factors Contribute to Mphil Students' Delay in Completing their Research and Thesis Writing?	90
Research Question 4: What Institutional-Related Factors Contribute to Mphil Students' Delay in Completing their Research and Thesis Writing?	104
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	114
Overview of the Study	114
Key Findings	116
Conclusions	117
Recommendations	118
Suggestions for Further Studies	120
REFERENCES	121
APPENDIX A	139
APPENDIX B	140
APPENDIX C	141
APPENDIC D	142

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Description of Supervisors and SGS Key Administrators	63
2. Description of MPhil Students	64



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. A conceptual Schema for Dropout from College	18
2. Adapted Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle	22
3. An adopted version of Jeremy Wright Pickle Jar	22
4. Conceptual Framework	54



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background to the study, which highlights the factors that affect the timely completion of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) students' research and thesis writing, the importance of thesis writing to students, the university and the society at large. This is followed by the statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study. The delimitation and limitations of the study are also covered. Additionally, operational definitions of terms are presented and the organisation of the study conclude the chapter.

Background to the Study

The influence of education on the national level of productivity and innovation has made the success of research students and the quality of graduates an important national issue (Grebennikov & Shah, 2008). In recent times, various stakeholders in higher education have given more attention to quality research, particularly postgraduate students completion and attrition.

According to Jeyaraj (2018), research work is an integral part of postgraduate education. Jeyaraj opined that the learning that takes place during postgraduate studies is a maturing process and thus must be enhanced with timely and appropriate support. The support and guidance, according to Park (2005), should be provided to postgraduate students without sacrificing the coherence and generic input needed in any academic programme.

Aside from the provision of support and guidance, Jeyaraj (2018) has affirmed that academic writing skills are essential in post-graduate learning since postgraduate research involves the production of a thesis. Jeyaraj asserted

that although many find academic writing a challenge, it is a crucial skill for academic success and thesis completion. Consequently, students are expected to gain mastery in the conventions of academic writing so that they can meet the demands of their postgraduate studies. Hyland (2013) noted that academic writing has become an area of interest due to increased participation in higher education, and increasing demand for quality teaching audits.

Pieces of research evidence abound on the issues surrounding the timely graduation of masters' students globally. The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) has identified inadequate supervision, unmanageable thesis topics and unsustainable funding of students as causes for the delay or failure to complete postgraduate research (Canadian Association for Graduate Studies [CAGS], 2006). In ensuring that postgraduate students complete their research work on time, Protivnak and Foss (2009) noted that efforts were made to improve completion rates by most universities across Europe and America. These efforts include an introduction of various policies and frameworks to encourage students to submit their theses in a timely fashion. Also, they recommended continuation charges, payable by research students if their research work extends beyond the time limit stipulated by the university (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). For example, Harvard University introduced a programme in which postgraduate students received yearly written reviews that detailed what was expected of them and where they stood each year. The interventions improved completion rates in some institutions. At Harvard University, the completion rates from the year 2005 to 2007 improved by 25 per cent (Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], 2008).

In the United States of America, the Council of Graduate Schools in 1991 reported that time-to-degree and the changing research environment was of great concern to many stakeholders in higher education. Amehoe cited Holdaway, Deblois and Winchester (1995), in the case of Canada, asserted that several higher education institutions showed concern about the problems with postgraduate education; especially the long time it takes their students to complete their research. In a similar study in Austria by Martin, Maclachlan and Karmel (2001), it was revealed that 60 per cent of beginning postgraduate research candidates in 1992 completed successfully in 2003 (that is, 11 years after initial enrolment), suggesting an attrition rate of 40 per cent.

Green and Powell (2005) similarly pointed out four factors underlying timely or untimely completion or even the decision to discontinue a doctoral study programme. These were: Individual (including gender, age, ethnicity, and social background), Structural (including the level of funding and disciplinary area), Academic (including previous experience and the type of research being undertaken), and Environmental (supervision, mentoring, progress review and academic culture). Council of Graduate Schools [CGS] (2008) noted that factors related to institutional administrative structures influenced the completion of doctoral studies in many universities. The report emphasised the need for institutional practices such as dissertation workshops on thesis writing, organising academic support groups, and rewarding outstanding mentors. Building doctoral student capacity and training faculty members on new and effective strategies are also vital (Di Pierro, 2007). Other recommendations included improvement of administrative mechanisms, mentoring, advising, and financial support for students (Sowell, R., Zhang, T., Bell, N., & Redd, K 2008).

The worldwide common phenomenon of a high rate of attrition and low completion among postgraduate research students owing to challenges in research and thesis writing (Olorunisola, 2011) is becoming a vital concern to government and funding agencies (Botha, 2016). On the African continent, postgraduate research completion rates are equally low. Terence (2011) reported that the average doctoral completion rates in Egypt are 60 per cent in life science, 55 per cent, and 49 per cent in social science and humanities respectively. According to a Wamala, Ocaya and Oonyu (2012); out of the 295 students who registered for the various doctoral programmes at the Makerere University between November 2000 and November 2005, only 89 of them were able to successfully earn the degree. Bunting, Sheppard, Cloete and Belding (2010) report that doctoral completion rates in most South African Universities remained below 20 per cent until the year 2004 when it began to improve. The improvement was because of the implementation of interventions aimed at improving completion rates to about 75 per cent. However, the target was not achieved. Between the years 2005 to 2010, the completion rates staggered between 45-50 per cent. Recently, Olibie, Agu and Uzoechina (2015) reported that the most unfortunate and painful thing about studying in Nigeria is the prolonged period of graduation.

Scholars in educational research (Grant, 2005; Lessing & Schulze, 2002; Mouton, 2001) believe that problems of timely completion and inability of postgraduate research students to complete their studies on time are mainly due to poor supervision and can, therefore, be solved by improving upon supervision offered to students and the student-supervisor relationship. Although the emphasis here is on the role of supervisor, the importance of the student's role

in the relationship towards achieving timely completion has also been recognized as a significant factor.

Studies that support the view that institutional inadequacies are responsible for slow completion and non-completion rather than student-centred factors also support attempts that focus on enhancing the supervisory process, postgraduate supervisor development efforts, enhancing supervisors' understanding of their responsibilities to improve upon their relationships with students and co-supervisors (Albertyn, Kapp, & Bitzer, 2008; Yu & Lee, 2013). Lussier (1995) attributed the delay in completing the degree to poor supervision and lack of adequate mentoring. Hockey (1996) was also concerned that the training of supervisors at postgraduate level is a "crucial factor" in students' successful completion of a masters' programme. What these studies have in common is that their investigation was based on student perceptions and they all stressed the role of supervisors as an important factor in improving postgraduate education.

Contrary to the believe that the untimely completion and inability of postgraduate research students to complete their studies is as a result of poor supervision, another school of thought believes that the problem is rather student-centred rather than deficient institutional arrangements that including poor supervision. Ibarra (in Lovitts, 2002) in his comments on completion rates among ethnic minorities in the U.S. indicated that policies adopted to address the non-completion problems were based on the assumption that the problem lies within the student and not the system. In an article titled 'selective admissions myth' (as cited in Lovitts, 2002), Berkins stated that strict admission procedures identify the ablest students and that those who fail to complete their

studies do so as a matter of choice. This implies that if the most qualified students are selected into a programme, they should be able to complete their programmes successfully irrespective of prevailing institutional arrangements and inadequacies including supervision. Lovitts (2002), however, cautions against the student-centred view and advised higher institutions not to consider tightening of selection procedures as a way of reacting to increasing non-completion rates and lengthy time-to-degree. By doing so, attention would rather be focused on student-centred issues rather than on institutional structures and research cultures.

The University of Cape Coast is no exception in this global phenomenon faced by postgraduate students. During the 46th congregation of the School of Graduate Studies and Research, at the University of Cape Coast, 2014 the Dean in his speech asserted that the majority of postgraduate students are not able to complete their thesis within the given time. The report indicated that students take three to four years to complete their thesis. This led the Graduate school to introduce a step-down policy in the 2013/2014 academic year, to relieve students struggling with their postgraduate research work. According to the then Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research, “the step-down policy will enable students who originally enrolled for the Master of Philosophy degree but have not met the thesis requirement after four (4) years to pick up a Master’s by course work only or equivalent in other disciplines”. The step-down policy was aimed at relieving research students of the stress of staying on a post-graduate programme for more than four (4) years due to their inability to complete their thesis. The Dean further confirmed that the policy has proven to

be popular with nearly 1,500 students taking the opportunity to graduate (University of Cape Coast, 2014).

One could assume that this policy would enhance the completion rate of postgraduate research students at the University of Cape Coast, however, it appears that the rate of completion among postgraduate research students at the University of Cape Coast has not yet improved. This revelation gives a clear indication that the problems of non-completion and slow completion are neither completely student-centred nor due to institutional deficiencies alone. It ought to be looked at from an evidential base through research.

Statement of the Problem

It is expected that MPhil students complete their academic programme within a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. However, available data indicates that students are not able to complete their thesis within this time-frame as many students take a considerably longer time to complete their theses or fail to complete them at all (Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], 2008).

Bourke, Holbrook, Lovat and Farley (2004) reported that only 10-20% of postgraduate students graduated within their stipulated period of study. Baafi-Frimpong (1998) in his research at UCC found that only 24 (11.4%) of the 210 regular postgraduate students admitted in 1993/94 academic year were able to submit their thesis and graduate within the period of three to four years (delayed though) of their study. Two decades after Baafi-Frimpong's study at UCC, the situation was becoming worse and efforts to salvage the situation gave birth to the step-down policy in 2013 among other interventions. Despite the interventions by the University of Cape Coast, MPhil students are still faced

with the problem of late completion and graduation (Dean of School of Graduate Studies and Research, 2014). Recently, Akparep, Jengre and Abaamah (2017) conducted similar studies at the University of Development Studies and also reported low completion of thesis writing in postgraduate research. The studies of Baafi-Frimpong (1998), Akparep, Jengre and Abaamah (2017), and Bourke et al. (2004) among others, all used the quantitative research approach. However, there are limited studies in Ghana that used qualitative research approaches to understand factors that prevent students from writing their thesis in time and this thus creates a research gap. There is, therefore, the need for research using the qualitative approach to help understand the students, supervisor, and institutional related factors that prevent students from writing their thesis within stipulated time at the University of Cape Coast.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that affected UCC MPhil students' completion of their programme. The specific objectives that guided the study were to:

1. find out the student-related factors that serve as a challenge to MPhil students during their research and thesis writing
2. investigate the supervisor-related factors that posed a challenge to MPhil students during their research and thesis writing
3. assess the institutional-related factors that served as challenges to MPhil students during their thesis writing and completion.

Research Question

In line with the objectives of this study, the following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. What are supervisors and MPhil students' perceptions of thesis writing?
2. What student-related factors contribute to the delay in completing MPhil research and thesis writing?
3. What supervisor-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing?
4. What institutional-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their programme?

Significance of the Study

The research findings would be useful to the management of UCC in policymaking and advising on corrective actions. The university would use the findings to improve the development of infrastructure such as libraries, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, and human resources to facilitate research and thesis writing by MPhil students.

Also, the findings would enhance the development of student support programmes from the government, other stakeholders, and well-wishers. Lecturers may use the findings to create awareness and improve completion rates at UCC and possibly in other universities in Ghana. The findings may be useful to graduate students pursuing or intending to pursue postgraduate research studies to address study-related factors that influence thesis completion.

Furthermore, the findings would provide valuable data for funding agencies to make informed decisions regarding their sponsorship of graduate students. Also, postgraduate students themselves would learn from their experiences and their reflections to move towards a better understanding of research supervision practices.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to the MPhil students of UCC, particularly, MPhil students at the IEPA and SDS. The study covered students who were admitted in the 2014 through to 2016 academic years. This category of postgraduate MPhil students was selected because they had spent a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 7 years exceeding the required stipulated length of time for the Master of Philosophy programme. Again, these cohorts were also purposively selected because they were admitted just when various interventions had been introduced by SGS which includes the ‘step-down’ policy, and therefore, it is expected that they should complete on schedule.

Finally, the study was delimited to students, supervisors, and institutional related factors that serve as challenges to MPhil students during their research and thesis writing thereby prolonging their completion and graduation but did not take into consideration the various subject disciplines.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the sample and the sampling method. The researcher had to use the convenient sampling and snowball sampling methods in getting MPhil students who had overstayed on their programme. This was because most MPhil students after completing their course work in the first year do not stay on campus. This affected the number of participants in the study. The effect of this challenge was mitigated by reaching out to as many students as possible who had overstayed on the programme, explain the importance and benefit of the study to them, and convincing them to all take part in the study.

Also, me being a staff of the university and student researcher conducting the study to explore factors affecting MPhil students’ timely

completion of their thesis could have brought in some biases. However, the effects of this were controlled by ensuring that I followed all ethics of conducting research protocols and remaining as objective as possible. I tried as much as possible not to bring into the study my views and judgments.

A possible limitation to my study is my role as an insider – a staff of the university and an MPhil student. There is always the temptation to allow my personal experience of M.Phil. Thesis writing to obscure my sense of judgment in analyzing and interpreting the data. However, as a qualitative researcher, this is sometimes inevitable. As such I am placing this here as a possible limitation and also use what Denzin (1989) refers to as thick description, where I present chunks of raw extracts from transcripts of interviews with participants to provide some context for readers to make judgments of my interpretation of the data.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to facilitate an understating of the terms that will be used throughout this study:

MPhil students: Master of Philosophy Students

Completion Rate: Completion rate is the ratio of the total number of students completing in the last 2nd year of their programme in a given year to the total number of students of official graduation in the population.

Supervisor: Refers to a university lecturer appointed by the university to provide academic guidance and mentorship to research students assigned to him/her.

Institutional related factors: Refer to formal and informal programmes and activities planned and undertaken by the university to facilitate student learning and research studies.

Time-to-completion: Refers to the number of years that elapse from entry into a postgraduate research programme to the time the degree is attained, including periods of breaks during active enrolment.

Timely completion: Refers to the ability of the Master of Philosophy degree the student to complete his/her programme within the time frame stipulated by the university. Most universities give a time frame of two years and three years minimum and maximum respectively for MPhil studies.

Untimely (prolonged completion): Refers to a situation in which the student fails to earn the MPhil degree within the time frame stipulated by the university. Instead, the study extends beyond the maximum time stipulated.

Student integration: Refers to the ability of the student to interact with lecturers, faculty members, and fellow students in a manner that promotes the acquisition of learning.

Institutional Infrastructure: Refers to the facilities such as a well-equipped library, internet facilities, an updated database available to students.

Organisation of the Rest of the Study

The study has five chapters. Chapter One deals with the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitation of the study, definitions of significant terms, and organisation of the study. Chapter Two covers the literature review that is organised under the following sub-headings; the concept of completion, theoretical framework,

student-related factors, supervision related factors, institutional related factors. Chapter Three presents the methodology that includes research design, population, sample size and sampling technique, research instruments, instrument validity, instrument reliability, data collection, and analysis technique. Chapter Four comprises data analysis, interpretation, and discussion. Chapter Five presents a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter aims to review the literature necessary for building a strong theoretical foundation for answering the research questions. The focus is placed on reviewing journal articles in the topical area of the concept under consideration in this study.

Concept of Completion

According to Cairncross (1999), completion has to do with students' ability to begin and finish their programmes successfully and, thus, become eligible for receiving a certificate. Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2005), corroborates the above definition by defining completion as the period from the first registration to the date when approval is given for the award of the degree. The date of the award may vary depending on the type of qualification to be awarded (diploma, bachelors, masters, or doctorate). Some qualifications may take longer than the approved years to complete for various reasons and the rate at which students complete their programmes will determine whether completion is high or low. Hauser & Koenig (2011) defined completion rate as “an indicator of the percentage of students in a given population who finished high school within the time allowed to complete. The emphasis of these definitions is the issue of time.

Amehoe and Botha (2013) in conceptualising completion highlighted the following factors associated with the terminology:

- i. Completion involves a process of beginning and ending;
- ii. The product or outcome at the centre of the process is students;

- iii. The students must have a similar identity in terms of their academic pursuit (such as having started the process at the same time, belonging to the same class, or studying in the same academic discipline);
- iv. ‘Duration’ and ‘Number’ are the basic yardsticks in determining the nature of situations without which there can be no such interpretation as timely completion, delayed completion, or non-completion.

Benefits of Early Thesis Completion and Graduation

Thesis completion has numerous benefits for society and the individual, the effects of which lead to public investment in higher education institutions. At a societal level, benefits of educational attainment include lower crime rates; lower welfare, medical, and prison costs; and a more stable society and government (McMahon & Walter, 2009). Baum and Ma (2007) found that “adults with higher levels of education are less likely to depend on social safety-net programmes, generating decreased demand on public budgets”. Turner (2004) observed that when degree completion rates are low, or graduation is delayed, the production of skilled workers in the economy is reduced, which results in lower tax revenue and spending. Failure to move matriculated students through the educational system to degree completion impacts not only the individual, the academic institution but society as a whole in important ways.

Individual benefits are intertwined with societal benefits of educational attainment. The most immediate and significant benefit is the wage premium associated with degree completion (Baum & Ma, 2007; Bound, Lovenheim, & Turner, 2010; McMahon & Walter, 2009; Turner, 2004). According to McMahon and Walter (2009), a college graduate earns 70% more than high school graduates, a figure that has increased dramatically since 1970. Not

surprisingly, through effective research work, educational attainment is negatively correlated with rates of poverty and unemployment (Baum & Ma, 2007; McMahon & Walter, 2009). Non-monetary benefits of higher levels of thesis write up include better health of the individual and his or her children; increased longevity; lower infant mortality rates; likelihood of children attending college; happiness (McMahon & Walter, 2009); and easier access to more prestigious positions in society (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

At an institutional level, graduation rates are often seen as a measure of the success of the institution (Astin, 1996). Low completion rates negatively impact public confidence in higher educational institutions and institutional enrolment management and budgetary stability (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004). A large number of studies have examined the economic returns to education to provide evidence on the motivations that drive the individual's choice of continuing to study, especially after undergraduate studies. According to the rational-behavioural model, people acquire more education only if their lifetime earnings expectations increase (Becker, 1964; Card, 1993; Heckman & Honore, 1990; Manski, 1993). It has been proven that people who invest in education, especially in postgraduate research studies, have more job opportunities, and thereby a reduced probability of being unemployed, and they earn more during their entire working life than those who have spent less time in education. It appears that human capital influences directly both the profile and the dynamics of the total work career of each individual as well as his/her income profile. Educated people face a low probability of being unemployed and at the same time have more chances of facing better labour market conditions from the start. As US data indicate, an

additional year of schooling typically raises an individual's earning power (Trostel, Walker, & Woolley, 2002). Thus, a person decides to invest in education because of the greater expected monetary and non-monetary returns. Higher earnings prospects are the most obvious benefit and the consensus estimate is that the return to education is quite substantial as the thesis work contributes immensely to the development of the country, Ghana.

Theoretical Framework

Postgraduate students face numerous challenges while attempting to contribute to the existing body of knowledge that can be accepted as an original scholarly inquiry (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Therefore, higher institutions over the world are making a conscious effort to provide an adequate academic environment to help students to complete their studies on schedule, improve their success rates in the various programmes, and avoid 'stepdown' situations. It involves strategies geared towards integrating students, retaining them, and making their experiences fulfilling on a sustainable basis. The concepts that underpin student integration, retention, and departure have been illustrated by scholars in the following models.

Vincent Tinto's Model of Student Retention

The most commonly referred to model in the student retention or dropout literature is Tinto's 1975 Model, which has as its central point, the notion of "integration".

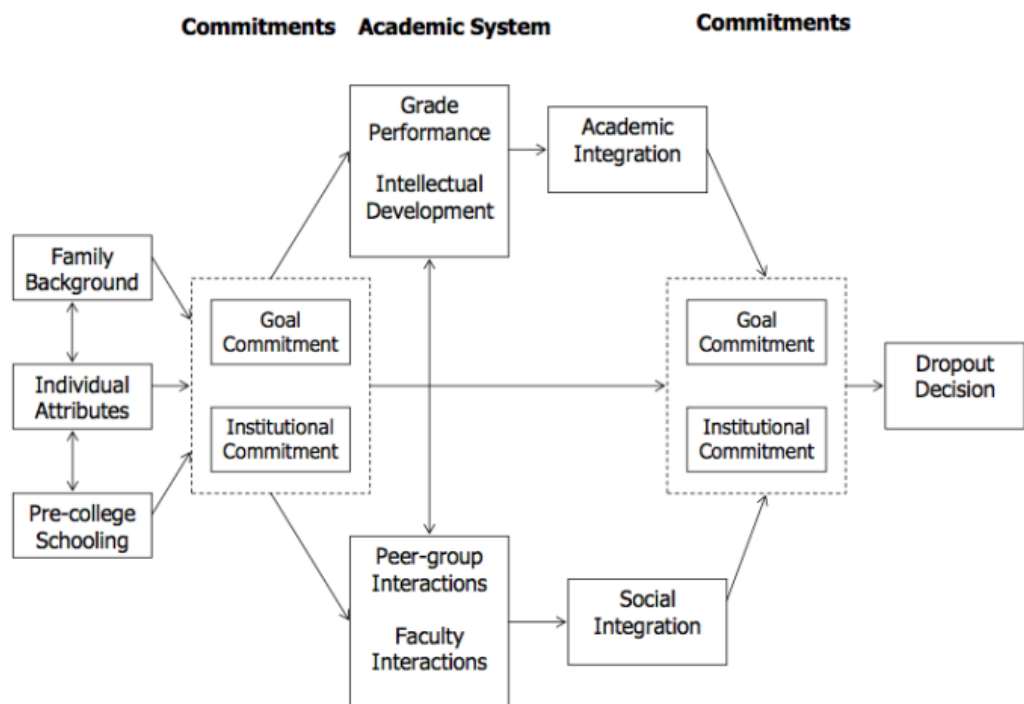


Figure 1: A Conceptual Schema for Dropout from College, (Tinto 1975)

By this idea, Tinto claims that whether a student persists or drops out depends on the “degree of academic integration and social integration” as indicated in Figure 1 above, which is an adapted version of Tinto’s model of student retention.

Issues that come up to be addressed in the area of academic integration include: whether the student feel that he or she is doing well academically or not; whether the student is enjoying personal development from what he or she is learning or not; whether the student is enjoying what he or she is learning or not; whether the subjects or courses he or she has chosen have any link for this or her career goals or not; whether or not studying the subject or course is the same as the student expected it to be; and whether the student identifies himself or herself with the academic norms and values of the institution or not.

Concerning goals and commitments, the belief is that those students who drift into higher education without a strong sense of purpose are likely to exhibit lower levels of commitment and persistence. Research has shown consistently, that efforts to improve or maintain student motivation can lead to better retention and achievement (Martinez, 1997). The intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the student on their initial course selection are important to remember. There is strong evidence that the initial motivation of students, as expressed by their reason for enrolling, aspirations, expectations of college do not vary significantly between students who subsequently stay and students who leave/delay or stepdown (Martinez, 1997).

The second part of Tinto's model, labelled goals/commitments, shows the addition of student internal and external commitments to the student drop/stop-out decision. As a student enters the institution, internal and external commitments have a significant bearing on the overall goal and institutional commitments.

Also introduced at this stage in the model is the acknowledgment that external commitments to others and entities outside of the institutions, such as family, friends, and work obligations, have an ongoing effect throughout the time spent in college. The external forces can rather be supportive or have a negative influence on a student's goals and commitments, subsequent interactions with the institutions, and ultimately, his or her departure decision (Tinto, 1993).

About social integration, the students are confronted with finding answers to the following issues: his or her ability make friends or encounter friendly colleagues; social belongingness (whether he or she fits into any of the

various groups in the institutions); the level of acceptability accorded the student by his or her academic staff or supervisors and whether they make themselves approachable and friendly; whether the student is enjoying being a student of the institution or not; whether the students are enjoying the social activities other students engage in or not.

What this model teaches is that the degree of academic and social integration which influences a student's dropout or retention decision is to a large extent determined by (1) an aggregate of attributes that the student comes with into the institutions, namely, his or her previous qualification (the previous level of education attained and in which institution), his/her personal and family attributes (personal conceptions or misconceptions, family status, the background of parents and family conditions), (2) the institutional environmental conditions such as the condition of teaching and learning support facilities, financial and funding matters, medical facilities, counselling services, sports facilities, and so many other institutional facilities needed to make life comfortable for academic progress.

In conclusion, Tinto's theory and models point to the fact that when students are admitted into institutions of learning; they go through a process of integration to enable them to adjust positively to the new environment in which they find themselves, and that the nature of the integration process may either lead to what he referred to as 'persistence' (the adoption of some strategies to survive in the system) or 'departure' (exiting the system because of difficulties). It means that when students are positively integrated, they will persist to the end of their programmes.

Jiranek's Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle

Closely related to Tinto's Integrated Model is the adapted version of Jiranek's Dissertation Complete Triangle shown in Figure 2. Although this model focuses on one key aspect of post-graduate studies – research, it was based on extensive studies to determine completion times, carried in Australia and UK by Jiranek (2010); (Kearns, Gardiner, & Marshall, 2008); (Wright, 2003); Wright and Cochrane (2000); Spear (2000) and Yew, Maclachlan and Karmel (1999). The studies showed several factors that influence completion time or candidature duration for research Masters and Doctoral students. Among these factors are the students' field of study, attendance mode (part-time or full-time), scholarships held, and technical difficulties in the course of research.

Jiranek (2010) sums up all the factors identified by these studies into three broad categories, without which the research project may not succeed. These are (1) Student qualities and personal situations (referring to academic ability, financial situation, language skills interpersonal skills, and persistence versus self-sabotaging behaviour); (2) the nature and quality of supervisory (referring to how often student meets with supervisors, and support received from other students and research colleagues); and (3) resources and facilities available to the project (referring to materials, equipment, and expertise).

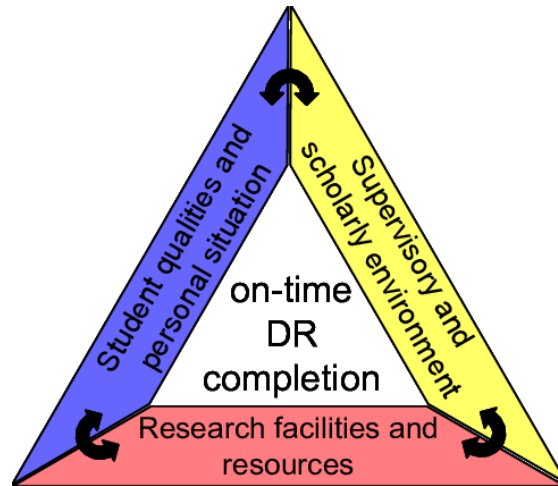


Figure 2: Adapted Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle.

Source: International Journal of Doctoral Studies (2010)

The extent of influence of these factors on the individuals' ability to complete the research or otherwise depends on the individual student's setting or personal characteristics and the interplay of these factors on the individual (Wright, 2003).

Pickle Jar Theory of Time Management to Thesis Timely Completion

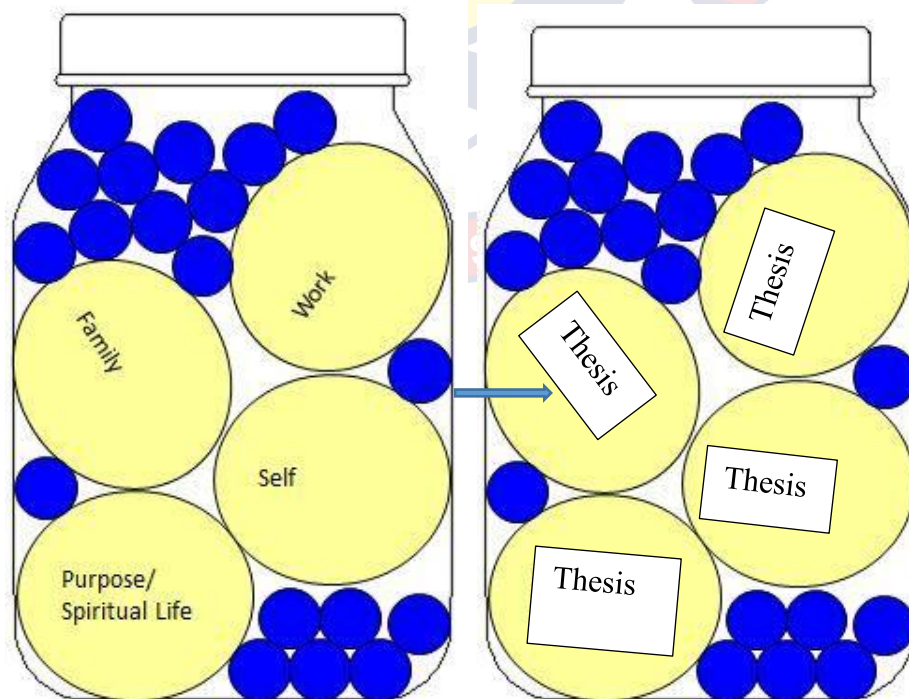


Figure 3: An adapted version of Jeremy Wright Pickle Jar (2002)

One must be quite familiar with the story of a pickle jar. It is simple but quite a good solution for better time management. Like everything in life that has a purpose, everything in the pickle jar also has a purpose for existence. The pickle jar is comparable to our life. Sand, pebble, and rocks inside the jar have their meanings. The rocks represent the major important task that has serious consequences if not accomplished on time. The pebbles represent the daily tasks with average importance. The sand represents unimportant tasks like phone calls, emails, social media notifications. The sand thus denotes distracting activities. If the jar is filled with sand first, there will be no space for the pebbles and rocks. If the jar is filled with pebbles, there is some space for sand but no space for the rock. If the jar is filled with rocks first, pebbles second, and sand, at last, there are rooms for all the three. This denotes a simple lesson that if one fulfills the major tasks first, there will be room to complete other tasks as well as get time for leisure (Mulder, 2017).

This study is anchored on the pickle jar theory which is the latest theory of time management taught in the leadership course. Jeremy Wright developed the theory after series of studies (Olubor & Osunde, 2001). The pickle jar theory states that the activities and responsibilities of people need to be balanced using an effective time management system. Time is approximately allocated for everything and things fit well where they are expected to fit. This theory is predicated on the fact that individuals have many large priorities in their lives such as studies, workload, leisure, family responsibilities, sleep, and rest which constitute the external commitments in the Tinto Model of Student Retention.

According to the theory none of these tasks is bad, but what is important is efficient management amid time constraints to enhance performance in various areas of life.

Experiential Learning Theory

The last theory supporting this study is the Experiential Learning Theory propounded in 1938 by (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). According to them, while the idea behind the theory was based on earlier scholarly work, (Lewin, 1951); Piaget, 1970) Kolb used the term “experiential learning” to emphasise the central role that experience plays in the learning process. Kolb’s experiential learning theory (1981; 1984) describes learning as a four-stage cycle. In the words of Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton and Renn (2010); Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis (2001) learners can enter the cycle at any stage but require the knowledge represented by each stage for learning to be most effective. One of the defining characteristics of experiential learning theory is the role of purposive experience in learning (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). A purposive experience involves creating the most effective conditions for learning by linking real-world experience to intended learning objectives.

According to Kolb (1984) cited in Stirling, Kerr, Banwell, MacPherson, Bandedaly and Battaglia (2014), educational approaches that fail to address each stage in this learning cycle do not facilitate the appropriate conditions for effective learning. This assertion has been supported by other theorists’ recognition that experience itself is not necessarily educational.

If postgraduate students’ experiences are structured effectively and rigorously processed, they can add a great deal of value to research output and

the educational strength of the department in particular and the institution in general. These transformative effects depend on careful planning and execution of research or any academic exercise while avoiding the tendency to fall back on the adage that every experience is educational. By pushing postgraduate students in a faculty to think rigorously and extensively about the intersections between theory and instruction, they can understand not only how to do things, but why they work the way they do, and what ethical principles are at stake as they engage in a real-research activity (Moore, 1991).

Relating experiential learning theory to our current study, it should not be taken for granted that research is a “we” venture involving the supervisor and the supervisee. It is equally worthy of note that no one can give what he did not have. Learning at the undergraduate level should be intensified to ensure better performance in postgraduate studies, bearing in mind the fact that any level carelessly misappropriated can influence the next level yet to be undertaken. In effect, how research methods and the conceptualisation of theories are effectively taught at the undergraduate or the coursework level of the postgraduate programme can influence the research and thesis writing stage of the student.

Not only does experiential learning theory support the facilitation of postgraduate student research writing, but it also supports the application of its key tenets to their research learning and development. The significance of this theory to the current study is rooted in the belief that students learn by doing.

From the foregoing discussion of completion models, the main determinants of completion can be classified as student-related factors, supervision-related factors, and institutional related factors. The models show

that the degree of students' academic or social integration, level of satisfaction, or dropout/withdrawal decisions are determined by personal factors (students' prior qualifications, individual attributes, family attributes, and personal financial status, goals, intentions, and expectations about the institution), supervision factors (supervisor-supervisee mentoring, prompt feedback, regular and productive scheduled meetings) and institutional factors (institutional teaching and learning support facilities, institutional environment).

Another observation about the models is the strong relationship among the various factors and how they impact upon the degree of students' integration into the academic entrainment and consequently the decision taken by the student to withdraw or persist. Setting one priority in the Pickle jar of life and apportioning more time to the accomplishments of the rock first will enable the individual to achieve the most important tasks and other necessary tasks in ones' life.

Factors Determining Completion Among Post Graduate Masters Research Students

A study by Mutala (2008) sums up factors affecting post-graduate completion as delays in approving the research topic, unnecessary delays in getting feedback (from supervisors), supervisor's unavailability, problems arising from balancing work/occupations and school, intimidations by supervisors, difficulties in finding relevant literature, and delays from external examiners. Duze (2010) undertook an analysis of problems encountered by postgraduate students in Nigerian Universities. The result showed that the most highly identified problem areas were in the order given as follows: (1) problem of lack of equipment; (2) academic problem; (3) financial problem; (4) problem

of data collection; (5) problem of supervision; (6) problems related to university administration; (7) accommodation problem; (8) family background; (9) external examiner's problem and (10) personal problems.

Yorke (2003) in his study attributes the delay in thesis completion to 'the wrong choice of study', 'the wrong choice of an institution', 'academic difficulties', 'financial problems', 'personal problems', 'poor quality of the student experience', 'unhappiness with the social environment', 'dissatisfaction with institutional provision', as the reasons that influenced their departure. Writing on students' perception of non-completion, McCormack (2005) grouped these concerns into three (3) main categories: student (personal) factors, supervisory arrangements, and institutional factors. This view does not depart from those expressed by Tinto, Wright, Jiraneck, and Knolb, already discussed in the theories above.

Student-Related Factors

Postgraduate research students have a lot of challenges to overcome such as family commitment, work commitment, finance et cetera (external commitment in Tinto model), which makes a significant number of them fail in achieving their research goals of a strong thesis and timely submission. These challenges are much greater if the students are doing part-time which consumes time, money, effort, patience, and enthusiasm. Most of them either finance their study by themselves or receive a scholarship, so it is important for them to complete their study as soon as possible, and certainly within the time frame given (Lessing & Schulze, 2002). According to Ismail, Abiddin and Hassan (2011), the height of these identified challenges is students not being familiar with the research process, difficulties in topic selection, and lack of knowledge

about research methodology. However, Abdul-Rauf (2016) noted that hard work, active engagement, and motivation of students are essential in the timely completion of the thesis despite the many distractions.

Personal Qualities

Evidence of student's personal qualities that could cause delay in thesis completion include lack of knowledge, frustration, loss of interest negative feedback and insecurity from the supervisor, lack of dependence related to mastery of research skills. Morton and Worthley (1995) identified difficulties with balancing between personal and academic lives as hindering factors in students' ability to complete their research and theses.

Furthermore, in a research conducted by Myers (1999), it was found that most of the participants for the study stated that family or other personal obligations like paid jobs or professional responsibilities took time away from working on their theses. Similar research by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (2008) noted that there was a 60% university dropout rate in South Africa. The students affected were mainly from poor families who dropped out before completing their studies on account of pregnancy, finding campus life too boring and structured, social and personal problems, having to care for sick relatives, peer pressure, and more.

Glathorn (1998) also stated that towards the end of students' coursework, they might have a change of career plans, values, or priorities, which could distract them from completing their theses. Glathorn (1998) further suggested that the fear arising from the "lack of knowledge and their own insecurity" may hinder thesis completion while Myers (1999) found that frustration and/or loss of interest are the biggest barriers to doctoral degrees

completion. The frustration, negative feedback, difficult relationship with the supervisor, or a change of interest, could easily make the student lose the initial enthusiasm he or she had for the research project.

Bowen and Rudenstine (1992) claimed that the thesis writing phase is not collective as compared to the coursework phase, and during this time students are often off-campus, some students experience a feeling of isolation. A study conducted by Olorunmisola (2011) found nine problems associated with non-completion. These included insufficient information, limited access to professors, engagement in studies which does not enhance the capabilities of the student, etc.

Postgraduate students spend long hours in the libraries, reading materials, searching source, and repeated writing isolation. In support of this argument, Kiley and Austin (2000) claimed that during the thesis development stage postgraduate candidates may find themselves disconnected from the institutional support system in the form of classes, and structured faculty-student interactions, finding themselves alone, a sense of anomie may develop.

Poor time management is one of the student-related factors that contribute to the failure to submit research projects on time. This corroborates the findings of Pitchforth, Beames, Thomas, Falk, Farr, Gasson, Thamrin and Mengersen (2012) who established that timely post-graduate completion is incoming skills which refer to the research and management skills of the students at the time of enrolments such as time management skills, discipline expertise, command over the English language, writing and mathematics skills. Jeremy Wright Pickle Jar model 2002 affirms that, with the constraints on time and varieties of tasks to be accomplished, time must be managed effectively for

everything to fit well where they are expected to fit to enhance performance in the various areas of life. Thus, poor time management contributes to the failure to submit the thesis on time.

Student Research Skills and Knowledge

A postgraduate student has been the author of completed project work, dissertation, or thesis is saddled with numerous works and technical assignments which according to Ellis and Levy (2009) includes first identify a meaningful problem (Peffer, Tuunanen, Rothenberger, & Chatterjee, 2007) that can serve as the focal point for the study. The student then needs to select an appropriate study type. This must be in line with the nature of the research problem and guideline from the available literature (Ellis & Levy, 2009), The selection of the appropriate study type represents nothing more than the end of the beginning of the challenge. Selecting a meaningful problem and appropriate study type however has proven to be a tedious and difficult task for most students (Ellis & Levy, 2009). The University of Cape Coast, School of Graduate Studies (2016) guidelines for preparing and presenting project work, dissertation, and thesis, in affirmation, outlined the specific responsibilities of the student; selection of topic, initiation of contact, literature search, submission of output for appraisal and feedback, language mechanics,

However, students' insufficient research knowledge or insufficient training in research methodology, inability to write well-organised, logical, and coherent papers, are factors, which attribute to failure by students to complete their projects on time (Majoni & Chidakwa, 2004; Mouton, 2001). Studies have further confirmed that students' limited language proficiency, weak academic writing, lack of capacity, lack of preparedness for research and postgraduate

study, (Osman, 2012), have also added up as major hindrances to students' completion of postgraduate studies.

Bassett, Staton-Spicer and Whitehead (1979) found the lack of preparation especially apparent in colleges of education. She conducted a cross-disciplinary study at the University of Iowa, examining the experiences of 196 recent doctoral graduates in humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, physical sciences, and education. Her data showed that education graduates “were rather poorly prepared for research before embarking on their dissertation, and they required considerable amounts of assistance for their dissertation research.” Education graduates did not feel as positive about their dissertation experiences as those from other disciplines. This corroborates the Experiential Learning Theory that learning at the undergraduate level should be intensified to ensure better performance in postgraduate studies, bearing in mind the fact that any level carelessly misappropriated can influence the next level yet to be undertaken.

Another major challenge during the research process is the data collection process. According to Bowen and Rudenstine (1992), it may be required that the student undertakes extensive archival work or fieldwork during the data-gathering phase of the thesis process. This work may take place outside of the student's university thereby increasing the time to complete

Employment Status

Many students are forced to work full-time to pay for tuition costs and to support their families. The professional student who is employed full-time brings many beneficial life experiences to the classroom but still must struggle to meet the demands of a job that frequently takes precedence over the thesis. It

is the recommendation of most researchers for students not to work while completing the thesis. This represents the ideal situation, which is not always possible or practical. Employment status is directly related to lengthier thesis completion. Working students are less likely to complete their research and thesis writing and generally take a longer time to finish them than non-working students (Lang, 1985). Bowen and Rudenstine (1992) state that working students who are simultaneously conducting research and writing theses are at a disadvantage that creates financial stress as well as psychological stress. In an assertion Studies by Choy (2000) among others also confirms that students' employment status (that is combining studies and work) is directly related to students keeping long in writing their thesis and subsequent completion. It appears that employment can detract one from working on the thesis. According to Botha (2016), student throughput at the postgraduate level had decreased over time due to, inter alia, financial difficulties: personal challenges and fewer opportunities for the students to get study leave from their employers.

Modality of Study (Full-Time or Part-Time Study)

Another significant factor that can affect completion time is the mode of study that the student opts for. Although there is no significant difference between completion time for part-time students in full-time employment and full-time students (Latona & Browne, 2001), evidence has been provided by Seagram, Gould and Pyke (1998); Martin, Maclachlan and Karmel (2001); US National Centre for Education Statistics, quoted in Latona and Browne (2001) that shorter completion times were associated with full-time enrolments than part-time enrolments.

Financial Factor

The financial factor relates to funding or lack of it for application, registration, tuition fees, accommodation, acquisition of books, food, equipment, travel, clothes, and related material things needed to support the student's academic pursuit. According to Ehrenberg and Mayros (1995) students with scholarships are most likely to complete research and their thesis writing within a reasonable period compared to their counterparts without it. Myers (1999) in a survey of postgraduate students indicated that over 70% of students indicated personal finances as a contributing factor in not finishing their post-graduate studies. Yorke (1999) in his study also identified matters relating to financial need as one of the main factors leading to student withdrawal and non-completion.

A study by Hofman and Van Den Berg (2000) asserted that lack of funding was seriously affecting students' conduct of their research. Rong'uno (2016) confirmed that adequate financial support is the "nervous system" in any academic research undertaking. Lovitts (2002) note that problems related to finance are the major cause of delayed completion of a post-graduate programme or dropout. In affirmation, Nevill and Chen (2007) singled out financial support as the main factor contributing to the students' ability to complete doctoral degrees.

Bartlett and Mercer (2011) also emphasise that research is very relevant but researchers cannot achieve anything without the necessary "carrots" which include research materials and finance. They conclude that adequate research materials and finance will ensure the quality and relevance of research output. However, Lovitts and Nelson (2000) reviewed the factors affecting graduate

students' non-persistence in graduate studies and discovered that financial assistance was important for studies yet it did not guarantee student success.

Students Commitment to Research Process

Girves and Wemmerus (1988) developed a model of graduate student persistence that includes the degree of involvement in one's graduate programme and the relationship with the faculty advisor, the quality of the relationship between the advisor and student, and the departmental characteristics. Miller (1995) describes the student persistence with three types of graduate students, the "direct current," the "alternating current," and the "weak battery." Miller portrays the direct current graduate student as one who maintains a constant level of effort throughout the dissertation process, leading to rapid degree completion. This student seeks immediate help when any problem arises.

Miller (1995) alternating current graduate students begin the dissertation process with a high degree of effort and then fluctuates between high and low activity. Much motivation is not necessary for this type of student. Although these students start their dissertation work strongly, they, however, experience delays during the research process. These types of students begin their research topic with high confidence and face ups and downs in the study process. However, during the dissertation process, short or long delays interrupt the student's progress. Although this student generally sets no specific completion date but has a general idea of completion time. The weak battery type of graduate student, start their work strong, but gradually reducing in their effort towards completion. They need outside intervention or reinforcement to get a jump start. Such a student's "battery" is, at times, strong, and he progresses

toward completion of the dissertation, at other times, the “battery” is weak and requires assistance from an external source. The “battery” may even die, and the candidate may leave the programme altogether if their battery is not re-charged.

In as much as these previous studies may inform the current study on the direction and likely trend of the results likely to be expected, most of these studies were conducted in a different context other than that of this current study. Since contextual factors could influence an individual’s behaviour and differs from country to country, this current study examined how students’ factors could impede their ability to completing their post-graduate studies in Ghana particularly the case of research masters’ students in the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisory-Related Factors

Research is not a one-man activity. It is a collaborative effort for the production of sound scholarly works that can stand the test of time in the academic sector. Guiding research and project is likely the most complex and finest form of education which is involved by the faculty members. Supervisors should not be just experienced researchers, but they also should know familiar methods that make research effective. Also, they should enable higher education students to obtain the needed skills for these methods (Pilcher, 2011). Quality of transferred educational skills by the supervisor is one of the major factors in a student's success in preparing the thesis (Bazargan, 1997).

Much of the literature on post-graduate studies recognises graduate supervision as a process involving complex academic and international skills. These skills include guiding postgraduate students towards sound proposal

preparation and defense, methodological choices, documenting and publishing their research, maintain both supportive and professional relationships, as well as reflecting on the research process. Postgraduate research is a form of apprenticeship taken under the supervision of one or more senior faculty members, the faculty members involved in the supervision of postgraduate research must have the right expertise to play the role of promoter/supervisor without these skills, supervision may suffer many challenges with undue delay in completion.

Cullen, Pearson, Saha and Spear (1994), as part of a major study, carried out at the Australian National University, Canberra, produced a list of the characteristics of a 'good supervisor' (which they noted is very similar to lists of what undergraduates hold as desirable features of a good lecturer:

- i. Approachable and friendly;
- ii. Supportive, positive attitude;
- iii. Open-minded, prepared to acknowledge error;
- iv. Organised and thorough, and
- v. Stimulating and conveys enthusiasm for research.

They concluded that:

The identification of effective supervisory practice is best accomplished not through the simple aggregation of existing best practice, but rather through the deconstruction of supervisory practice and through the identification of those aspects of supervisory practice which would most benefit from strengthening, elaboration or change.

A more structured list of supervisory roles and attitudes is provided by Brown and Atkins (1988):

- i. director (determining topic and method, providing ideas);
- ii. facilitator (providing access to resources of expertise, arranging field-work);
- iii. Adviser (helping to resolve technical problems, suggesting alternatives);
- iv. Teacher (of research techniques);
- v. Guide (suggesting a timetable for writing up, giving feedback on progress, identifying the critical path for data collection);
- vi. Critic (of design of inquiry, of draft chapters, of interpretation of data);
- vii. Freedom giver (authorises the student to make decisions, supports student's decisions);
- viii. Supporter (gives encouragement, shows interest, discusses student's ideas);
- ix. Friend (extends interest and concern to the non-academic aspect of students; life);
- x. Manager (checks progress regularly, monitors study, gives systematic feedback, plans work).

The supervision process is influenced by many factors including the social setting, the personalities of the supervisor and the student, the relationship that develops between them, the expertise of the supervisor, and the problems that varied among students.

Responsibilities of Supervisor

The role and responsibility of the supervisor and the supervisee should be clear to all participants in supervision (Health Visitor's Association, 1995).

Besides, supervisors and supervisees should be aware of the ethical codes for supervision (Butterworth & Faugier, 2013). As Carroll (1996) mentions, good supervisors can adopt a multiplicity of roles concerning the supervisee. Carroll emphasises the meaning of the task and role of the supervisor and states that tasks are the behavioural side of functions and roles. The role is person-centered (teacher/pupil), the task is action-centered (to teach/to learn), and the function is a combination of both roles and tasks. (Van, 2000) argues that, even though a strong notional distinction is made between roles and tasks, in reality, they combine.

Traditional, part of the supervisor's job was to ensure that work was done well and to standard (Rogers, 1957). Hawkins and Shohet (1989) and Proctor, Marken and Payne (1988) argue that a supervisor can be seen as having three tasks. The administration or normative task examines the management part of practitioners' roles and it is concerned with on-going monitoring and quality (Carroll, 1996). The education or formative task involves the process of skill development and the ability to reflect on experiences. Lastly, the support or restorative task that involves supportive and helping functions.

The University of Cape Coast, School of Graduate Studies (2016) guidelines for preparing and presenting project work, dissertation and thesis, outlined the following specific responsibilities of the supervisor as:

- i. Guide/advise the students on topic selection to meet the student's career objectives, long-term research interests, and the interest of the community of researchers in the relevant field.
- ii. Guide the student on technical aspects of the project work, dissertation, or thesis.

- iii. Provide guidance on sources of literature that the student may consult.
- iv. Draw the student's attention to the strengths and weaknesses of his/her approach to the task.
- v. Have regular supervisory meetings with the student.
- vi. Provide timely feedback on specific aspects of works submitted by the student.
- vii. Prepare and submit periodic reports to the School of Graduate Studies on the student's progress.
- viii. Advise the student on a research course he/she may take or audit to facilitate his/her research design and data analysis activities.
- ix. Guide and verify the corrections the student is expected to make after the examination of the project work, dissertation, or thesis (including the viva, where applicable).
- x. Ensure that the student is made aware in writing of the inadequacy of progress and /or o any work where the standard is below par, acceptability will be according to criteria previously supplied to the student.
- xi. Prepare students for oral examination and dissemination of research findings.
- xii. Refuse to allow the submission of sub-standard work for examination, regardless of the circumstances. If the student chooses to submit without the consent of the supervisor, then this should be recorded and make known to the SGS.

According to Sze (2007), effective supervision is related to the supervisory style, supervisor competence, and academic and intellectual standing of the supervisor.

Supervisory Style

The supervisory style has to do with the level of direction and level of communication between the two (such as highly directive, regular meetings, availability (i.e. making time for students) interest and commitment and explanatory to the student. Timely and constructive feedback constitutes a major form of instruction that helps the students to address specific writing problems in their theses (Yu & Lee, 2013).

Good communication between students and their supervisor has been identified as an important element of supervision (Phillips & Pugh, 2000; Spear, 2000). Without open and honest communication, it is very difficult to identify the nature of and reasons for the shortfalls perceived by the student. Both parties should be open to criticism, willing to listen to each other, and to talk openly and trustworthily (Haksever & Manisali, 2000). Communicative skills of the supervisor involve being attentive and actively listening (Rogers, 1957) and being able to comment openly and objectively and constructively. Delamont, Atkinson and Parry (2004) point out that students must maintain communication with their supervisors throughout the study tenure. As pointed earlier, the supervisors have the task of guiding the students through the postgraduate journey. Delamont, Atkinson and Parry (2004) noted that guiding students can be easily attained if there is good communication between students and supervisors. The SGS guidelines also stipulate that the department also has the role of facilitating communication between supervisors and students in the

University of Cape Coast. As soon as the supervisor is formally appointed, and he/she agrees to supervise a given student the administrator of the department involved supposed to contact the respective student to inform of him/her allocated supervisor. This formally links the two so they start arranging meetings for the work.

Another supervisor style for effective supervisor is feedback. This is because the students depend on their supervisors' feedback in the process of researching and writing up a thesis (Wang, 2008) as it replaces the type of instruction that other students normally get in lecture and classroom approaches (Bitchener, Basturkmen, East, & Meyer, 2011). Thus, in postgraduate thesis writing, supervisors are said to be experts that provide opportunities for these students to move from the initial level of mastery to a more advanced level of writing with minimal support (Yu & Lee, 2013). Although the supervisors normally give both oral and written feedback on students' thesis writing, Yu and Lee claimed that written feedback constitutes a major form of instruction that helps the students to address specific writing problems in their theses. Hyland and Hyland (2006) further added that the written feedback contains a heavy informational load that offers the assistance of an expert that guides them through their ZPD. Also, the nature of written feedback which is usually provided on the students' work-in-progress, such as research proposals and draft chapters (Wang & Li, 2011) allowed them to revise and rewrite the thesis before submitting the final draft. As a result, this feedback provides opportunities for the students to practise their writing skills through the revision process, besides consolidating their learning journey from being novice writers to experts (Kumar & Stracke, 2011).

Regardless of how helpful feedback is in helping the students in their thesis writing, Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) asserted that the issues of feedback are highly problematic in postgraduate supervision. The student claimed problems such as lack of prompt feedback, conflicting and inconsistent feedback, as well as unhelpful advice by the supervisors gave a direct negative impact on the thesis completion and its quality. At the same time, the written feedback that is too general or vague, lack of guidance and only focus on negative aspects (Weaver, 2006), as well as illegible handwritten feedback (Crossouard & Pryor, 2009) were also found to be contributors to these problems.

Also, research has shown that constant, thoughtful supervision and availability are the key to successful graduate programme completion (Donald, 1995; Holdaway, 1993). Spear (2000) opines that one of the most common complaints from research students concerns infrequent or erratic contact with supervisors, who may be too busy with administrative or teaching responsibilities, have too many students, or be away from the university too often. Therefore, the supervisor should make equal information, time, and energy available to all students (Brown & Krager, 1985) and should also meet regularly with students (Hockey, 1996; Russell, 1996). Similarly, Lubbe, Worrall and Klopper (2005) noted that senior faculty members were being put under increasing pressure to teach, to publish, and to generate income. Quite often, "students' problems" will be down the list of priorities of senior academics. Effective supervisors are also characterised by respect, empathy, genuineness, honesty, non-sexist, and non-authoritarian attitude, paying attention to client welfare (Page & Wosket, 2001). Carroll (1996) identifies a good supervisor as

being a good teacher, who has access to a range of teaching and learning methods and can adapt to individual supervisees.

Supervisor Competence

Effective supervision requires supervisors to be knowledgeable and skilled in the research field (McQueeney, 1996). Brown and Atkins (1988) suggest that to supervise effectively, one has to be a competent researcher and to be able to reflect on research practices and analyses the knowledge, techniques, and methods that make them effective. Frischer and Larsson (2000) and Phillips and Pugh (2000) take a slightly different view, in that, they suggest that students are recommended to select a supervisor based on the key factor of whether the latter has an established research record and is continuing to contribute to the development of his or her discipline. This includes whether the person has recently published research, holds research grants, and is invited to speak at conferences in their own country or abroad. Therefore, an effective supervisor should satisfy such criteria. Spear (2000) supports this statement and adds that often it will be sufficient for the supervisor to be competent in the general area of the student's research even if not expert in the detailed area of the thesis topic.

Furthermore to the above, unclear motives and purposes of supervision (Wallace, 2003), supervisors' preference of some supervisory roles over other roles (Vilkinas, 2002), and lack of research training among supervisors were also identified as major hindrances to thesis completion. Some supervisors are not trained on the newest research methods that could help them in guiding their students in the postgraduate, which results in their inability to apply and transfer the appropriate skills and research expertise to their supervisees. In a study on

postgraduate supervision, Lessing and Schulze (2003) observed that students' aspirations were not often met in most aspects of supervision.

Supervisor-Supervisee Working Relationship

Research and thesis writing is a kind of apprenticeship process, the effectiveness of the process depends on the working relationship between the apprentice and expert. A healthy working relationship between the student and supervisor(s) is a crucial determinant of the successful completion of the project work, dissertation, or thesis. Supervision also can be interpreted as two ways interactional process that requires both the student and the supervisor to consciously engage each other within the spirit of professionalism, respect, collegiality, and open-mindedness. Supervision is a complex social encounter that involves two parties with both converging and diverging interests.

Loganbill and Hardy (1983) point out that the central focus of the beginning phase in this relationship is the development of trust between the supervisor and supervisee. This is reflected in supervisee behaviour designed to make this unfamiliar experience a familiar one. The identification and definition of salient, conscious expectations regarding supervision often take place during this stage. When other issues become the focus of supervision, the relationship has moved to the mature or developing phase. To guard against unrealistic expectations in supervisees, Loganbill and Hardy (1983) emphasise the importance of supervisor appreciation that the supervision relationship progress over time. This implies that insufficient time and effort in establishing trust within the supervision relations is likely to be reflected in trainee resistance to addressing client or therapist issues because they have differential needs for support depending on the level of training.

The Institute of Peace, Leadership, and Governance of Africa University (2006) conducted a study using a qualitative research design to establish how to manage the study-supervisor relationship for successful postgraduate supervision. The study revealed that supervision is a complex social encounter that involves two or more parties with both converging and diverging interests. Therefore, balancing these interests is very crucial to the successful supervision of postgraduate research work and establishing how to manage the student-supervisor relationship.

Seidu (2015) argued that supervisors are assigned a lot of students making it difficult to have sufficient time to supervise them and that, students who had built a trusted and better relationship with them were better off as it served as a bait to have them supervise their work for them and adding that the relationship should be established on certain principles and rules of engagement agreed and accepted by the parties involved to ensure that supervisees would know their limits and act accordingly. Good supervision and the agreeable relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor are not only vital components of successful post-graduate training (Dimitrova, 2016) but also constitute key determinants towards timely completion of the master's programme (Latona & Browne, 2001). A study conducted by Ezebilo (2012) on challenges in post-graduate studies in Sweden revealed that the success of research students largely depends on their relationship with supervisors. Thus, poor supervision does not only have a profound impact on the quality of the work of postgraduate students but also supervisees' motivation and advancement (Abiddin, Hassan, & Ahmad, 2009). Cheatham, Edwards and

Erickson (1982) stated that non-completion is possible because of the lack of quality interaction between students and their supervisors.

It is in this perspective that Abiddin, Hassan and Ahmad (2009) argued that good supervisory practice help students to fulfil their potential while in reverse, the supervisor's failure to attend to his/her exportations and responsibilities can harmfully affect the completion of the postgraduate degree. A clear understanding of the role of the supervisor and student is crucial to building a healthy and productive supervisory relationship (Thompson, Kirkman, Watson, & Stewart, 2005) and successful completion of the postgraduate degree. This indicates that supervisor-supervisee working relationship could result in a delay in thesis completion particularly in the context of Africa, Ghana.

Institutional-Related Factor

The last related factor that has also been established in the literature as triggering some of the challenges culminating into postgraduate students' non-completion is the institutional/environmental policies, and procedures. Institutional factors include policies and procedures established or not established for graduate student and supervision (Donald, 1995), how these are communicated to supervisors and students, the numbers of students being supervised, the supervisors' inability to manage a research group effectively, and inadequate support services and equipment.

Academic Environment

Any environment for learning must be one that seeks to integrate all learners. In other words, the learners must feel accepted by the environment if they are to be retained. Students at all levels of education need a conducive

academic environment that would make them feel integrated into their institutions as places of academic pursuit. According to Lovitts (2000), the more conducive the department's environment for integration, particularly academic integration, the lower the department's attrition rate. This means that when the academic environment of an institution is conducive and makes it possible for students to integrate, the conducive atmosphere permeates all departments of the institution where academic work takes place, thereby, enabling most students to complete their programmes on time. These ideas came out strongly in Tinto (1993) models of institutional departure which states that to persist, students need integration into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal social systems (extra-curricular activities) and informal social systems (peer-group interactions). Such enabling environment must include adequate student support services such as dedicated space for research, libraries stocked with the relevant collections, online research databases, adequate funds, grants and fellowship to support research efforts especially at the postgraduate level, an academic staff who should be interested and committed to research, as well as the availability of adequate social amenities that would blend with academic work towards a fulfilling student experience. Fallows as cited in Wisker, Brown and Brown (1996), thought that "universities might need to improve significantly their levels of support and published guidance to supervisors" because a "damaging situation arises when universities take the view that the possession of a personal research track record automatically enables an academic staff member to supervise the work of [postgraduate research] students". The need to ensure that rules and regulations governing academic life are fairly implemented and the

establishment of an agreed code of practice for research supervision and training (Lewis Elton, as cited in Ryan and Zuber-Skerritt (2017) are other key considerations for an enabling academic environment. Wright and Cochrane (2000) note that the nature of an academic discipline and resources-rich-environment influences to a large extent, the time to degree in doctoral programmes.

Staff-Student Ratios

Literature has shown that there is an increasing social demand for education, without a corresponding increase in the faculty and this has resulted in the challenge of how to manage the growth in masters and doctoral enrolments with a depleted knowledge infrastructure and strained academic (supervisory) capacity whilst ensuring high levels of quality (Duze, 2010). In Tetey (2008) study referred to earlier, he lamented the low staff-student ratio in African higher education institutions, noting how academic staff growth lagged behind student enrolment growth. He found that staff-student ratios have gone up in all countries (Ghana: 1:39 in 2007; Nigeria: 1: 47 in 2007; and South Africa: 1:46 in 2006). Among the implications of this high student-staff ratio is the huge burden on staff at all levels. To worsen the matter, it freezes on new hiring of academic staff in many universities during the last few decades creating serious generational and intellectual gaps among faculties (Murshi, Binta, Chabo, Ndebele, & Panzirah, 2001). Massive enrolments in higher education mean that current faculties (both human resource and infrastructure), are badly stretched.

At the postgraduate level, the real burden is felt in the limited number of supervisors, especially, given that a large proportion of academic staff (faculty)

in most African Universities do not hold doctoral degrees, and that some teaching positions are being filled by staff with only a bachelor's degree (Tettey, 2008; Walsh, 2010). With the above situation in Africa, and elsewhere, faculty tend to be overburdened with too much supervision load, which may lead to less attention or commitment to postgraduate research students.

Student Support Services

The most important student support service for many students is finance. This is a major concern for many students because from the student's perspective, if you do not have enough money to survive, then you cannot study. According to Bird and Crawley (as cited in Haselgrove (1994), for mature students with families and resource commitments trying to complete a degree at an accelerated rate, financial problems are acute. By implication, financial problems could become acute for most postgraduate students who fall in the category described by Bird and Crawley, and more so, because of funding needs for their research work. It is therefore important for higher education institutions to make provision for financial aid and facilitate access to grants especially for minority students and for postgraduate research. Apart from financial support from parents, guardians, and employers, other ways in which institutions can facilitate access to finance include educational loans, grants from the industry for students in specific disciplines, provision of teaching assistantship opportunities for brilliant students, payment for student services at the Library, Computer Laboratories, etc. Where these and many student financial support systems are either not available or inadequate, the completion time for students with financial challenges may be prolonged and in severe circumstances, the situation can lead to high drop-outs.

Another important dimension of student support service is the availability of a regulatory system in higher education institutions which deals with the research and thesis writing process itself to enhance student life in the institutions.

According to (Haselgrove, 1994), a university creates a range of duties upon students according to the services it provides. The student's responsibilities include (as examples): payment of tuition and hall fees, of not 'misbehaving in the halls, of not 'misusing' computers, repaying hardship loans, not plagiarising others, of being examined, of not bringing the university into disrepute on a field course, informing her or his department when she or he is ill, etc. Likewise, a university also has several obligations under the statutory instruments. Protivnak and Foss (2009) observed that doctoral students feel that mentoring and structured supervision systems such as weekly deadlines and weekly monitoring, can facilitate timely completion of thesis writing. Other factors that influence thesis completion are problems related to the thesis committee, administrative bureaucracy, nature of the research, and student social-socio economic related issues (Morton & Worthley, 1995).

Students' learning experience is enhanced if they are convinced that the institution is doing its best to meet its side of the obligations as they (students) also try to fulfil those expected of them. Where this is not the case, the situation results in a lack of the right information and confusion among students about procedures, or what to do when they find themselves in difficulties. Such simple omissions such as not giving information about being sick at the appropriate time and to the appropriate unit within the institution and lack of information

about timelines, and issues relating to student-tutor contact can seriously affect students' academic progress and their completion.

Equally important is a credible appeals system to which students can address their grievances for hearing and intervention to assure them that they have not suddenly become objects of victimisation in their new environment and to build confidence in them. According to Farrington (as cited in Haselgrove (1994), students have to be confident that systems of assessment and examination are fair and impartial, which includes questions of equality of opportunity, and that there are established quality control procedures in the assessments they undergo. At the research postgraduate level, where so much depends upon the judgment and commitment of the supervisor, procedures for ensuring regular contact between supervisor and student, there is a regular review of these procedures, and the appointment of supervisors and examiners are fair and scrutinized at an appropriately senior level beyond heads of departments. When the confidence level of students is high regarding these matters, they would see their way clear and make progress in their studies towards timely completion.

The final point worth mentioning under student support services that can affect time-to completion relates to the availability of systems to deal with the psychological aspects of students' learning experience. Common psychological challenges of postgraduate research students, according to Phillips and Pugh (2000) include diminishing initial enthusiasm, the feeling of isolation, work-intrinsic interest leading to over-independence (or neglect of one's supervisors), boredom, frustration, etc. An institution's student support system needs to be holistic to include academic and personal counselling services to make the

desired positive impact on students' academic progress which is necessary for completion.

Teaching/Learning Resource

Library books, reference books, conference reports, and journals are all important in research studies. The role of the library in research work is a critical component and libraries have been historically the gateways to information, providing researchers with access to knowledge facts to support their studies (Ruiz, 2002). Academically successful students should have adequate access to teaching/learning resources that are essential for their studies. The resources include materials on improved research practices, catalogues of research materials, better-informed researchers as well as dedicated spaces that provide a better work environment for researchers. The dedicated space is important more so for some researchers who rely on printed manuscript content held in libraries (Ivankova & Stick, 2007).

In terms of space and internet facilities most university libraries, due to cuts in their budgets, cannot boast of an adequate collection of books, periodicals, and electronic resources to meet the needs of library users (Markwei, 2001). Okwakol (2008) notes that most African universities do not have adequate physical facilities such as lecture rooms, offices, library, and laboratory space to provide a suitable learning and teaching environment. Again, Cheboi (2006) observed that the lack of adequate facilities compromised the quality of university education. Nelson and Lovitts (2008) note that libraries are critically important in helping researchers to exploit the full benefits and opportunities of the networked world including such developments as open access and social media. This promotes and exploits new technologies and new

models of scholarly communication especially with the introduction of content which has improved how researchers interact with digital content therefore accessing virtual as well as the physical library. In conclusion, Sarkar (2012) point out that the application of ICT is particularly powerful and uncontroversial in higher education's research work because it enables researchers to access not only information but also varieties of academic resources across the world.

Conceptual Framework

The framework guiding the study is presented in Figure 4. The Jinarek's Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle informed the conceptual framework for the study. The framework consisted of three main factors: (1) Student Qualities and Personal Situations (2) Supervisory and Scholarly Environment (3) Research Facilities and Resource.

Figure 4 explains the interconnections among the student, supervisory, and institutional related factors that can affect the timely completion of thesis writing. The figure explains how the students' proactive involvement, effective time management amid other internal and external distractions, and remaining focused can lead to timely completion. The other related and most influential factor aside from the student is the guardian; the supervisor and the supervisory process itself, taking into consideration the healthy working relationship that exists between both parties. The third catalyst is the institutional factors that play the role of the watchman, at the same time providing both parties the required policies and procedure, facilities, and enabling environment to aid timely completion among postgraduate research students.

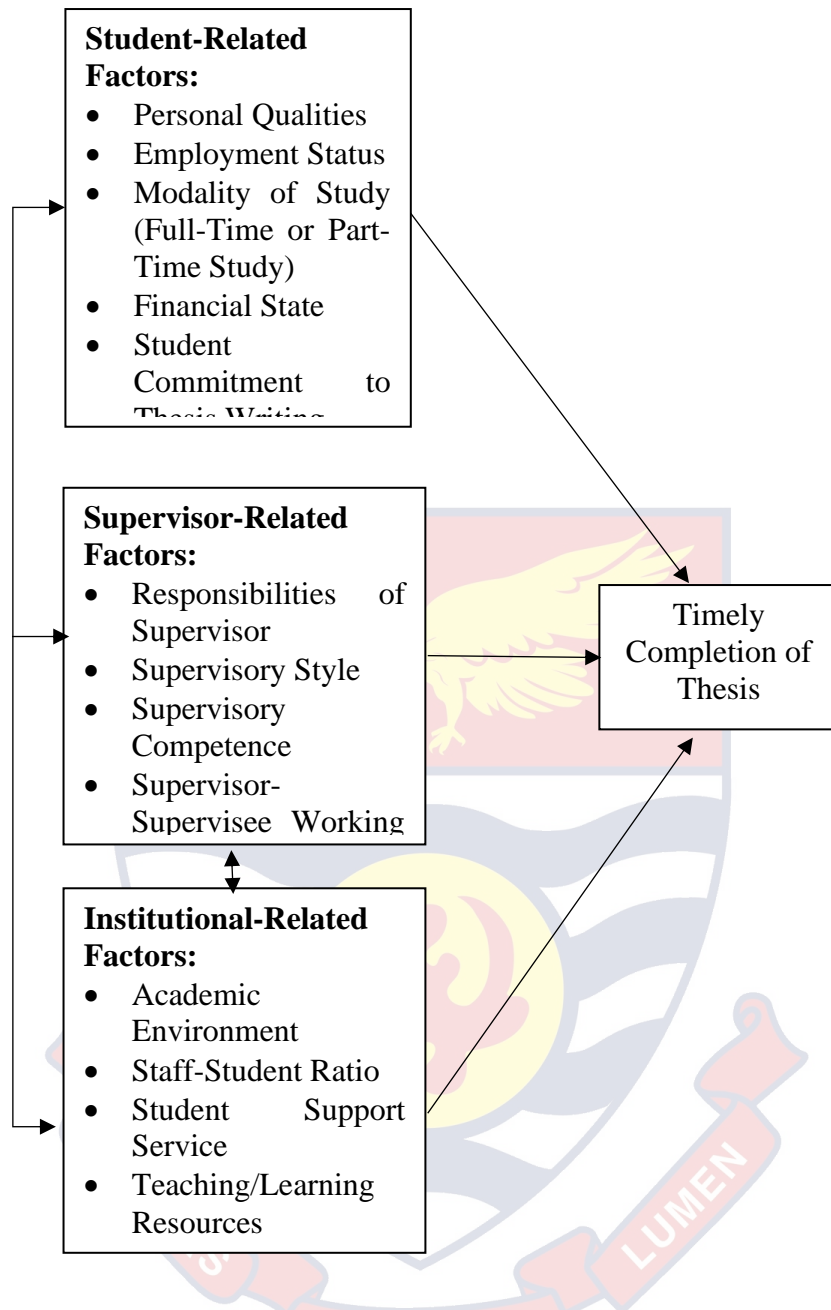


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Construct

At the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, a similar interplay of the students'-related factors, supervisor-related factors, and institutional-related factors is expected to roll out. I am of the view that student factors such as personal qualities, employment status of the students, financial state of students, and their commitment to their research and thesis writing are strongly related to supervisors' factors such as responsibilities of the supervisor, supervisory

styles, and supervisor-supervisee working relationship among others. The student and supervisor factors are also closely related to institutional factors such as the academic environment, staff-student ratios, and student support services.

There is an interplay of all three factors, thus, students, supervisors, and institutional factors, and all together influence or affect MPhil students' timely completion of their programme or having to abandon their study along the line. I, therefore, implore the Graduate School of the University of Cape Coast to take the lead in coordinating MPhil students and their supervisors while providing all necessary support and resources as an institution to help MPhil student complete their thesis on time but not abandon it along the line because of once challenge or the other.

Summary of the Related Literature Review

The chapter commenced with the review of related literature on the concept of completion as the ability of a student to begin and finish a programme (MPhil study) successfully, this was further explored with various definitions from authorities such as Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2005), Hauser & Koeing (2011) and Amehoe and Botha (2013). This was followed by a review of the benefits of early completion to the student, supervisor, the awarding institution, and the society at large. The most significant benefit was identified as the wage premium associated with degree completion to the student and means of measuring success to the institutions.

The theories underpinning the study reviewed included Vincent Tinto's Model of Student Retention, Jinarek's Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle, Jeremy Wright's Pickle Jar of Time Management and Experiential

Learning Theory. Vincent Tinto's Model of Student Retention claims that whether a student persists or drops out depends on the "degree of academic integration and social integration". Jinarek's Dissertation Research (DR) Completion Triangle is a triadic angle with arrows indicating the inter-relationship of the three main factors without which research cannot succeed. These factors were identified as the student qualities and personal situations, the nature, and quality of supervisory, and the resources and facilities that are available such as support services to the postgraduate student.

The third theory, the Jeremy Wright's Pickle Jar of Time Management to Thesis Completion, is related to the individual life with varieties of a task to be accomplished within a time constraint. In the Pickle Jar are sands, pebbles, and rocks. The rocks represent the major important task that has serious consequences if not accomplished on time, the pebbles representing the daily task with average importance, and the sand representing unimportant tasks like a phone call, email, social notifications distracting the student from accomplishing the most important tasks (thesis). It, therefore, admonishes the effective use of time to enhance performance. Lastly, the Experiential Learning Theory acknowledging the "we" venture between the student and the supervisor(s). The significance of this theory to the current study is rooted in the belief that students learn by doing. The supervisor in this context must guide the students well, as in the progress in their career development for better professional services to society.

Lastly, empirical studies of students, supervisors, and institutional factors that cause delay to timely completion were reviewed, synchronising the debate among the various authorities in the field with divergent and convergent

views to help support or refute the findings and analysis in chapter four of the study.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter discusses the research design, methods of sampling, and the procedure for collecting data. The chapter also presents an overview of the study area. Other issues discussed in the chapter are the research instruments for data collection, pre-testing of instruments; data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical issues about the research.

Research Design

Parahoo (2014) describes a research design as “a plan that describes how, when, and where data are to be collected and analysed”. This study is underpinned by the philosophical standpoint that reality is a social construction that is experienced subjectively. This informed the methodological decisions in an attempt to gather valid data to make valid interpretations for the creation of valid knowledge (Sikes, 2004). The interpretive philosophical paradigm underpinning this study acknowledges the feelings, experiences, and viewpoint of the researched as data (Kusi, 2012). The researcher, therefore, employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative researchers see knowledge as the result of human cognition; it does not exist out there for it to be discovered (Kusi, 2012). This implies that one always has to interact with one’s research participants in their socio-cultural context to gather data and interpret them to create knowledge (Kusi, 2012).

In the view of Kusi (2012), qualitative researchers aim to understand ‘depth’ rather than ‘breadth’ or explore a phenomenon in detail. They are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how

people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research is an umbrella term that encompasses many research approaches including historical research, phenomenological study, ethnographic study, and case study. For this study, the case study approach was employed for the exploration of student, supervisor, and institutional related factors that serve as challenges during the research and thesis writing phase of the MPhil programme at UCC. The case study approach ensured that in-depth views of students, supervisors, and management were obtained. This design did not only help to describe the data in a real-life environment but also reflected their perspectives which helped to explain challenges confronting MPhil students that could not be captured through survey research (Zainal, 2007). Thus, the design was considered appropriate to ascertain the factors that cause delay during the thesis writing and completion of the MPhil programme at UCC.

The first major strength of the case study approach is that it can capture and explore the complexity of a phenomenon for better understanding. This is what large-scale quantitative studies including a survey fail to achieve because, in most cases, they collect superficial information about a phenomenon for generalisation (Kusi, 2012; Muijs, 2004).

Secondly, the case study approach is action-centered and, therefore, the findings are useful for improving practice (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). Notwithstanding these strengths, the case study approach has been critiqued in diverse ways, this includes the fact that the findings are difficult to generalise. This is because such studies often concentrate on an instance or a few instances of a phenomenon and involve a relatively small sample size. Given the fact that

the advantages of using the case study approach in this study outweigh the disadvantages, the case study approach was considered more appropriate for the study.

Study Area

This study was conducted at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), a public university in the Central Region of Ghana. Established in 1962, UCC is a non-profit public higher education institution located in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Officially accredited and/or recognised by the National Accreditation Board, UCC is a very large coeducational higher education institution. It is one of the rare sea front universities in the world.

UCC offers courses and programmes leading to higher education degrees in several areas of study. The University had a total student population of 74,710 during the 2016/2017 academic year consisting of 18,949 regular undergraduate students, 1,445 sandwich undergraduate students, 1,014 regular postgraduate students, 2,773 sandwich postgraduate students 48,989 distance undergraduate students, and 1,540 postgraduate distance students.

The School of Graduate Studies of the University of Cape Coast has close to 7500 students pursuing graduate programmes (SGS, 2019). Out of this number, 2969 (1859 males and 1110 females) are sandwich students, 3235 (2006 males and 1229 females) are distance students, and the rest, 1125(405 females, 720 males) are regular students. The School of Graduate Studies, UCC, seeks to be well-positioned for innovative teaching and research, with worldwide acclaim. It is therefore working at creating a congenial environment for teaching, learning, and training of graduate students, equipped with initiative and leadership in key sectors of national and international endeavour.

The School of Graduate Studies coordinates all postgraduate programmes/activities at UCC. IEPA and SDS have the highest number of regular postgraduate students in UCC. The IEPA runs three MPhil programmes, namely; MPhil Educational Planning, MPhil Educational Administration and MPhil Administration in Higher Education and PhDs in Qualitative Based Research and Educational Leadership while the SDS also runs MA programmes in Human Resource Development, Human Resource Management, and Labour Studies.

The researcher chose the University of Cape Coast because of accessibility and familiarity, having served in the University for close to two decades. This factor helped the researcher to properly handle the challenges encountered during the research and utilised elements that contributed to achieving the objective of the study.

Population

In this study, the population from which samples were derived consists of MPhil students of IEPA and SDS from 2014 to 2016 academic year numbering 258 who delayed in completing their thesis, faculty members who are supervisors in IEPA and SDS numbering 22, and four (4) key administrators of the School of Graduate Studies. The study thus had a total population of 284.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study being qualitative, it was necessary to select a sample that would enable the phenomenon under study to be explored for better understanding. Creswell (2012) argues that selecting a large number of interviewees in a qualitative case study could result in a superficial perspective and the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes

with the addition of each new individual or site.

The researchers aimed to assess the multiple perspectives of the interviewees with different academic and professional qualifications and experiences, about challenges preventing MPhil students from completing their research and thesis writing in time. Therefore, choosing a maximal variation sampling strategy, a purposive sampling procedure Kusi (2012) was employed to build this complexity into the study. According to Kusi (2012), a maximal variation sampling strategy is a purposive sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristics or traits. The procedure requires that the researcher identifies the characteristics and the sites or individuals that display different dimensions of the characteristics. This study, therefore, selected three (3) supervisors from SDS and three (3) from IEPA, two (2) administrators from SGS and six (6) students three (3) each from SDS and IEPA were selected to respond to the semi-structured interviews, giving a sample size 14.

Using the demographic data that was gathered through the background check on the respondents, three categories of participants were generated according to their status, experiences, length of service as supervisors and duration spent on the programme for MPhil students. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select five Professors and one Senior Lecturer who had supervised postgraduate students for a minimum of ten years and a maximum of 15 years and had served the University of Cape Coast for a minimum of ten and a maximum of 20 years. This criterion was used in selecting the supervisors and administrators on the assumption that they might have acquired much experience in supervising MPhil students at UCC. The description of the

Supervisors and School of Graduate Studies administrators involved in the study are presented in Table 1. For purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of the respondents.

Table 1: Description of Supervisors and SGS Key Administrators

Pseudonym	Gender	Rank	Length of service
Sup 001	Female	Associate Professor	18
Sup 002	Female	Senior Lecturer	16
Sup 003	Male	Professor	21
Sup 004	Male	Associate Professor	20
Sup. 005	Male	Professor	36
Sup. 006	Female	Professor	20
SGS 001	Male	Vice Dean	12
SGS 002	Male	Deputy Registrar	31

On the part of the students, three students each from the School of Development Studies and Institute for Educational Planning and Administration who had extended their candidature and/or had over-stayed the required two years on the programme were selected purposively by comparing the matriculation list from 2014 to 2016 academic year to the congregation list of grandaunts from 2016 to September 2019. Description of the student respondents is presented in Table 2. Again, for purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of student interviewees are undisclosed. Instead, information attributed to them was identified with pseudonyms derived from the respondents during the interviews.

Table 2: Description of MPhil Students

Pseudonym	Gender	Cohort	Status
Stud. 001	Female	2014/2015	Completed but Delayed
Stud. 002	Female	2015/2016	Completed but Delayed
Stud. 003	Male	2014/2015	Yet to complete the thesis
Stud. 004	Male	2015/2016	Yet to complete the thesis
Stud. 005	Female	2014/2015	Yet to Complete thesis
Stud. 006	Female	2014/2015	Yet to Complete thesis

Data Collection Instrument

The sole method of gathering information or data for this study involved face-to-face interviews with students, faculty members who are supervisors, and key administrators of SGS of UCC. The study collected in-depth data on students, supervisors, and institutional factors to produce a comprehensive understanding of the challenges MPhil students face when writing their thesis at UCC.

A semi-structured interview guide was used in gathering information about the student, supervisor, and institutional factors that contribute to the delay in writing their thesis among MPhil postgraduate students at UCC. According to Borg and Gall (2003), an interview as a research instrument involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. Its principal strength is its adaptability to any given situation. In semi-structured interviews, a researcher employs a detailed but not rigid interview guide. This involves a predetermined sequence and wording of the same set of questions to be asked of each respondent to minimise the possibility

of bias on the part of the researcher/interviewer (Borg & Gall, 2003).

The interview guide had items that addressed all the research questions that guided the study. The semi-structured interview guide offered respondents the chance to speak out on the students, supervisors, and institutional factors that contribute to the delay in the completion of thesis writing. Supervisors of this study reviewed the interview guide to ascertain its suitability and reliability before it was used for the main data collection. Two sets of interview guides were developed, one for supervisors and the other for students. My thesis supervisors helped to fine-tune and focus the interview questions such that the respondents would not have difficulty in responding to them.

Both student's and supervisors' instruments or interview guides were pilot-tested at the University of Education, Winneba. The pilot-testing of the instrument led to the revision and modification of some items on the interview guides. This helped to fine-tune the instruments before using them for the main data collection exercise at the University of Cape Coast.

Data Collection Procedures

An introductory letter from the Office of the Director, IEPA was sent to respondents to introduce the researcher as a student undertaking a study on the challenges MPhil students face during their thesis writing. A copy of the letter was presented to the administrator of SDS, who booked appointments for the interview with the selected faculty members (supervisors) and MPhil students who had overstayed their time at the School. The researcher also called the other supervisors and MPhil students from IEPA and key administrators of the SGS to book appoint for the interview. The researcher had a general plan for interviewing based on the research questions, but the general plan did not

prevent the researcher from asking further questions during the actual process of interviewing. In other words, the issue of adaptability being a strength of the interview method was explored, having in mind that, the researcher's goal is to help respondents express their views of a phenomenon on their terms. The researcher secured the respondents' prior consent to record the interviews. The audio recording, in part, facilitated my review and analysis of the research data.

Data Processing and Analysis

Glesne (2016) defines data analysis as the effort of researchers to manage and make sense of their data to transform it from its acquired form into a form that communicates the promise of a study's findings. It is a transformation process (from organisation to meaning) that involves a three-tier approach: description, analysis, and interpretation. In the description, the researcher stays close to the data that was originally collected. Where, the researcher departs from the data that was originally collected and makes inferences to complete otherwise important but incomplete statements, or to use language and grammar appropriate for a dissertation.

A transcript of recorded interviews was prepared for the analysis, using descriptive language. According to Glesne (2016), descriptive language portrays the contexts in which events transpired. In the analysis, key issues about the study were identified by listening to the interviews over and again. The transcriptions from the interviews were also read over severally to make interpretations. The researcher transcended factual data and probed into what was to be made of the data. Data were put under themes for analysis, based on the research questions. Following the advice of Tesch (1990), the researcher constantly sought for configurations in the data that suggested that certain

pieces of data belonged together. I also looked for common properties in coding to derive analytical conclusions. Through this process, the researcher was able to identify emerging issues.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the data collected. The purpose of the study was to explore student, supervisor, and institution related factors that caused delays in the completion of postgraduate (MPhil) thesis. The researcher employed a qualitative design using the case study approach, hence, using one-on-one in-depth interviews in gathering data. Analysis of the data of the study was guided by an interpretive paradigm where the researcher aimed to view the narrative (interview responses) against the context in which it was set and the subjective viewpoints of the participants. The responses were transcribed manually and coded and discussed. The results and analysis are presented generally under the biodata of respondents and the research questions that guided the study. However, themes were developed under each research question to help bring out the immerging issues.

Bio Data of Respondents

The respondents for the study were grouped into three main categories: students, supervisors, and SGS administrators. The supervisor's and administrators' categories of respondents were made of four Professors, two Associate Professors, one Senior Lecturer, and one Deputy Registrar of all the rank of Senior Members of the University of Cape Coast with 10 to 30 years of supervised experience. The researcher believes that the respondents having supervised MPhil students for these numbers of years, would have accumulated enough experience and knowledge as to why MPhil students at UCC were not able to complete their thesis in the stipulated time.

The third category of respondents was made of students; three students

each from SDS and IEPA, who had extended their candidature after they had over-stayed the required two years on their programmes. These students were selected purposively and were identified by comparing the matriculation list from 2014 to 2016 academic year to the congregational list of grandaunts from 2016 to September 2019. For purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of respondents (students, supervisors, and administrators) are undisclosed. Instead, information attributed to them was identified with pseudonyms derived from the respondents during the interviews.

Research Question 1: What are Supervisors and Students' Perceptions of Thesis Writing as Part of Postgraduate Studies?

The first research question sought to explore the perceptions of supervisors, administrators, and students on the need to write a thesis as an MPhil student. The respondents were of the view that thesis writing was an important part of the MPhil programmes because it provided students the opportunity to research various issues that confront society and come up with possible ways of addressing them. Also, writing a thesis during the MPhil programme, prepared the students who may want to later pursue a Ph.D., by giving them the requisite knowledge and experience in thesis writing. Four themes were generated from the views of the respondents as to why the thesis should be part of postgraduate studies. These are the generation of knowledge, distinguishing academic studies from professional programmes, contributing to national development and requirement for graduation.

Generation of knowledge

The first theme that was generated under Research Question 1 was that thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies helps in the production of

knowledge for society. Also, writing a thesis is seen as the main avenue where research students are exposed to the various philosophies and theories underpinning knowledge generation which will enable the student to identify appropriate methodologies to suit whatever they want to research into. Respondents expressed their views in many ways and some have been captured and presented. Sup 001 for instance said that:

Well for me, to start with, it is a good exercise that they have to write a thesis, and in writing a thesis, they (the students) get the skills, because the expectation is that once you are philosophizing as a master of philosophy student, you should be able to, as it were, speak your mind and coherently put your thought and one of the avenues through which one can do that is to write and submit a thesis (Sup001).

In support of Sup 001, Sup 002 also said that:

The essence of the university (Higher) education is to be contributing knowledge to the social-economic development and for knowledge generation so if you discover knowledge and you do not document it, nothing has been done, and one way of knowledge discovery is to research, where you do a systematic examination of a problem to arrive at a solution. If you do not report your findings, then nothing has been being done and if you do not conduct research, you cannot get the knowledge that can stand the test of time, because, it is through the systematic inquiry, scientifically, step-by-step approach that you can generate knowledge and the approach should be such that even

if you are not there another person can just follow your steps (Sup002).

Affirming the views expressed, Sup 004 indicated that:

The thesis element of postgraduate studies is necessary because as a Master of Philosophy student, writing your thesis enables you to integrate philosophical issues into the knowledge that you have acquired in your studies. If we take the thesis out then there is nothing to philosophy about, so the thesis element is necessary (Sup004).

Sup 003 also added that:

...research is important because we want to be able to contribute to existing knowledge. So, what is the body of knowledge that we have? What are the gaps? And how we can contribute to that? And this is what graduate studies are about. So, in the first year of your postgraduate studies, you get to understand the theories, the methods, and all that, and then the discussion of the various issues within the specific discipline you have chosen. Then in your second year and third years of postgraduate studies, you put everything together to writing your thesis (Sup003).

The views expressed by the respondents indicate that MPhil students writing a thesis is a good academic exercise that equips or prepares students to contribute to the world of knowledge. The next theme that was generated under research question 1 was that, MPhil students writing thesis help to distinguish

between students pursuing academic studies and those pursuing professional programmes.

Distinguish academic studies from professional programmes

The second theme derived under Research Question 1 was that MPhil thesis writing was important because it helped to distinguish MPhil studies as post-graduate academic studies from other professional postgraduate programmes. There is a line of distinction between academic studies and professional studies and thesis writing is what brings about the difference. Whereas students pursuing professional postgraduate programmes would not need to write long essays or thesis as a requirement for the award of their degrees or certificates, it is a major requirement for MPhil students pursuing academic/research programmes to exhibit some research and writing skills as a requirement for graduation. A supervisor for instance indicated that:

The thesis is very necessary so far as academic postgraduate studies are concerned. However, for professional post graduate programmes, I do not see the importance of thesis writing. So far as MPhil is a research-based academic programme, thesis writing is very important (Sup 002).

Another supervisor further explained the importance of thesis writing saying:

Thesis writing is very important in postgraduate academic studies because you are preparing yourself in the skills of generating knowledge and you do not just have to generate knowledge, that knowledge generated from research will be useful to the society, to the organization, and others (Sup 004).

The views expressed by the respondents suggest that writing of thesis as a postgraduate student at the MPhil level was a way of distinguishing between academic studies or research-based studies and professional studies and or programmes. Whereas it is a requirement for academic/research-based postgraduate students to write a thesis, professional postgraduate students are not required to write a thesis before their graduation.

Contribution to national development

Another theme that emerged from the responses to Research Question 1 was the contribution of research and thesis writing to national development. Emphasizing the importance of postgraduate thesis writing to national development, a supervisor pointed out the link between postgraduate research and thesis writing to national development:

..... This is how countries grow, this is how countries develop. So, in some places and countries, there is a direct connection between the research that MPhil postgraduate students, and for that matter, the universities are producing and state policy and national development (Sup 005).

This response among others shows the connection between MPhil thesis writing and national development. Given this supervisor, some countries in the developed world have used research to grow their economies and developed their countries. The developed countries have state policies that encourage and use research from universities to grow their economies and that goes a long way to help them develop. Ghana can equally learn from these countries by encouraging and supporting postgraduate studies (especially MPhil research and thesis writing) to

help grow our GDP, expand the economy, and develop the country at large.

Requirement to graduate as an MPhil student to graduate

On the part of the students, the main reason most MPhil students wrote a thesis was that it was a requirement for graduation. The fourth theme thus generated under Research Question 1 was writing a thesis as a requirement for an MPhil student to graduate. This means that if students had their way, they probably would not have written any thesis.

Some students however expressed the need to submit a thesis as a requirement to graduate as an MPhil student. For example, Aba was of the view that:

..... thesis writing is necessary because if you only look at the coursework, then everybody can do it, but the thesis is an addition. If you are a research student then you have to go through the thesis to make you a real research student, so for me, I think that it is necessary and that makes you an academic (Stud. 001).

The views of the respondents affirm that of Pitchforth et al. (2012) who indicated that students writing a thesis is one of the major academic activities which is not only the first systematic step for familiarising students with research but also is used as a criterion for evaluating individual competence of the student in scientific research and obtaining related skills.

Research Question 2: What Student Factors Contribute to MPhil Students' Delay in Completing their Research and Thesis Writing?

In answering Research Question 2 which sought to explore the student-related factors that contribute to the delay in completing their research and

thesis writing, five themes emerged from the responses of the participants. They were: personal qualities and commitments, individual student concerns about marital, family, or health problems, employment status, balancing studies, and other activities, and financial factors or status of the student. Their responses indicated varying sentiments about these student-related factors.

Students Personal Qualities and Commitment

The first theme generated was the student's personal qualities and commitment to the timely completion of the thesis. All categories of respondents acknowledged that the students' personal qualities and commitment pose a challenge to postgraduate students' timely completion of their thesis. The students themselves admitted to the fact that they were sometimes a cause for the delay or non-completion of their thesis. Some excerpts from the interviews are as follows:

I think it depends mostly or largely on the student, how you want your work to be or move fast. Because, sometimes we [students] become relaxed and say that, after all, am not getting it so let me put it down and do my stuff and because I was also working, I was like let me do what is necessary when I get the time I will do the thesis. So, to me, I think that it has to do with the student and how well or soon you want to finish (Stud., 001).

Another student also indicated that:

I think to finish a thesis, the student has to do 60% of the work The solution to students' completion on time is, students must work hard (Stu., 002).

The views of Stud., 002 and Stud., 001 for example suggest that the students themselves are aware they are part of the delay in the completion of the thesis. This means that some measures will have to put in place to get students to remain committed to completing their thesis and on time.

On the part of the administrators at the School of Graduate Studies and the supervisors, some of their responses were that:

.....some students are just lazy; they want things done easily. Some just want to be called students, to improve their status in society (SGS 01).

Another supervisor was of the view that:

Sometimes, when you ask students to do corrections on their write-up, they take a long time before they come back with the corrected version. Some students do not look at the corrections critically and come back with the same mistakes. When it is like that, it is not encouraging to read the persons work again because you tell them to do this, then the person will bring it back with the same old mistakes without the person doing the correction (Sup 006)

Also, a supervisor added that:

Several students do not see that postgraduate work is the student's work. The supervisor is there just to guide and facilitate the work. Students have the challenge of being dedicated, making the effort to find the right material, and then

reading with an understanding that you are reading to get information that will help you advance your work (Sup 005)

Student's commitment to thesis writing is a major factor in timely completion. Relating to Tinto's theory of retention concerning goals and commitments, they believe that, students who drift into higher education without a strong sense of purpose are likely to exhibit lower levels of commitment and persistence. Invariably, the student's initial motivation before enrolling for the course and career aspiration is the major force that will fuel the thesis process to completion and on time. This is consistent with Martinez (1997) who emphasised consistently that efforts to improve or maintain student motivation can lead to better retention and achievement. There is strong evidence that the initial motivation of students, as expressed by their reason for enrolling, aspirations, and expectations of college, do not vary significantly between students who subsequently stay and students who leave/delay or stepdown (Martinez, 1997).

One important component which needs stressing is that in completing thesis work that is credible and contributes to knowledge, it is more demanding as exemplified in the above excerpts. This can be linked to a pregnant mother and childbirth. Whereas in thesis writing a supervisor (acting as a midwife/gynecologist) has an important role to play, students (the pregnant woman) should not lose sight of the fact that the work (which can be seen as a baby) belongs to them and so to be able to complete on record time, they should be able to devote enough time to read and write something worth (to produce a healthy baby).

Students' concerns about marital, family, or health problems

The second theme under student-related factors is students' concerns about marriage, family, and health problems that often cause delays to students' timely completion of their thesis. Some challenges or setbacks from family, parents, and spouse prevent most MPhil students from completing their thesis on time. Interestingly, one may ask if similar challenges or drawbacks do not occur during the coursework? Yes, they do occur but from the responses, students seem to attach more importance to the coursework than the thesis, probably because the course work is seen as a 'team moving van' and a more 'structured activity' and as such, they would not want to be left behind by their course mates. As a result, they try all means to complete the coursework and then they relax during the thesis writing. A student indicated that:

I think is it the pressure from family and home, so getting time to write the thesis was a problem for me. It becomes more difficult when you are done with the coursework and you have to work on your thesis alone (Stud.,003).

Stud., 003's response affirms early studies that found out that the thesis writing phase is not collective as compared to the course work phase, and during these times, students are often not on campus. Some students experience a feeling of isolation (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). Similar studies by Kiley and Austin (2000) confirmed that students struggle at the dissertation phase because dissertation writing is an ambiguous, unstructured, and unfamiliar process. However, graduate students must be agentic, and willing to identify and work on their academic and scholarly weaknesses.

Furthermore, other students also recounted home and family

distractions to their timely completion, and the following responses emerged:

I think that pressure from home and as a family woman, you have to sacrifice a lot for you to be able to finish your work. So, you not getting that time can delay your work for that one I wouldn't dispute it (Stud., 004)

In support of Stud., 004, Stud., 005 also indicated that:

I have had various challenges, first of all, family commitments and responsibilities, have been a bit challenging. I had to relocate my family and that took a bit of my time and resource so that count as my challenge. I had to go and look for a new apartment and school and everything so it took a lot of my time and resource to have that done (Stud., 005).

The excerpts from the students (especially women) support Botha (2016) who indicated that challenges such as family constraints contribute to thesis delay. Similarly, studies have found that students who encounter marital or family problems during their postgraduate work often experience considerable additional duress, regardless of gender. The findings of the study affirm Tinto (1993) Retention Theory to the fact that students' commitment to other entities outside studies, such as family, friends, and work obligations, can hurt the timely completion of their thesis. Tinto was, however, quick to add that, the external forces can be supportive or have a negative influence on a student's goals and commitments, subsequent on his studies and ultimately the completion of a thesis.

About marriage, family, and health problems causing students to delay in the completion of their thesis, administrators of the School of Graduate

Studies and the supervisors had interesting experiences to share. A supervisor for instance said:

A challenge that the students face has to do with pressure at home. You see, sometimes, some are married people, importantly and particularly the ladies. You have to combine schooling and taking care of the home. Even though they are all writing thesis, when the married woman goes home, they have to take charge of the family and other issues. Both male and female students, married and single, are supposed to finish their work in the same two years. Let's say, for instance, we are on the same programme, you are my wife and we are all pursuing an MPhil programme. When we get home, even though we are all pursuing the same programme, you the woman are supposed to cook, take care of the children, and do all traditional jobs (chores at home), so by the time you get to the study table, you are already tired and that becomes an issue. So, combining thesis writing with family affairs put the postgraduate students (women) in some kind of stress that makes it difficult for them to finish in time (Sup 001).

Another supervisor recounted that:

When the postgraduate students are women, then there are additional challenges. Either they have a family and so they go back home and they cannot combine thesis writing and taking care of the family or she is single so there is pressure on her to get married. They get married in-between and then they give

birth. Motherhood starts and then all that. For other women, two of them that I have lost, it was their parents. It was their mothers; they were not well and so there were all kinds of arrangements. They had to take care of their mothers, neglecting their work. I have even lost their number (looking worried). I use to call them but now I have stopped (Sup 004).

The stories of the supervisors affirm the fact that even though family issues distract timely completion of the thesis, its effect is higher on women than men. This supports Morton and Worthley (1995) who said that women typically bear more of the responsibility for home and child care. Problems in this domain seem more likely to impact women to a greater extent than their male counterparts. Again, the findings of this study affirm the finding of the Southern African Regional Universities Association (2008) who reported that there was a 60% university dropout rate in South Africa, and the affected students were mainly women from poor families who dropped out before completing their studies on account of pregnancy, finding campus life too boring and structured, social and personal problems, having to care for sick relatives, peer pressure, and more.

Balancing academic work and social activities

The third theme that emerged was the inability of students to balance their academic work and their social life. Most of the students' responses suggested some difficulty in balancing academics and social life especially upon completion of their course where they are seen to be on their own. However, some supervisors did not see why students' difficulty in balancing between personal and academic lives should be a challenge for them to

complete their work. They were of the view that all that the student needs to do is to focus and manage his/her time properly. A supervisor for example said that:

There were two of my students who were in Kumasi, a male, and a female. The male has completed and has even graduated but the female I haven't seen her for the past two years. The male met me consistently whenever I was in Kumasi. And then another guy who was doing well. To he went away for some time, he came back and told me he was getting married then after the marriage, he came and focused on the work. To he graduated and he is now on the Ph.D. So, the way I see it, if students will focus on their studies and work consistently, it shouldn't be a problem (Sup 002).

Another supervisor also indicated that:

Time management is important, in this world, we all do different things, and the time is finite, 24hours a day. It is up to you to balance the time, things that are not of priority, you do not treat them as a priority, once you decided to come to school and you know that the time is definite, you concentrate and finish your work. If it is part-time, you are given three years, full-time you are given two years, you cannot make any excuse, you cannot (Sup 006).

The views of these supervisors can be linked-to Jeremy Wright's model of Pickle Jar time management theory. The sand, pebble, and rocks inside the jar have their meanings. The Pickle jar theory states that the activities and responsibilities of people need to be balanced using an effective time

management system. Time is approximately allocated for everything and things fit well where they are expected to fit. The rocks represent the major important task that has serious consequences if not accomplished on time (Mulder, 2017). So, in this study, the rock can be seen as the writing of the thesis, and failure to complete it on time as scheduled will have its negative consequence on the student. The student, therefore, has to focus more on the rock and assign little time to those other activities that are being represented as sand and pebbles in the jar.

Also, Pitchforth et al. (2012) established that timely post-graduate completion is incoming skills which refer to the research and management skills of the students at the time of enrolments such as time management skills, discipline, expertise, command over the English language, writing and mathematics skills. Thus, poor time management contributes to the failure to submit a thesis on time. Abdul-Rauf (2016) also indicated that hard work, active engagement, and motivation of students are essential in the timely completion of the thesis despite the many distractions.

Combining studies with work

The next emerging theme was students combining studies with work. All the student respondents were gainfully employed during their studies. Studies by Choy (2000) among others have shown that students' employment status (that is combining studies and work) is directly related to students keeping long in writing their thesis and subsequent completion. Many students now a days also work full-time to pay for their tuition costs and to support their families. All the categories of respondents, that is students, supervisors, and administrators expressed concerns about the effect of combining work with

studies on the timely completion of a thesis.

An administrator at the School of Graduate Studies for example said that:

... I think the major challenge on the side of the students has to do with some of them combine work with studies, especially thesis writing. Some students are teachers and they combine studies with work i.e., they go back to teach after classes or the course work and the programme is such that if you allow space, you may tend to forget or delay in doing what you are supposed to do, you see, out of sight out of mind, that is another issue (SGS 001).

On the part of the supervisors, one of them indicated that:

.... at the students' level, I found out that because most students are not able to get a study-leave for full-time studies, they have to combine their studies with work. They are on the master's programme undertaking their studies and combining studies with work, so they are not able to concentrate on their thesis. And because they combine studies with work, they are not able to follow schedules for thesis writing as they should, and that in a way affect their output (Sup 003).

A supervisor also expressed strong concerns on how she had 'lost' students because the nature of work of the students' work did not allow them to complete their theses. She narrated the story of a student who had long advanced in her work but had not shown up for the past five years since she got a job.

One young woman came to tell us that she had found a job, she had really advanced in her work by then, you know, she had collected data and very excited. I remember me and the other colleague, we sat there and she said ooo they say they will do this and this, and it is about 5 years now, we haven't seen her again. ... most of the time, student workers have distractions from their workplace (Sup 005).

Another supervisor indicated that:

Sometimes people are working then they think that "I am working, I can take leave and come and do the coursework, and then when am done then I can stay at work and do the research". That is the problem. They think thesis writing is so easy they can just stay home and write after completing their course work (Sup 001).

These responses indicate that it is very difficult for most students to combine thesis writing with work therefore students who chose to go on that line are very likely not to achieve their goal. The students on their part also agreed that combining studies, especially thesis writing with work was a very difficult, sometimes impossible task.

Some of the responses of the student were as follows:

I was also working while I was on the programme so I was like let me do what is necessary at work first then when I get the time, I will write the thesis (Stud., 004).

Another student also said:

I was a full-time student and a full-time worker as well. I work in an environment that is very demanding, total commitment to

responsibilities and duties, and that takes a toll on me, so I feel combining these two things has gone a long way in affecting my completion of the thesis. Work takes me away from focusing on thesis writing. I need to have an environment that is quite conducive but I haven't had that due to the distractions from work (Stud., 005).

The extracts confirm a similar study by Botha (2016) in which student throughput at the postgraduate level had decrease over time due to, inter alia, financial difficulties, personal challenges, and fewer opportunities for the students to get study leave from their employers. Most postgraduate students who combined studying with work were not able to devote adequate time to their studies and thesis writing.

However, a supervisor was of a contrasting view. He thinks that students not getting time from work was no excuse. In his view, the School of Graduate Studies of the University of Cape Coast has structured postgraduate studies into two models; full-time and part-time. He thinks students-workers should identify the model that best suits them, probably part-time, and learn to manage their time well. After all, the part-time model is also time-bound, it is not as is because you are a part-time student, you will be on the programme forever. You still have a given time to complete your programme. The only difference is that the part-time model is relatively flexible and has an extended period to complete the programme.

In the words of the supervisor:

...well, the problem of not having time from work is the reason why the SGS has two models. You can either do the MPhil

on a part-time basis or you can do it on a full-time basis, so if you choose the part-time, then it is expected that you are not going to complete your programme within the allotted time for full-time studies. The system makes provision for that, but even if it is part-time and you are working, this is where maturity and efficiency come in, the fact that you are working doesn't mean that you shouldn't be time-bound. You just have to manage your time (Sup002).

He further added that they encourage students to learn to manage their time well so that they make the best out of the situation.

...so those we've been able to talk to, we tell them that look, you need to find time so you break up your activities and schedule time for each; some time for yourself, some time for your work and so these are the issues, but several times it depends on the nature of the work they are doing (Sup002).

Financial Challenges/difficulties

Another theme that came up under students' related factors was financial challenges or difficulties of students. The financial factor relates to unavailability or inadequacy of funding to support students in paying for application, registration, tuition fees, accommodation, acquisition of books, food, equipment, travel, clothes, and related material needed to support the student's academic pursuit. Lovitts (2002) noted that problems related to finance are the major cause of delayed completion of a post-graduate programme or dropout.

In the interviews conducted in this study, some of the supervisors and students were of the strong view that financial challenges or difficulties were a strong determining factor to MPhil students' timely completion of a thesis. The following are some of the responses that emerged:

Some students come on the programme with financial challenges, so as soon as they complete the first year, that is the course work, then they go to find jobs. They have to work and get money to do other things. Sometimes it's not that they will be writing thesis small and getting money small, so that is the challenge. They want to bite more than they can chew (Sup006).

Another supervisor also indicated that:

The financial status of the student is a major factor in determining the speed at which the student will write his/her thesis and complete the programme. Some students do search for jobs while on the programme so they can support themselves on the programme so their financial situation determines the pressure with which they go to find jobs instead of writing their thesis (Sup005).

On the part of the students, one said:

One other thing that I will probably attribute to myself as being a reason for my delay was the financial challenges I had to go through. I did not have the financial support so I had to fend for myself. So along the line, I had to pause to work so I could get money to continue with the programme (Richard).

The responses of the supervisors and students all attest to the fact a students' financial status can affect the rate at which MPhil students can write their thesis and subsequently complete their postgraduate programmes. The views expressed are in line with schools of thought that suggest that the financial state of the student may drive the student to engage in income-generating activities that take a toll on their time and studies. This, in turn, may limit the time available to devote to their research, thesis writing, and completion of programme. This study's findings are consistent with Hofman and Van Den Berg (2000) who indicated that lack of funding seriously affects students' research and this could result in serious distraction and frustrations. Furthermore, the findings are in line with Rong'uno (2016) who confirmed that adequate financial support is the "nervous system" in any academic research undertaking. Earlier studies by Nevill and Chen (2007) had also singled out financial support as the main factor contributing to the students' ability to complete their postgraduate studies.

However, some students' respondents did suggest that lack of funding or financial challenges was not necessarily the cause of their delay in thesis writing. These students in particular indicated that they had financially prepared themselves for the programme so to them, the financial challenge was not the issue.

One student, in particular, said that

"ooooo, financially I was okay because I was ready for the programme. Money wasn't much of a problem to me (Stud., 001).

The student's view is in agreement with Lovitts and Nelson (2000) who observed that financial assistance was important for postgraduate studies but

that it did not guarantee students' success. This means that other factors, probably related to supervision or institution could be reasons why MPhil students at UCC delay in completing their research and thesis writing.

Research Question 3: What Supervisor-Related Factors Contribute to MPhil Students' Delay in Completing their Research and Thesis Writing?

A thesis supervisor is a critical component in MPhil thesis writing. According to Marshall and Green (2006) supervisors are the most important resource provided by the university to support the student during the research degree candidature. This study also sought to identify supervisor-related factors that contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing. MPhil students, supervisors, and administrators of the School of Graduate Studies were interviewed to find their views on probable supervisor related factors. Three themes emerged. These are; pressure on the supervisors' time due to other commitments, supervisor-supervisee role, and commitment to the thesis process and supervisor-supervisee relationship. These themes are addressed as follows.

Pressure on Supervisors' Time

Respondents expressed views that indicated that most supervisors could not devote enough time to students because of different activities that are equally important in the university. The fifth point guiding supervisors at the University of Cape Coast as outlined in the guidelines of the School of Graduate Studies for the supervision of thesis states that supervisors must '*have regular supervisory meetings with student*' (SGS, 2016, p. 8). This point which was purposefully written in the guide was meant to ensure effective interaction and support between students and their supervisors, particularly during the thesis

writing/supervision period of the postgraduate studies. Supervision now appears difficult to achieve if not impossible because supervisors are most of the time preoccupied with teaching and/or administrative duties.

A supervisor for example indicated that:

On the supervisors' side, we are doing our part. The challenge that we have is that apart from supervising students' thesis, we are also teaching; and apart from teaching, you also attend many meetings, and the problem is even compounded when you occupy a position, for instance, you are a Head of Department, Vice Dean, Dean, Provost, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, or the Vice-Chancellor and all that. You see, there are certain meetings you cannot avoid and once you cannot avoid ... These many meetings will not allow supervisors to concentrate and supervise students' thesis. Am not saying they don't do it, but the problem is the time (Sup003).

Another supervisor said:

... and aside from that, apart from internal meetings, supervisors sometimes undertake external activities. You are called to attend meetings and viva in sister universities and all that, so all these things take a chunk of our time (Sup001).

Also, another supervisor stated that:

... Some supervisors have genuine cases because they have other assignments that take them outside the country and so on, so some are genuine cases that the supervisors are not available or are very busy with (Sup005).

Another supervisor furthermore buttressed the issue by saying:

Hmmm, there is pressure on our time. There is pressure on our time because students have a lot of deficiencies from their backgrounds. We have to 'hand-hold' a lot of them. We have to find time to read and read their work, and then to understand what they have written, we have to look at their English and all kinds of things (Sup002).

Administrators at the School of Graduate Studies agreed with the supervisors who also double as lecturers and unit heads. An administrator for instance indicated that:

Supervisors getting the time to meet the students regularly is difficult because often they may be having lectures and other meetings in addition to having to supervise students' thesis and things that will certainly prevent supervisors from meeting the students regularly (SGS001).

The responses from the interviews show that most supervisors were very busy with extensive commitments to be effective with their roles as lecturers, Heads of Department, and other officially assigned duties from the university and other sister universities. The responses from the interviews are in line with an earlier study by Spear (2000) who found that the most common complaint from research students concerned irregular contact with supervisors, who most of the time are preoccupied with teaching or administrative duties, have too many supervisees or have to be away from the university frequently for conferences or external examinations. Similarly, Lubbe, Worrall and Klopper (2005) noted that senior faculty members were being put under increasing

pressure to teach, to publish, and to generate income. Quite often, "students' problems" will be down the list of priorities of senior academics. It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that the lecturers themselves admitted to being very occupied with other university activities.

Supervisors-supervisee Role and Commitment to the Thesis Process

The second theme identified under supervisor-related factors was the supervisor-supervisee role and commitment to the thesis process. Although some supervisors agree to the fact that they do not get enough time and attention for students (supervisees), supervisors believe that students completing their thesis on time is possible if the students own and manage their thesis. Supervisors expect students to be reading relevant materials, pushing hard, and taking initiative. Respondents interviewed revealed that supervisors' role was as important as the role of the students (supervisees). It is assumed that supervisees do not have the "technical eye" in tweaking their thesis, hence, the need for supervisors to assist them in that respect.

Some of the responses from the supervisors interviewed are as follows:

Several students do not see that postgraduate work is the student's work. The supervisor is there just to guide and facilitate the work. Some students depend solely on their supervisor. If the supervisor does not push, the student will not do anything. And I have always told my students from the beginning that the work is under their management, there is so much on the supervisor that if you relax, the tendency is that the supervisor may not act or guide as he should and I have seen

that the students I have supervised, those who take initiatives, those who will always move ahead, do something and prompt me, those students can complete their work early than those who solely want to depend on my availability before they work (Sup002).

Another supervisor narrated the following:

Hmmm, sometimes, out of sight, out of mind. If you are not there to put pressure, for me they are there [pointing to theses on his desk] those who call, these are the serious one, because of the pressure of work and out of sight issue (Sup001)

One other supervisor lamented saying:

We have supervisors who do not supervise and yet they get promoted. In many other universities, if you haven't graduated a certain number of students you won't get promoted. Here, we have professors that cannot point to any good student that they supervised. They delay students' work, they do not read the work and the work goes through assessment because their names are there, so the assessors having a halo effect they assume that the thesis is good, they give the marks, the students will graduate. The Professor did not read the work, later, when the students visit their office, they say oooo please tell me what is in the thesis. These professors/lecturers are not sanctioned; the system does not sanction the academics who do not perform (Sup006).

On the part of the students, they also expressed their views. Some of their responses are as follows:

My supervisor is not committed to my work, he does not read my work and anytime we have an appointment with him, he is always in a hurry to send me out of his office. I regretted working with him, but thank God, he has been changed and I have a new supervisor and I think am making progress just that the first one has wasted my time (Stud., 002).

Another student also said:

Initially, she was so difficult to get, but I must say after I had gone through those challenges and felt there was a little hope to get back on track I approached her and she was willing and ready to work so probably at the beginning she was so difficult to get, she also had her problem, so she was not pushing me (Stud., 004).

As earlier outlined, the University of Cape Coast, School of Graduate Studies (2016) guidelines for preparing and presenting project work, dissertation and thesis, outlined specific responsibilities of the supervisor and students during the thesis writing. The student responsibilities include; selection of topic, initiation of contact, literature search, submission of output for appraisal and feedback, language mechanics, proof-reading, and conforming to format and style specifications. The supervisor, on the other hand, is expected to guide the student mainly on the technical aspects of research; which includes providing timely feedback on specific aspects of work submitted by the student. whenever any of the parties relent on their part, it could lead to a delay in the writing of the thesis. This could be in the form of students not writing to the supervisors' expectations or not meeting set deadlines or the supervisor not

having time to read the students' work or guide the student in the thesis writing. These challenges if not well addresses will certainly lead to students not submitting their thesis on time or dropping from the programme altogether.

The excerpts from the responses and findings of the study confirm findings from the study by Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) who found that problems such as lack of prompt feedback, conflicting and inconsistent feedback, as well as unhelpful advice by the supervisors, gave a direct negative impact on thesis completion and its quality. This means that untimely feedback is a demotivation to students, thereby, leading to delay in writing of the thesis and subsequent completion of the programme.

Supervisor-supervisee Relationship

The last theme that came up under the supervisor-related factors was supervisor-supervisee relationships. A healthy working relationship between the student and supervisor(s) is a critical determinant of the successful completion of a thesis (SGS, 2016 p. 8) The first point on supervisor-student working relationship outlined in the University of Cape Coast School of Graduate Studies guidelines for preparing and presenting project work, dissertation and thesis states that '*right from the beginning, both students and supervisors must agree on how they will interact and exchange information – meeting times, telephone communication, correspondence by e-mail, and submission of outputs in softcopy or hardcopy.*' (SGS, 2016, p. 8). Students in postgraduate studies are expected to maintain the momentum of the study and to complete and acquire the degree within the schedule. For this to happen, they expect timely, uninterrupted support, regular, and quality feedback from their supervisors, throughout the research period. Beyond the writing of a quality

report/thesis or dissertation, students expect the supervisors to take time to advise, mentor, and support them, especially those planning to develop careers in their areas of research or academic work (Dietz, Jansen, & Wadee, 2006). The relationship between the supervisor and supervisee should be mutual and harmonious so that they can work together towards timely thesis completion and graduation of students (Akpaprep, Jengre, & Abaamah, 2017). Data from the respondents revealed the relevance of a supervisee having a cordial relationship with the supervisor to get along throughout the research cycle or process. The findings revealed that poor student-supervisor relationships led to delays in thesis completion. Findings indeed emphasised that there should be a cordial relationship built on trust and hard work. This way, both parties would be on the same wavelength towards the successful completion of the thesis.

Interviewing students on the relationships they had with their supervisors; a respondent shared her view:

At the beginning of the supervisory process, we agreed on our meeting days and time and he followed it. Whenever he had other engagements he asks me to send my work to him through emails (Stud., 001).

Another student also said that:

My supervisor was the pillar behind my completion. She was a shoulder to cry on when I had a problem at home. When everyone abandoned me, she stood by me and encouraged me to finish. I am most grateful to her. My welfare was an utmost concern to her and she would always call to check on me and encourage me to finish (Stud., 004).

The views of Stud., 001, and Stud., 004 suggest that some students had a good relationship with their supervisors. However, this could not be said about all the supervisors. Stud., 002 for example did not have a good relationship with her supervisor.

My supervisor does not respect the agreement we had concerning the schedule of meetings. Whenever I call him, to book for meetings, he always gives me excuses or ignores my calls I regretted working with him, but thank God, he has been changed and I have a new supervisor and I think am making progress just that the first one has wasted my time (Stud., 002).

Yaa's experience is an indication that some students suffer at the hands of some supervisors. This could be as a result of several issues from personal to work stress to many more. Such happenings would never get students to write and complete their thesis on time.

The administrators of the School of Graduate Studies of UCC were straight forward in terms of the kind of relationship that is expected between the students and their supervisors. They simply referred to the students' handbook on the writing of thesis by the School of Graduate Studies. One of the administrators during the interview said:

When we are talking about a supervisor-supervisee relationship, it is clearly stated there (pointing to the students' handbook of the SGS), the limit to which supervisors can go is clearly stated there whereas the extent that students can go is also there (SGS001).

The other administrator from the School of Graduate Studies also said:

It is politics, there is politics involved in the student-supervisor relationship and you need to learn how to manage it. It is incumbent upon supervisors also as specified in the rules, that if you take on the responsibility of supervising then the time, the calendar should be structured with mutual respect and consent of the student (SGS002).

This means that the Schools of Graduate Studies of UCC has spelled out in its students' handbook, the extent to which students can relate to their supervisors. The handbook also suggests some steps students can take in case they have problems relating to their supervisors. These steps include requesting a change of supervisor if attempts at getting the student and supervisor to move along fail.

Supervisors were also interviewed on the nature of the relationship that existed between them and their students (supervisees). One of the supervisors said:

The Student-supervisor relationship is a major factor for students completing their thesis on time. I think when I went to the United States, one of the things that I learned from my supervisor was that your supervisor should be your best friend, and I asked him why and he said yes if he is not your best friend, even when you are approaching him, you are already troubled, you cannot express yourself well. ...if you are on good terms with your supervisor, things get on well (Sup002).

Sup001 did not seem to have a problem relating to his student. He simply said:

It is all about managing the relationship in a productive manner. I haven't had an issue with relationships with students so I haven't experienced anything like that. If I tell you to do work, you do it and that is it (Sup001).

However, Sup004 responded to the question coming from the angle of the differences that existed among supervisors. She said:

We know that supervisors are human beings, and as human beings, we have different temperaments, different cultures, different orientations, and others. There are some who in terms of gender, some who depending on where they are coming from, the cultural background, might have their ways of looking at a female supervising if they are men. Their ways of looking at female students doing postgraduate studies and so on, so indirectly, can affect the way they will expect you to do your things (Sup004).

In support of Sup004, Sup003 also added that:

Some supervisors are very quick-tempered and so they cannot tolerate certain things. If you are a supervisor and your students are to bring something and you see very fundamental mistakes, something that could be avoided easily, the supervisor will become annoyed with the student and that can affect the relationship between the student and the supervisor.... Also, I had the occasion of two people who complained that there was a challenge between them and their supervisor on what I consider to be a professionally unacceptable indicator – politics.

Because the student belongs to a particular political party and the supervisor belongs to a different party, it was affecting their relationship and so it went to a point where one of the students had to apply for a change of supervisor. So, the student-supervisor relationship is very important. The lecturer/supervisor is there to facilitate the completion of your work and this cannot go on well if the relationship is not good (Sup003).

Sup005 and Sup006 shared their experiences of their relationships with students.

I have different relationships with students. Those that am close to, those that the relationship breaks down, some have even written to have me changed as their supervisor ... two students were going to see their supervisors and they were talking about their supervisors. One was saying my supervisor is good and all that, as for me my supervisor is this, so one had a very good supervisor, was very happy, expectant and waiting to see the supervisor. They were coming here; they both were coming to my office (he burst into laughter). One had a very good supervisor, the other had a bad supervisor, they both walk in here and they said this is my supervisor and they started laughing, so this is it. (Sup005).

Sup006 also narrated that:

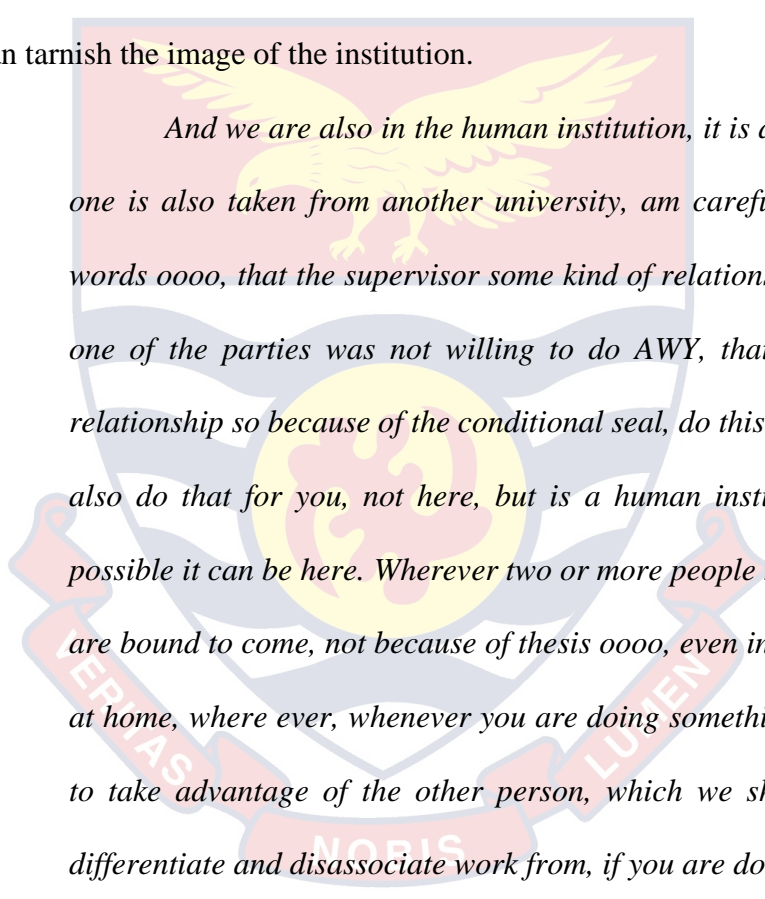
Am telling you my story. I had a student who finished within time, you know and so he went through the viva

everything, finished within two years. This is an MPhil student who went through the viva, everything, and then he brought me his hardcopy to sign, and then I signed it. By then, I was a director at AAA and so he opened the door and he walked out and then he came back again and said 'Prof. I have a confession to make' and so I said yes what is it, and he said 'hmmm, anybody who asked me who is your supervisor and I mentioned your name said you won't finish. Who is your supervisor and as soon as I mention your name, they say you won't finish. Even this morning someone met me because they didn't know that I have gone through the viva, they asked me the question and I said you are my supervisor and they said you won't finish but I showed him my thesis and I said but I have finished. This is my thesis. I am going to her to sign. So, what I have discovered is that over the years, there is a certain perception about me, I do not know what I can do about it. Some students come to me and they've been told that they won't finish and that I am hard, and so there are two groups of students. Some also come to me because they heard that I am hard and they want to work (sup006).

From the above excerpts, one could deduce that there seems to a cordial relationship between students and their supervisors regarding thesis writing at the University of Cape Coast, However, all the student respondents were delayed in completing their thesis with some yet to complete. This, therefore, contrasts previous findings that cordial student-supervisor relationship is a strong determinant of early completion of students' thesis. For instance,

Dimitrova (2016) and Latona and Browne (2001) opined that good supervision and the agreeable relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor are not only vital components of successful post-graduate training but also constitute key determinants towards timely completion of the master's programme.

A respondent however cautioned that, in establishing a better and cordial relationship for the success of the thesis writing, care must be taken in demarcating the boundaries so as not to engage in any illicit relationship that can tarnish the image of the institution.



And we are also in the human institution, it is a community, this one is also taken from another university, am carefully choosing my words oooo, that the supervisor some kind of relationship and because one of the parties was not willing to do AWY, that also myrrh the relationship so because of the conditional seal, do this for me and I will also do that for you, not here, but is a human institution, it is also possible it can be here. Wherever two or more people meet these things are bound to come, not because of thesis oooo, even in the offices, even at home, where ever, whenever you are doing something and you want to take advantage of the other person, which we should be able to differentiate and disassociate work from, if you are doing your work do your work and outside your work if you have something to say that should be, but it shouldn't be tied to because you are supervising my work, then I have to do what I do not want to do (SGS 001)

From the viewpoint of the supervisors interviewed on the relationship between students and supervisors, they unanimously indicated the importance

of students having a friendly relationship with supervisor(s) founded on certain principles, rules of engagement, and obeying instructions.

Data collected further indicated the need to consider relationships that went beyond the thesis work/academic work in line with the view of Seidu (2015). This is indeed true because, students after graduation and in seeking jobs or further studies would want to as part of the requirements, submit recommendation letters mostly from the supervisor's who supervised their thesis. This is usually made easier through relationships that were good during thesis writing.

Research Question 4: What Institutional-Related Factors Contribute to MPhil Students' Delay in Completing their Research and Thesis Writing?

The fourth research question sought to find institutional-related factors that contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing at UCC. Literature has established that institutional policies and procedures established can affect the timely completion of a postgraduate thesis. This study, therefore, interviewed students, supervisors, and administrators of the School of Graduate Studies on possible institutional bureaucracies that affect students' timely completion of a thesis. Emerging themes were institutional policies and procedures, staff-student ratios, and teaching and learning resources.

Institutional Policies and Procedures

The first theme that came up under the institutional related factors was institutional policies and procedures. These are regulatory systems in higher education institutions that direct and regulate the research and thesis writing processes and also enhance staff and student life in the instructions. The theme

also had subthemes coming up. The subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews are administrative inertia, bureaucratic inertia, and policy inertia. The subthemes are thus discussed with quotes from the interviews as support.

Administrative inertia

The first subtheme that came up under institutional policies and procedures of the institution-related factors that affect MPhil students' timely completion of their thesis was administrative inertia. This had to do with administrative bottlenecks that often hinder or prevent MPhil students at UCC from completing their thesis on time. Administrative inertia encompasses several areas such as the appointment of thesis assessors, payment of assessors, organising viva, and preparing successful students for graduation. Students, supervisors, and administrators were interviewed for their views on these factors and some of their response is as follows:

A supervisor indicated that:

... per the arrangement, once the student submits the thesis, within six months, everything should be ready for the student to graduate but often it takes about one year and, that is a purely institutional delay. Other times, it goes beyond the institution, because the institution can say that there is this external examiner who is delaying so we can change the person, but in a situation where there is a lack of personnel in that particular discipline, all that the institution can do is to tolerate so these are some of the things (Sup005).

Adding to the views of the Sup005, Sup002 also said that:

Monies that are paid to examiners for assessing thesis is not attractive so the thesis goes to examiners, they have other competing works they do. Certainly, their commitment to work on the thesis will be low so they delay. They will rather finish other jobs before coming to that (referring to the thesis) (Sup002).

Another supervisor also reiterated that:

Can you imagine that at a point in time I had to go and quarrel with the School of Graduate Studies. Students I have supervised, they never paid for their supervision for so many years. After confronting the school, eventually, they came and paid it was almost ten thousand Ghana Cedis. Just imagine that rubbish (Sup003).

The responses of the supervisors indicated that after they have done their part, the university system sometimes is not able to do its part as expected and this eventually can lead to demotivation and consequently affect the commitment to other supervisees and eventually lead to delay completing their thesis and these are purely administrative inertia that students or supervisors can do little if not nothing about.

Bureaucratic inertia

The second subtheme that came up was bureaucratic inertia. These are the official steps and protocols that should be followed strictly. It is expected that students and supervisors follow these strict rules as members of the university. An administrator at the School of Graduate Studies and a supervisor

explained the processes that MPhil students should go through. The administrator at the School of Graduate Studies said that:

There is a chain of activities that MPhil students must move through before their graduation. For example, students are supposed to finish the coursework before commencing the thesis writing and by the rules, students cannot graduate if they don't pass the coursework and research (thesis). One institutional challenge that we face is that some students do not get their full result before the beginning of the 13th month which is the thesis writing period, and so whether they qualify to begin the thesis or not is in limbo. So, you have a situation where the student is in the 1st semesters of the 2nd year but does not have some results of the 1st year to determine if they are qualified to continue with the second year or not and am telling you as a fact and so if results are not released on time, it's an institutional challenge which leads to MPhil students delaying in thesis writing. In a situation where the student has failed a paper, it leads to divided attention in the second year, so instead of the student concentrating on the thesis writing, the student will have to combine the thesis writing with some coursework and examination to write, and that cannot be possible (SGS001).

A supervisor also narrated:

After the supervisor has gone through the thesis, the work must go to the department to nominate examiners. The examiners must be written to, and accept that they want to examine the work

(thesis). The work then is sent to the School of Graduate Studies to send the thesis to the examiners. The examiners are given some time to assess the work (maximum 8weeks), but some examiners sometimes take more than 8weeks, sometimes years. The thesis comes back from the examiners to the graduate school, then graduate school refers it to the department. The department calls the student, that is, assuming everything is okay, the student has passed. The student must then go and do the viva. Where the student was failed by one of the examiners (we have two examiners), it is a whole chain of a problem. A third copy is sent to a third examiner or where both examiners fail the student, the student is supposed to take another topic and write all over again. This is the bureaucracy, it a long process (Sup004).

The long processes as narrated by the supervisor and an administrator at the School of Graduate Studies brings to light the bureaucracy in the system. All these must be satisfied before a student can be deemed to have completed the MPhil programme.

Policies inertia

The third subtheme that came up was policy inertia. This relates to the specific rules that guide operations in the university. There are specific rules as to how long a student can be on the programme, or how long a student can take to write the thesis, or how supervision of thesis counts as the workload for lectures/supervisors. These are university rules and sometimes these rules in themselves become a challenge to MPhil students completing their thesis on

time. Both supervisors and students expressed their views on policies that sometimes pose a challenge to MPhil students completing their thesis on time.

A supervisor for example said that:

We have to be firm on our timelines because it is like we give students time and the students will beg and then we relax and give them another time. I think it should be such that the department should set dates for the proposal presentations and defense and then follow it. The student will be able to comply and complete it.

.... Also, the thesis supervision does not form part of the workload that you take so it sorts of overburdening the supervisors. Elsewhere, it is not so. Supervision is counted as part of your credits or workload. (Sup005).

Another supervisor also said:

MPhil/Ph.D. supervision is not a small thing yet they do not want to count that as part of your workload. We also think that thesis supervision should be counted as part of our workload, then if you are assigning a lecturer teaching responsibilities, you know that if am supervising three students, it amounts to 12hours, so if I have 3 Ph.D. students then you cannot give me so much to teach (Sup006).

From the excerpts above, time-lines for the research work should be followed to the letter, and properly communicated to stakeholders to follow religiously to ensure timely completion of thesis writing. It is believed that if timelines are followed during research work as it is done during the coursework,

it may lead to a corresponding increase in timely completion of MPhil students' thesis writing.

Supervisors see management's refusal to add the theses supervision to their workload as unfair, because to them, not adding the supervision to their workload puts them under unnecessary stress of supervising, teaching, marking, publishing, and performing other administrative tasks assigned them by the university. Again, it was clear that the lengthy administrative procedure such as the time gap between the submission of the thesis and the viva and the gap between the viva and obtaining the certificate was unnecessarily long and sometimes goes beyond a year. This will increase the time-to-completion by the student. This is consistent with the findings by Abdul-Rauf's (2016) study in which the majority of participants stated that it takes a long time for the administrative procedures such as, various panel presentations, necessary approval for the proposal, the time gap between the submission of the thesis and the viva and the gap between the viva and obtaining the certificate in most universities in Africa.

Teaching and Learning Resources

The last theme that emerged from the study about institutional-related factors was the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources and poor/unconducive learning environment. Postgraduate students need conducive learning environments where they can concentrate on their studies and research work. The university seeks to provide the necessary teaching and learning materials and conducive learning environments but there are still some challenges. Students, supervisors, and administrators at the SGS indicated that there were some challenges in terms of teaching and learning resources that

inevitably delayed MPhil students' timely completion of a thesis. The following are some excerpts from the student respondents:

I think internet connectivity or facility is not that strong. It delays our work, but as for the books sometimes when you go to the IDS library you have some books available and you can get some thesis to look at but the problem is the internet (Tobi).

Another student also added that:

In my case, the problem is when I get to the main library, the small area allotted to the postgraduate student was stuffy and noisy with so many distractions. Almost all the sockets for plugging laptops you have to be hanging around, no place to plug my laptop and all that, it is discouraging (Stud., 002).

The students complained of poor internet and space to read or learn as the major challenge about teaching-learning resources. Administrators of the School of Graduate Studies also highlighted their challenges as follows:

The institutional factor or challenge I think about is easy internet access. Now UCC is doing well, hitherto, the internet was not working as expected. In some cases, you realise that some of these supervisees/students might have to send their work through email probably because they are outside. If you are not able to access the internet to read, then it becomes difficult (SGS001).

The other administrator also added that:

Our major challenge is space. The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) has since its inception operated from three normal

size rooms, that is the whole SGS in three rooms. Well, it is not that the University hasn't seen this problem. In almost every speech by the Vice-Chancellor, this matter has come up. Thankfully, the SGS is putting up its building complex at the new site. It is just adjacent to the CODE. So, in that building, all of these things have been catered for, a big seminar room for supervisor-supervisee meetings, offices are there and even a place for displaying of current research, marketable research, where industries can walk in and buy research project and presentations (SGS002).

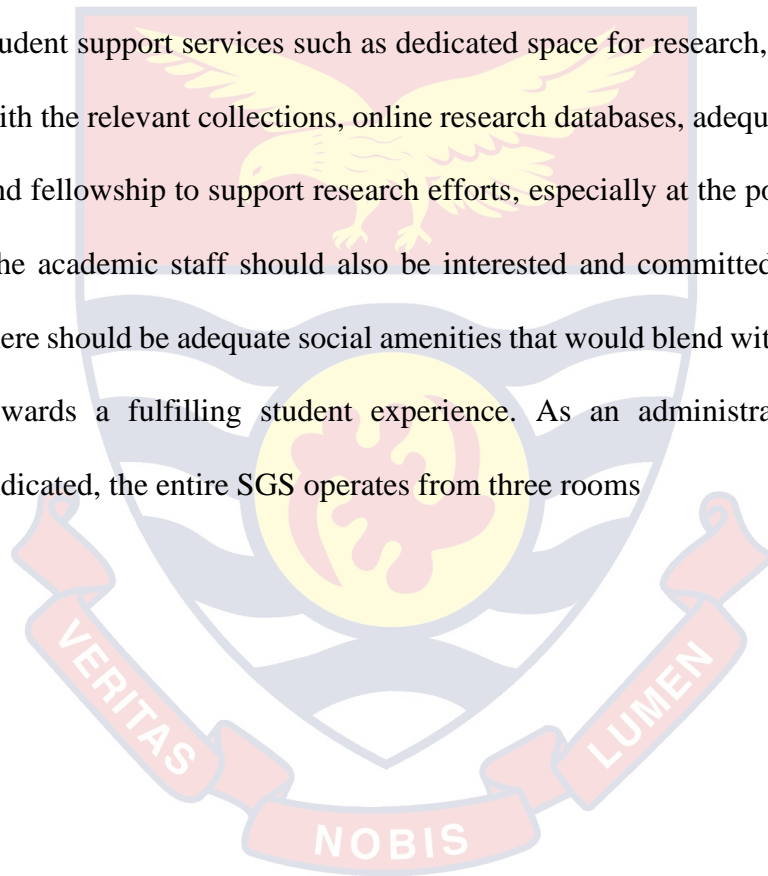
On the part of the supervisors, Sup001 said:

I think that the things that we need to do our work should be there. I need internet, that alone is taking my time. I need to print but my printer is not working and I have to think about it. I need software for something and the rest, so the university should invest more in the things we need to do our work. You know, when you go elsewhere, when you are done with your work and all that, there is network printing. You just click print, it goes, the software is there (Sup001).

The responses of students, supervisors, and administrators indicate that teaching and learning resources needed to facilitate and speed up MPhil students' thesis writing are either not available or they are inadequate. Students especially will need the library to access relevant materials to write their thesis. The libraries should also be conducive for reading, critical thinking, and writing notes.

Also, the importance of the internet in today's' world and academia is immeasurable. Report on the ineffectiveness of internet connectivity as it slows down the entire research process is unacceptable. The students, as well as their supervisors, claimed that they needed the internet to access current debate and data on the topic being researched.

The findings tie in strongly with Tinto's model of institutional departure. The university should provide an enabling environment that includes adequate student support services such as dedicated space for research, libraries stocked with the relevant collections, online research databases, adequate funds, grants, and fellowship to support research efforts, especially at the postgraduate level. The academic staff should also be interested and committed to research and there should be adequate social amenities that would blend with academic work towards a fulfilling student experience. As an administrator of the SGS indicated, the entire SGS operates from three rooms



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents an overview of the entire study. It also highlights the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study and makes recommendations aimed at averting the issues pointed out by the study.

Overview of the Study

This study sought to explore factors affecting MPhil students during their research and thesis writing causing the delay in completion and graduation at the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study aimed at ascertaining the student, supervisor, and institutional related factors that caused a delay to MPhil students' completion of research and writing of the thesis. Subsequently, suggestions were made as to how these factors could be effectively managed by all stakeholders to increase timely completion among postgraduate students of the University. These factors could be effectively managed by all stakeholders to increase timely completion among postgraduate students of the University.

The study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are supervisors and students' perceptions of thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies?
2. What student-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing?
3. What supervisor-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing?
4. What institutional-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their programme?

The study reviewed literature under the concept of completion, the

benefit of early completion to the student, supervisor, institution, and the society at large. Theories underpinning the study were reviewed and analysed. The study adopted the qualitative case study approach of research because it could explore the students, supervisors, and institutional related factors that serve as challenges during the research and thesis writing phase of the MPhil programme. This approach helped to ensure that in-depth views of students, supervisors, and management were obtained. This design did not only help to describe the data in a real-life environment but also reflect stakeholders' perspective which was helpful to explain challenges confronting MPhil students which may not be captured through survey research. The case study approach to research is known to facilitate the exploration of the phenomenon within its context. Thus, the design is considered appropriate to ascertain the factors that cause delay during the thesis writing phase of the MPhil programme at the University.

The research population from which the sample was derived consists of the following groups of participants/interviewees:

- a. MPhil Students
- b. Faculty Members of IEPA and SDS
- c. Administrators of SGS

The interviews were audio-recorded, having earlier secured the respondents' consent to that end. The audio recording, in part, was meant to facilitate the researcher's review and analysis of the research data. A transcript of recorded interviews was prepared for analysis, using thematic deductions and descriptive language.

Key Findings

Research Question 1: What are supervisors and students' perceptions of thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies?

The first research question sought to explore the perceptions of supervisors and students on the need for MPhil students to write a thesis. This study found out that MPhil students writing of thesis is a major avenue through which the postgraduate student can learn and apply the knowledge acquired into solving individual, societal and national issues. Thesis writing enables MPhil students to research into societal problems and come up with findings that can inform policymaking and also contribute meaningfully to societal development. Also, writing a thesis during the MPhil programme, prepared the students who may want to later pursue a Ph.D., by giving them the requisite knowledge and experience of bigger scale research and thesis writing. Putting the views together, it could be concluded from the study that thesis writing helped in the generation of knowledge, distinguishing academic studies from professional programmes, contributing to national development, and finally a requirement for MPhil students to graduate.

Research Question 2: What student factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing?

The second research question also sought to find student-related factors that contributed to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing. Findings from the second research question show that personal qualities and commitments of students, students' concern about marital, family, or health problems, employment status, and financial status of student are the student-related factors contributing to delay in MPhil students' timely

completion of a thesis. However, some of the students indicated that their financial status had little or no significant influence on the timely completion of their thesis because they had prepared themselves financially before starting the programme.

Research Question 3: What supervisor-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing?

The findings from research question three indicated that pressure on supervisors' time due to other commitments, supervisors' style of supervision, and supervisor-supervisee relationships were the most influential supervisor-related factors that affected the timely completion of the MPhil thesis. The findings, therefore, confirmed that managing administrative tasks with teaching and supervising thesis puts a lot of pressure on the supervisors, thereby making it difficult for supervisors to devote the required time and commitment to guide the student in producing a quality thesis in a timely fashion as required.

Research Question 4: What institutional-related factors contribute to MPhil students' delay in completing their research and thesis writing?

The last research question of this study sought to find out institutional-related factors that affect the timely completion of thesis writing among MPhil students of UCC. The study showed that institutional policies and procedures, and the availability of teaching and learning resources in the university affected the timely completion of the MPhil thesis at the University of Cape Coast.

Conclusions

The study revealed that students played major roles in the successful completion of the thesis. Distractions from family, marriage, and work played a major role in the timely completion of the thesis. It was established that

research students were found to combine work with their studies that limited the time they spent on their thesis thereby leading to the delay in completion. The relationship that existed between the students and supervisors also played a significant role in the early completion of the thesis. It was found out that the supervision process does not form part of the workload of faculty members; this puts a lot of pressure on their time since they have to make time for teaching and other administrative duties assigned to them. The University also shared the blame for failing to put proper mechanism(s) to keep track/check of the progress of students' thesis both on internal supervision and on external examination, thereby causing the delays. The study, therefore, concluded that students, supervisors, and the University contributed to the delay in the timely completion of research and thesis writing among MPhil students of UCC.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made for facilitating the thesis writing process and completion of the MPhil programme. The recommendations have been classified into three: for the students, supervisors, and management of UCC.

For the students

1. It is recommended that students in full-time employment should seek proper study leave to be able to dedicate the required time needed for research and thesis writing.
2. Students should be exposed to time management skills before embarking on their research projects. This will help them to manage time correctly as they carry out research and thesis writing.
3. Students should be encouraged to identify topic areas for their thesis as

early as possible in the course of the programme. This will enable the focus well on the thesis topics and related the coursework to the thesis process. It would be expedient to select a topic before being introduced to research methods and statistics so that relevant questions relating to the topic could be asked for clarification and better understanding.

4. Finally, it is recommended that MPhil students have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the programme before starting the course. Prospective students should be aware of the various stages of the degree programme such as coursework, examinations, research, and writing of the thesis, as well as the administrative process; internal and external assessment, and viva. It is also in their interest to inquire about time requirements, skills required, the degree of independent work required for degree attainment as well as the emotional, psychological and physical stamina required to endure and succeed.

For the supervisors

1. To attend seminars and workshops to be up-to-date with the modern requirement of producing a thesis. This will enable them to guide their students to follow the requisite format to producing a good thesis.
2. To aid timely completion, supervisors should encourage a professional relationship with their students as this will motivate the students to feel at ease in approaching them on issues bothering them about their thesis.

For the management of UCC

1. It is also recommended that; thesis supervision should be added to the workload of the faculty members.
2. There should also be a mechanism by the SGS to check/track the

progress of the thesis when sent for external examination.

3. The SGS Board in collaboration with the University management should put in place measures to set special days whereby external examiners are brought to the University purposely to examine students' thesis. Such external examiners should be adequately catered for and be motivated to spend considerable time purposely meant to mark the thesis. This way, issues of delays with external examinations will be a thing of the past.
4. Enforcement of the periodic progress report on each postgraduate student should be submitted every semester as a feedback and tracking tool to enhance student completion at a scheduled time. Also, the functional schedule should be put in place for postgraduate students.
5. Finally, the 'step down' policy should be intensified so that student, who are unable to complete their programme on record times as a result of their own making is made to 'step down' or lose their studentship status to serve as a deterrent to others to work hard.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Studies that will target a prompt and quality thesis, since research output positions universities in the ranking.
2. Further studies should be carried out on the effectiveness of the School of Graduate School in-service training of supervisors and its effects on timely completion.

REFERENCES

- Abiddin, N. Z., Hassan, A., & Ahmad, A. R. (2009). Research student supervision: An approach to good supervisory practice. *The Open Education Journal*, 2(1).
- Abdul-Rauf, F. A. (2016). Challenges of thesis work: towards minimizing the non-completion rate in the postgraduate degree program. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 8(7), 113-124.
- Akparep, Y., Jengre, E., & Abaamah, D. (2017). Demystifying the blame game in the delays of graduation of research students in Universities in Ghana: The case of University for Development Students. *European Journal of Business and Innovation Research*, 5, 34-50.
- Albertyn, R., Kapp, C., & Bitzer, E. (2008). Profiling exiting postgraduate students' performance and experiences. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 22(4), 749-772.
- Amehoe, C. K., & Bortha, R. (2013). *Postgraduate throughput at the University of Ghana* Citeseer.
- Astin, A. W. (1996). Involvement in learning revisited: Lessons we have learned. *Journal of college student development*, 37(2), 123-134.
- Bartlett, A., & Mercer, G. (2011). *Postgraduate research supervision: Transforming (R) Elations. Eruptions: New Feminism across the Disciplines, Volume 11*. ERIC.
- Bassett, R. E. (1979). Effects of source attire on judgments of credibility. *Central States Speech Journal*, 30, 282-285.
- Baum, S., & Ma, J. (2007). *Education pays: The benefits of higher education*

for individuals and society (Monograph). Retrieved from College Board website: <http://www.collegeboard.com>

Bazargan, A. (1997). Quality and its evaluation in higher education: A look at national and international experiences. *Rahyaft Quarterly*, 60, 15-71.

Becker, G. S. (1964). Human capital: theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education. New York: National Bureau of Economics Research.

Bitchener, J., Basturkmen, H., East, M., & Meyer, H. (2011). Best practice in supervisor feedback to thesis students. *Auckland: The University of Auckland*.

Borg, W. R., & Gall, M. D. (2003). Educational research: An introduction, (7thEd): Boston, MA. A&B Publication.

Botha, R. (2016). Postgraduate throughput trends: A case study at the university of Ghana. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 49(1-2), 58-66.

Bound, J., Lovenheim, M. F., & Turner, S. (2010). Why have college completion rates declined? An analysis of changing student preparation and collegiate resources. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 2(3), 129-157.

Bourke, S., Holbrook, A., Lovat, T., & Farley, P. (2004). Attrition, completion and completion times of PhD candidates. AARE annual conference, Melbourne.

Braxton, J. M., Hirschy, A. S., & McClendon, S. A. (2004). Understanding and reducing college student departure [Monograph]. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 30(3)

- Brown, R. D., & Krager, L. (1985). Ethical issues in graduate education: Faculty and student responsibilities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 56(4), 403-418.
- Bunting, I., Sheppard, C., Cloete, N., & Belding, L. (2010). *Performance indicators in South African higher education 2000-2008*. African minds.
- Butterworth, T., & Faugier, J. (2013). *Clinical supervision and mentorship in nursing*. Springer.
- Cairncross, A. (1999). Progression of students through the Human Ecology Programme (1994-1999). *Belville: Department of Human Ecology and Dietetics, UWC*.
- Canadian Association for Graduate Studies [CAGS]. (2006). Graduate studies review report. 310-260 St. Patrick Street. Ottawa, ON K1N 5K5. 172-188.
- Carroll, M. (1996). *Counselling Supervision: Theory, Skills and Practice*. London: Cassell.
- Cheatham, T. R., Edwards, J. R., & Erickson, K. V. (1982). The doctoral dissertation in speech communication: An inventory of attitudes and experiences. *Communication Education*, 31(4), 315-323.
- Cheboi, B. (2006). Funding patterns and their effects on quality of higher education in Kenya. Kenyatta University. Conference paper. Nairobi,
- Choy, S. P. (2000). *Low-income students: Who they are and how they pay for their education*. DIANE Publishing.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2003). *Research methods in education*. (6th edition). London: Routledge.

- Council of Graduate Schools [CGS]. (2008). *PhD completion and attrition: Analysis of baseline program data from PhD completion project*. Retrieved August 6, 2019 from <http://www.phdcompletion.org/quantitative/program.asp>
- Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 4th Ed., Boston: Pearson.
- Crossouard, B., & Pryor, J. (2009). Using email for formative assessment with professional doctorate students. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(4), 377-388.
- Cullen, D.J., Pearson, M., Saha, L.J., and Spear, R.H., (1994) Establishing effective supervision. Canberra : Australian Government Publishing Service. ISBN 0644 34901 8.
- Delamont, S., Atkinson, P., & Parry, O. (2004). *Supervising the doctorate*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Denzin, N. (1989). (1989a). Interpretive interactionism. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Di Pierro, M. (2007). Excellence in doctoral education: Defining best practices. *College Student Journal*, 41(2), 368-376.
- Dietz, A. J., Jansen, J. D., & Wadee, A. A. (2006). Effective PhD supervision and mentorship: A workbook based on experiences from South Africa and the Netherlands: South Africa-Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD).

- Dimitrova, R. (2016). Ingredients of good PhD supervision-evidence from a student survey at Stockholm university. *Utbildning och Lärande/Education and Learning*, 10(1), 40-52.
- Donald, J. G. (1995). Graduate student supervision policies and procedures: A case study of issues and factors affecting graduate study. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 25(3), 71-92.
- Duze, C. O. (2010). An analysis of problems encountered by post-graduate students in Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 22(2), 129-137.
- Ellis, T. J., & Levy, Y. (2009). Towards a guide for novice researchers on research methodology: review and proposed methods. *Issues in Informing Science & Information Technology*, 6.
- Evans, N., Forney, D., Guido, F., Patton, L., & Renn, K. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, Research, and Practice*. (2nd ed.). United States of America: HB Printing. ISBN-13: 978-0787978099
- Ezebilo, E. E. (2012). Challenges in postgraduate studies: Assessments by doctoral students in a Swedish University. *Higher Education Studies*, 2(4), 49-57.
- Frischer, J., & Larsson, K. (2000). Laissez-faire in research education — An inquiry into a Swedish doctoral program. *Higher Education Policy*, 13(2), 131-155.
- Girves, J. E., & Wemmerus, V. (1988). Developing models of graduate student degree progress. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 59(2), 163-189.
- Glothorn, A. (1998). Writing the winning dissertation. *A step by step guide*. Thousand Oaks: Crowing.

- Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. ERIC.
- Grant, B. M. (2005). Fighting for space in supervision: Fantasies, fairytales, fictions and fallacies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 18(3), 337-354.
- Grebennikov, L., & Shah, M. (2008). Enhancing the research student experience at university. Australasian Association for Institutional Research 2008 Forum,
- Green, H., & Powell, S. (2005). *Doctoral study in contemporary higher education*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Haksever, A. M., & Manisali, E. (2000). Assessing supervision requirements of PhD students: The case of construction management and engineering in the UK. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 25(1), 19-32.
- Haselgrove, S. (1994). *The Student Experience*. ERIC.
- Haselgrove, S. (1994). Why the student experience matters. *The student experience*, 3-8.
- Hawkins, P., & Shoher, R. (1989). Supervision in the Helping Professions: An Individual, Group, and Organizational Approach, Birmingham: Open University Press.
- Health Visitor's Association. (1995). *Clinical supervision. Principles and process*. College Hill Press, Ltd., London.
- Heckman, J. J., & Honore, B. E. (1990). The empirical content of the Roy model. *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society*, 1121-1149.
- Hockey, J. (1996). Strategies and tactics in the supervision of UK social science PhD students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 9(4), 481-500.

- Hofman, A., & Van Den Berg, M. (2000). Determinants of study progress: the impact of student, curricular, and contextual factors on study progress in university education. *Higher Education in Europe*, 25(1), 93-110.
- Holdaway, E., Deblois, C., & Winchester, I. (1995). Supervision of graduate students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 25(3), 1-29.
- Holdaway, E. A. (1993). Graduate studies in the UK: Some impressions and suggestions. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 47(3), 237-258.
- Hyland, K. (2013). Writing in the university: Education, Knowledge and Reputation. *Language teaching*. Vol. 46(1), 53-.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000036>
- Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). Feedback on second language students' writing. *Language teaching*, 39(2), 83-101.
- Ismail, A., Abiddin, N. Z., & Hassan, A. (2011). Improving the development of postgraduates' research and supervision. *International Education Studies*, 4(1), 78-89.
- Ivankova, N. V., & Stick, S. L. (2007). Students' persistence in a distributed doctoral program in educational leadership in higher education: A mixed methods study. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(1), 93.
- Jeyaraj, J. J. (2018). It's A Jungle Out There: Challenges In Postgraduate Research Writing. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 18(1), 21-37.
- Jiranek, V. (2010). Potential predictors of timely completion among dissertation research students at an Australian faculty of sciences. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 5(1), 1-13.

- Kearns, H., Gardiner, M., & Marshall, K. (2008). Innovation in PhD completion: The hardy shall succeed (and be happy!). *Higher Education Research & Development*, 27(1), 77-89.
- Kiley, M., and Austin, A. (2000). Australian graduate students' perceptions, preferences and mobility. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 19(1), 75-88.
- Kolb, D. A., Boyatzis, R. E., & Mainemelis, C. (2001). Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions. *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles*, 1(8), 227-247.
- Kumar, V., & Stracke, E. (2011). Examiners' reports on theses: Feedback or assessment? *Journal of English for academic purposes*, 10(4), 211-222.
- Kusi, H. (2012). Doing qualitative research: A guide for researchers. Accra: Emmpong Press. PMid, 22299616.
- Lang, D. (1985). Preconditions of three types of alienation in young managers and professionals. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 6(3), 171-182.
- Latona, K., & Browne, M. (2001). Higher education series: Factors associated with completion of research higher degrees. *Higher Education Division, Sydney*.
- Lessing, A., & Schulze, S. (2002). Postgraduate supervision and academic support: students' perceptions. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 16(2), 139-149.
- Lessing, A., & Schulze, S. (2003). Lecturers' experience of postgraduate supervision in a distance education context: Research in higher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17(2), 159-168.

- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science: Selected theoretical papers* (Edited by Dorwin Cartwright.).
- Loganbill, C., & Hardy, E. (1983). Developing training programs for clinical supervisors. *The Clinical Supervisor, 1*(3), 15-21.
- Lovitts, B. (2000). Context and attrition. *Making Strides, 2*(3), 1-7.
- Lovitts, B. E. (2002). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Lovitts, B. E., & Nelson, C. (2000). The hidden crisis in graduate education: Attrition from Ph. D. programs. *Academe, 86*(6), 44.
- Lubbe, S., Worrall, L., & Klopper, R. (2005). Challenges in postgraduate research: How doctorates come off the rails. *Alternation, 12*(1), 241-262.
- Lussier, T. G. (1995). Doctoral students at the University of Manitoba: Factors affecting completion rates and time to degree by gender and by field of study.
- Majoni, C., & Chidakwa, C. (2004). Views of distance education students on factors affecting completion of research projects at the Zimbabwe Open University. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research, 16*(2), 103-111.
- Manski, C. F. (1993). Adolescent econometricians: How do youth infer the returns to schooling? In *Studies of supply and demand in higher education* (pp. 43-60). University of Chicago Press.
- Markwei, E. (2001). Awareness and use of the internet by academic staff and students of the University of Ghana. *Unpublished thesis. University of Ghana, Legon.*

- Martin, Y. M., Maclachlan, M., & Karmel, T. (2001). *Postgraduate completion rates*. Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Higher Education .
- Martinez, P. (1997). *Improving Student Retention: A guide to successful strategies*. ERIC.
- McCormack, C. (2005). Is non-completion a failure or a new beginning? Research non-completion from a student's perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 24(3), 233-247.
- McMahon, W. W., & Walter, W. (2009). *Higher learning, greater good: The private and social benefits of higher education*. JHU Press.
- McQueeney, E. (1996). The nature of effective research supervision. *A Journal for Further and Higher Education in Scotland*, 20(1), 23-31.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Miller, M. (1995). ABD status and degree completion: A student's perspective. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco,
- Moore, M. G. (1991). Distance education theory. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 5, 1-6.
- Morton, K. R., & Worthley, J. S. (1995). Psychology graduate program retention, completion and employment outcomes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*.
- Mouton, J. (2001). *How to succeed in your master's and doctoral studies: A South African guide and resource book*. Van Schaik.

- Muijs, D. (2004). Validity, reliability and generalisability. *Doing quantitative research in education with SPSS*, 64-84.
- Mulder, P. (2017). Pickle Jar Theory. Retrieved [2017] from *Tools Hero*: <https://www.toolshero.com/effectiveness/pickle-jar-theory>.
- Myers, L. H. (1999). *Barriers to completion of the doctoral degree in educational administration* [Virginia Tech].
- Nevill, S., & Chen, X. (2007). The path through graduate school: A longitudinal examination 10 years after bachelor's degree (NCES 2007-162). US Department of Education. *National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office*.
- Okwakol, M. (2008). Challenges and prospects for quality assurance in science and technology education in African Universities. *The Uganda Higher Education Review Journal of the National Council of Higher Education*, 5(2), 17-26.
- Olibie, E. I., Agu, N. N., & Uzoechina, G. O. (2015). Characteristics of post graduate education research mentoring in Universities in Nigeria: Curricular enhancement strategies. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 4(1), 156-166.
- Olorunisola, A. (2011). *Meaning and Essence of Doctoral Research Supervision*. A paper presented at the Workshop on Contemporary Issues in Research Supervision organized by the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, held at the Conference Centre, University of Ibadan.
- Olubor, R.O. & Osunde, U. A (2001). "Analysis of personal study time and

leisure among University Undergraduates in Southern Nigeria.”

Available online at <http://www.freepateronline.com>. Retrieved on 15th

July, 2019

Osman, H. (2012). *Strategies for academic writing*. UiTM Press.

Page, S., & Wosket, V. (2001). *Supervising the counsellor: A cyclical model*.

Psychology Press.

Parahoo, K. (2014). *Nursing research: Principles, process and issues*.

Macmillan International Higher Education.

Park, C. (2005). War of attrition: Patterns of non-completion amongst

postgraduate research students. *Higher Education Review-London-*,
38(1), 48-53.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A*

third decade of research. Volume 2. ERIC.

Peffer, K., Tuunanen, T., Rothenberger, M. A., & Chatterjee, S. (2007). A

design science research methodology for information systems research.

Journal of management information systems, 24(3), 45-77.

Phillips, E. M., & Pugh, D. S. (2000). How to get a PhD. A handbook for

students and their supervisors. Buckingham. *Open University Press*.

Riazi, A. (1997). *Acquiring disciplinary literacy: A social-cognitive*

analysis of text production and learning among Iranian graduate

students of education. Journal of Second Language Writing, 6(2), 105-

137.

Pilcher, N. (2011). The UK postgraduate Masters dissertation: An ‘elusive

chameleon’? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(1), 29-40.

- Pitchforth, J., Beames, S., Thomas, A., Falk, M., Farr, A., Gasson, S., Thamrin, T., & Mengersen, K. (2012). Factors affecting timely completion of a PhD: A complex systems approach. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 12(4), 124-135.
- Proctor, B., Marken, M., & Payne, M. (1988). Enabling and ensuring supervision: A co-operative exercise in accountability. Leicester: Leicester National Youth Bureau and Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community work.
- Protivnak, J. J., & Foss, L. L. (2009). An exploration of themes that influence the counselor education doctoral student experience. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 48(4), 239-256.
- Rong'uno, S. K. (2016). *Institutional and student related factors and Doctoral Studies completion rates in Education at selected Public Universities in Kenya*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Department of Educational Administration and Planning, University of Nairobi, Kenya.
- Ruiz, Y. (2002). Predictors of academic resiliency for Latino middle school students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63 (02), 206. (UMI No. 3043416).
- Russell, A. (1996). Postgraduate research: student and supervisor views. Australia: The Flinders University of South Australia.
- Ryan, Y., & Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2017). *Quality in postgraduate education*. Routledge.
- Sarkar, S. (2012). The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in higher education for the 21st century. *Science*, 1(1), 30-41.

- Seagram, B. C., Gould, J., & Pyke, S. W. (1998). An investigation of gender and other variables on time to completion of doctoral degrees. *Research in Higher Education, 39*(3), 319-335.
- Seidu, A.-h. (2015). Writing a Theses: A guide for social science students. *Supreme Concept*.
- Sikes, P. (2004). Methodology, procedures and ethical concerns. *Doing Educational Research, 15*-33.
- Sowell, R., Zhang, T., Bell, N., & Redd, K. (2008). Ph.D. completion and attrition: Analysis of baseline program data from the Ph.D. Completion Project. Council of graduate schools, Washington, D.C. ISBN: 1-933042-13-3
- Spear, R. H. (2000). *Supervision of research students: Responding to student expectations*. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Stirling, A., Kerr, G., Banwell, J., MacPherson, E., Bandyaly, A., & Battaglia, A. (2014). *What is an Internship? An Inventory and Analysis of "Internship" Opportunities Available to Ontario Postsecondary Students*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.
- Sze, D. (2007). Effective student-centred PhD supervision from a social constructivist viewpoint. *Development Program for Research Higher Degree Supervision. Institute of Teaching and Learning, the University of Sydney*.
- Tesch, R. (1990). Qualitative research: Analysis types and software protocols. *Hampshire, UK: The Falmer Press*.
- Tettey, W. J. (2008). *Comparative analysis of next generation of academics indicators*. The University Leaders' Forum. Accra, Ghana,

- Thompson, D. R., Kirkman, S., Watson, R., & Stewart, S. (2005). Improving research supervision in nursing. *Nurse Education Today*, 25(4), 283-290.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Trostel, P., Walker, I., & Woolley, P. (2002). Estimates of the economic return to schooling for 28 countries. *Labour Economics*, 9(1), 1-16.
- Sarah Turner, 2004. "Going to College and Finishing College.Explaining Different Educational Outcomes," NBER Chapters, in: *College Choices: The Economics of Where to Go, When to Go, and How to Pay For It*. 13-62, *National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.*
- Van, O. E. (2000). *Clinical supervision: A practical guide*. Churchill Livingstone.
- Vilkinas, T. (2002). The Ph.D. process: The supervisor as manager. *Education and Training*, 44, 129–137.
- Wadesango, N., & Machingambi, S. (2011). Post graduate students' experiences with research supervisors. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 2(1), 31-37.
- Wallace, S. (2003). Figuratively speaking: Six accounts of the PhD viva. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11(2), 100-108.
- Walsh, E. (2010). A model of research group microclimate: environmental and cultural factors affecting the experiences of overseas research students in the UK. *Studies in Higher Education*, 35(5), 545-560.

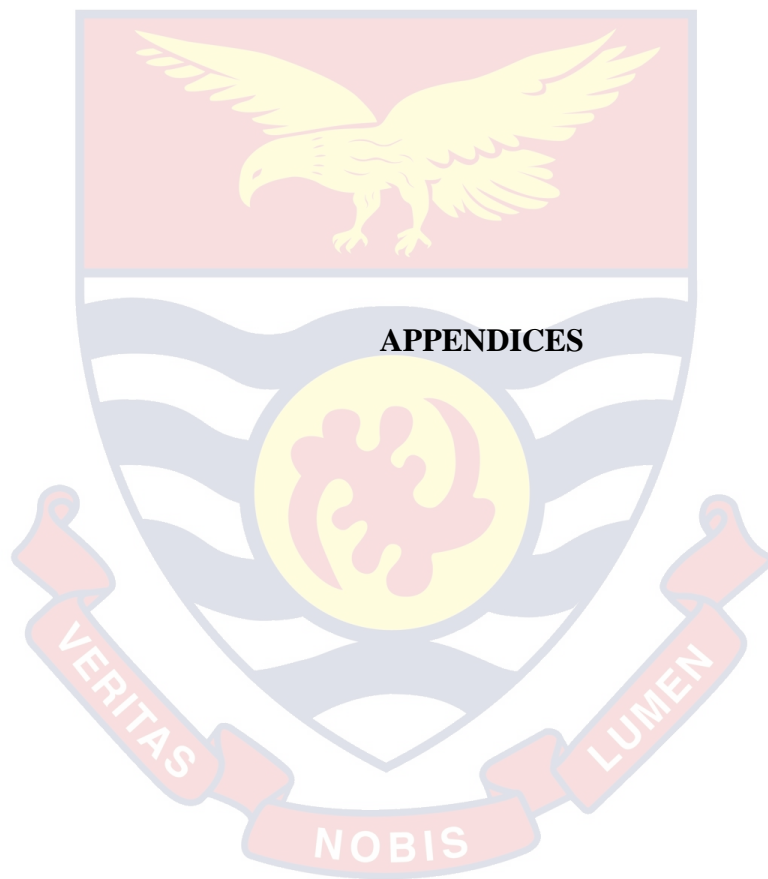
- Wamala, R., Ocaya, B., & Oonyu, J. C. (2012). Extended candidature and non-completion of a Ph. D. at Makerere University, Uganda. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 5(3), 175-184.
- Wang, T., & Li, L.Y. (2008). Understanding international postgraduate research students' challenges and pedagogical needs in thesis writing. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 4(3), 88-96. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5172/ijpl.4.3.88>
- Wang, T., & Li, L. Y. (2011). 'Tell me what to do' vs. 'guide me through it': Feedback experiences of international doctoral students. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 12(2), 101-112.
- Weaver, M. R. (2006). Do students value feedback? Student perceptions of tutors' written responses. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(3), 379-394.
- Wisker, G., Brown, S. A., & Brown, S. (1996). *Enabling student learning: Systems and strategies*. Psychology Press.
- Wright, T. (2003). Postgraduate research students: People in context? *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 31(2), 209-227.
- Wright, T., & Cochrane, R. (2000). Factors influencing successful submission of PhD theses. *Studies in Higher Education*, 25(2), 181-195.
- Yew, M. M., Maclachlan, M., & Karmel, T. (1999). Postgraduate completion rates. 2001D occasional paper series. *Canberra: Higher Education Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs*.
- Yorke, M. (1999). *Leaving early: Undergraduate non-completion in higher education*. Psychology Press.

Yorke, M. (2003). *Student retention in Open and Distance Learning: Why students leave early in higher education in the UK*. Paper presented at the Retention Symposium, 27–28 May 2003, Cambridge, England.

Yu, S., Lee, I. (2013) Understanding supervisors' commentary practices in doctoral research proposal writing: A Hong Kong Study. *Asia-Pacific Edu Res* **22**, 473–483. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-012-0046-9>

Zainal, Z. (2007). Case study as a research method. *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, 5(1).





APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & OUTREACH
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

Tel. No.: 03320-91478
Tel. No. : 03321-30571
Fax No. : 03321-30588
E-mail : iepa@ucc.edu.gh

University Post Office
Cape Coast
Ghana

8th May 2019

Our Ref: IEPA/144/Vol./166

.....
.....
.....
.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter **Ms. Joana Essuman** is an M.Phil. student of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast. She requires some data/information from you/your outfit for the purpose of writing her thesis titled, "**Challenges Facing M.Phil. Students in Research and Thesis Writing at the University of Cape coast**" as a requirement for M.Phil. degree programme.

Kindly give the necessary assistance that **Ms. Essuman** requires to enable her gather the information she needs.

While anticipating your co-operation, we thank you for any help that you may be able to give her.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


Alberta A. K. Owusu (Mrs.)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR
FOR: DIRECTOR

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
CAPE COAST

APPENDIX B

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CAUSING MPhil STUDENT'S DELAY IN COMPLETION OF THESIS AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MPhil STUDENTS.

1. What are your perceptions of thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies?
2. What action of yours do you think affected the completion of your research and thesis writing leading to delayed completion?
3. What inactions of yours do you think affected the completion of your research and thesis writing leading to delayed completion?
4. Explain these challenges in regard to student related factors?
5. Explain these challenges in regard to supervisor related factors?
6. Explain these challenges in regard to institutional related factors?
6. How did these challenges affect the timely completion of your research and writing of thesis?
7. Suggest what can be done to solve these challenges?

Thank you.

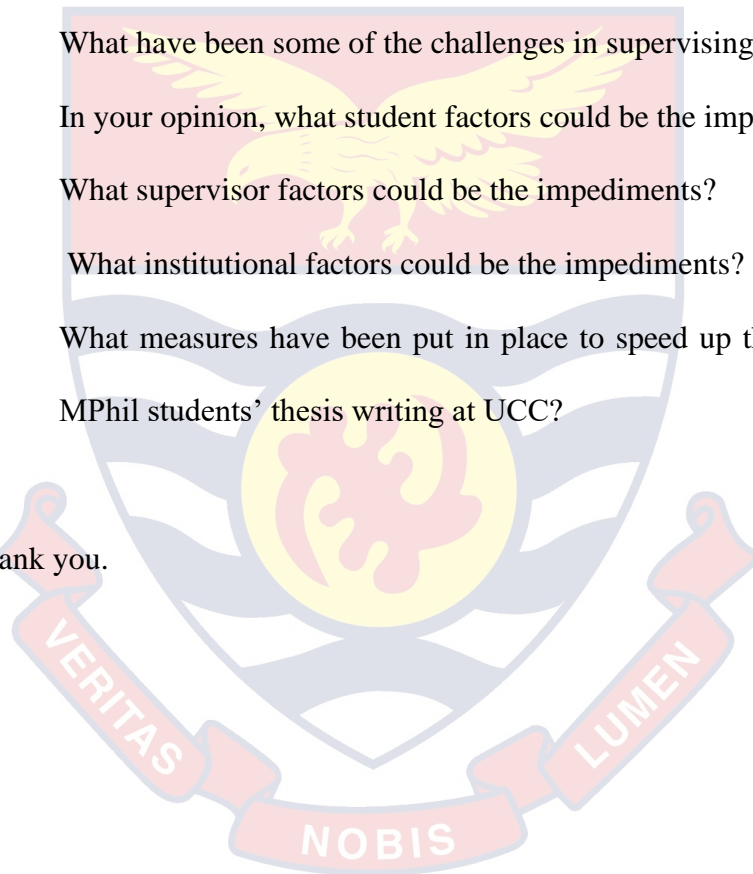
APPENDIX C

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CAUSING MPhil STUDENT'S DELAY IN COMPLETION OF THESIS AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS.

1. What are your perceptions of thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies?
2. What have been some of the challenges in supervising MPhil theses?
3. In your opinion, what student factors could be the impediments?
4. What supervisor factors could be the impediments?
5. What institutional factors could be the impediments?
6. What measures have been put in place to speed up the completion of MPhil students' thesis writing at UCC?

Thank you.



APPENDIX D

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CAUSING MPhil STUDENT'S DELAY IN COMPLETION OF THESIS AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SGS ADMINISTRATORS.

1. What are your perceptions of thesis writing as part of postgraduate studies?
2. What are your experiences and views on MPhil students' thesis writing at UCC?
3. In your opinion, what students' factors could be the impediments?
4. What supervisor factors could be the impediments?
5. What institutional factors could be the impediments?
6. What strategies has your office put in place to improve the timely completion of MPhil student of the University?
7. What other possible ways can the challenges of MPhil thesis writing at the University of Cape Coast be resolved?

Thank you