

**ANALYSING STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION  
THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL LENS**

**by**

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in the  
School of Social Sciences, Languages and Higher Education Studies  
Faculty of Education

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Supervisor [Dr WP Wahl]

July 2020

## DECLARATION

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I, **S.M. Holtzhausen**, declare that the thesis, *ANALYSING STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL LENS* (five interrelated, publishable articles), that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree (Doctor of Philosophy with specialisation in Higher Education Studies) at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work.

All the references that I used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references (see list of references and attached Turnitin report).

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification. I also cede copyright of this thesis in favour of the University of the Free State.



10 July 2020

**SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

**[Dr S.M. (Somariè) Holtzhausen]**

## ETHICS STATEMENT

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### **GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)**

22-Apr-2020

Dear Dr Holtzhausen, Sophia SM

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#### **Application Approved**

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Yours sincerely

**Prof Derek Litthauer**  
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## LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATION (EDITOR 1: ARTICLE 1 ONLY)

### Declaration

30 January 2020

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Article: A systematic review, through Bronfenbrenner's lens, of the historical role of student affairs in relation to postgraduate development.

I confirm that I edited this article, checked the references, and made recommendations for changes to the text.



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07 July 2020

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

I herewith declare that I did the language editing of the thesis compiled as a report on the research on *Analysing student affairs research within higher education through Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model lens* by Sophia Maria (Somariè) Holtzhausen, student number 1990235937.

Track changes were used for corrections, comments and recommendations, and the student was responsible for accepting/ rejecting the changes and recommendations, and for finalising the document.

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## ABSTRACT

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Through Bronfenbrenner's Person, Process, Context and Time (PPCT) model lens, this study identified the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student (including postgraduate students) learning and development in higher education, as well as how these themes might be managed or implemented best by higher education institutions.

In order to address these questions, this five-article doctoral journey is situated within the parameters of Higher Education Studies, Student Affairs, Student Development Theory, and Ecology of Learning. All these fields of study and theories play a fundamental role in accomplishing student learning and development. However, this study predominantly is positioned within the field of student affairs, with special reference to Jones and Asbes' (2017:143) third student development theory category. The motivation for this is that the study specifically concentrated on the ecological aspects of student development, reinforcing the applicability of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological systems theory (i.e. the PPCT model) as a theoretical lens.

Mainly qualitative data generation methods were employed in this study. The research findings are put forth in the format of five articles, which present a kaleidoscope of research that focused on the historical interval of 2008-2019:

In Article 1 four North American directives and Kuh's High Impact Educational Practices provided a development trajectory of the student affairs profession. Although Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model lens has signposted four historical movements (in loco parentis, service providers, out-of-class development officers, and multiple educators), the reader should note that these student affairs practitioners' roles are evolutionary. This study also found that scholarly student affairs practitioners should be flexible and theory-based in their praxis. Also, because student affairs function under a contemporary umbrella with broad and diverse responsibilities, there is substantial scope for further development in this field.

Article 2 explores the student affairs research position worldwide between 2008 and 2019 in the light of an extensive document analysis of 926 student affairs research articles published in 91 peer-reviewed journals. The thematic categorisation of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was used to determine nine prominent and five new

international publication trends as derived from the document analysis (CAS 2019). Thereafter, Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, particularly the chrono-system, provided critical insights in this study about how and why student affairs manifest in worldwide higher education.

Article 3 established an increase in and emphasis on African student affairs research. This provoked the significance of mapping African student affairs research during the past interlude (2008-2019) through Bronfenbrenner's lens. The document analysis of 121 articles (published in 34 selected academic journals) confirmed nine of CAS's prominent African student affairs research trends, while four new local themes were observed. Finally, postgraduate programmes and services requiring future exploration to extend and promote student affairs as a field of research and studies in the African context were identified.

Article 4 focused on the interrogation, namely: In what way can scholarly article style postgraduate studies specifically enrich the field of student affairs? In this qualitative research journey, taken through Bronfenbrenner's theoretical microscope, higher education experts and supervisors agreed that well-defined institutional policies, faculty/departmental guidelines, and assessment are essential for success. Subsequently, article option training and support for postgraduate students, supervisors, and student affairs practitioners are essential. This study's final, proposed outcome is postgraduate attribute indicators for quality assessment of article style postgraduate studies, which require extensive future exploration.

Finally, in Article 5 the findings of a 360-degree circle reflection on the four intervention guideposts are presented and analysed (through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model). Lessons learned to promote postgraduate student development could serve as catalyst for further research.

**Keywords:** article-style postgraduate studies, assessment; Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model; higher education; Person-Process-Context-Time model; policy; student affairs (with special reference to the roles of the practitioner); student learning and development, quality

## **DEDICATION**

---

Dedicated to my Heavenly Father and all my academic mentors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

I would like to express my gratitude to:

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## TURNITIN REPORT SUMMARY (FULL REPORT WAS SEPARATELY SUBMITTED)

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS (ONLY APPLIED IN CHAPTER 1)**

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<b>CAS</b>	<b>Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education</b>
<b>HE</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<b>HEIs</b>	<b>Higher education institutions</b>
<b>HES</b>	<b>Higher Education Studies</b>
<b>IASAS</b>	<b>International Association of Student Affairs and Services</b>
<b>PG</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>
<b>PPCT</b>	<b>Person, Process, Context and Time</b>
<b>SA</b>	<b>South Africa</b>
<b>UFS</b>	<b>University of the Free State</b>

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Orientation**

---

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

With the presentation of this doctoral thesis in the format of five interrelated publishable manuscripts/published articles (hereafter only referred to as articles), it was regarded crucial to provide the reader with some background that could serve as an orientation to the study. One of the prerequisites is that the five publishable articles produce a holistic whole indicating the interrelatedness and shared goal in these articles (see Epilogue in Chapter 7). Even though a clear rationale for and coherence among the articles are implicated in all five articles, additional clarification may enhance the presentation in totality as evident in the epilogue (see Chapter 7).

Additionally, this approach, however, must not be regarded as synonymous in all respects with a conventional introduction to a doctoral thesis, although resemblance will be noticeable. The main purpose is to provide a brief orientation to the study, with special reference to the following: the background to and rationale for the research problem and relevant literature review (see 1.2); research interest and focus (see 1.3); paradigmatic, disciplinary and theoretical framework for the study (see 1.4); research questions, research aim and objectives (see 1.5-1.6); the appropriate research approach, design and methodology (which is also provided in an adapted format in each article [see 1.7]); data analysis, interpretation and report (see 1.8); the value of the research (see 1.9); and ethical clearance (see 1.10).

### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO AND RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEW**

Students' learning and development are a core interest in higher education (HE) and Student Affairs<sup>1</sup> plays a fundamental role in accomplishing learning and development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn 2010). However, these students' learning and development are more diverse and complex which require more comprehensive and holistic processes within the higher education context (Felten, Abbot, Kirkwood, Long, Lubicz-Nawrocka, Mercer-Mapstone & Verwoord 2019; Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall 2009).

This complexity concerning current student learning and development is further problematised by the realities of a resource strained environment, especially in the context of developing countries. The reality of increased postgraduate (PG) enrolment or demands for PG outputs (Le Roux, Taylor, Kloot & Allie 2019), as a specific example, puts significant strain on human, financial and infrastructure resources (which are important social forces/expectations in the context of student development in HE). This also challenges how universities practise PG supervision. To address continuous global challenges and demands, a pro-active transformation of HE teaching and learning, community engagement, and research are required (Le Roux *et al.* 2019; Clegg 2009:403). Higher education institutions (HEIs) thus need to manage these student learning and development challenges and demands by using a wide-angled view that captures the multiple, overlapping aspects of the development of a whole student (Long 2012; Evans *et al.* 2010; Fry *et al.* 2009).

The literature on student learning and development (Felten *et al.* 2019; Evans *et al.* 2010) also confirms that HE practitioners are confronted with meeting the needs of a diverse student population, as well as the educational and working environments of both staff and students, which challenge and support a diverse group of individuals. The following limitations<sup>2</sup> in student learning and development research have been identified by these scholars and are used as a rationale for the study:

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<sup>1</sup> This research will use certain Student Affairs concepts interchangeably as stated in literature. Concepts such Student Affairs, Student Affairs and Services, Student and Development are interchangeably used in the South Africa, whereas the term Student Affairs Services is used internationally (cf. Schreiber 2012).

<sup>2</sup> These limitations, especially limitation one and three overlap to some extent.

1. Development must be considered within a holistic and less linear manner.
2. The impact of the environment on development must be considered. (Lewin [1936] stated that behaviour is the interaction between a person and the environment).
3. More information is needed on the movement in student development.
4. How various aspects of development intersect and are connected must be investigated (exploratory research).

This background and rationale highlight the significance of this study, with a special accent on “why” and “how” some limitations in the current body of literature will be addressed. To this effect, I have identified the following three areas of limitations. Firstly, how questions have been framed in the literature to date makes it difficult to generalise how findings can be applied to the learning and development of students in developing countries, especially PG students. This framing limitation is underlined by the fact that many research studies fail to ask questions about what research is real and not asked in literature (e.g. the holistic and intersectional nature of student development, and in this regard fail to acknowledge the ecological factors that impact developmental processes). Secondly, many studies are limited in scope, that is, data are predominantly collected from developed countries in the global North (i.e. a contextual limitation). Thirdly, how the ecology of learning has been conceptualised in the current body of literature is questionable. Many conceptualisations fail to recognise the realities facing HE in developing countries (e.g. rather strongly influenced by bio-ecological and contextual factors). Furthermore, these factors are not adequately captured in PG conceptualisations and perspectives on problems in PG studies.

These limitations (i.e. framing limitations, contextual limitations, and conceptual limitations) demand a thorough understanding of the body of literature on student affairs, especially concerning student development within a transforming HE field of study (Jansen 2011:2). Thus, this study aimed to achieve what Jansen (2011:2) identified as an “intimate knowledge of” a particular field of study, that is to “know everything that has been researched and published on the topic in focus”. I plan to report on the study in five inter-related publishable articles that all will relate to the research focus (see 1.3). I have chosen the theoretical framework based on the rationale provided

above, namely analysing student affairs research in HE through a Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model lens.

### **1.3 RESEARCH INTEREST AND FOCUS**

My role as facilitator, researcher, and supervisor over 24 years at the UFS (including several departments, centres, etc. – currently at the Faculty of Education) fosters my research interest, which lies in student learning and development. This is also at the heart of both HE in general and student affairs in particular. Currently, challenges about student learning and development are diversely managed by HEIs. This study aims to demonstrate the importance of student learning and development in student affairs within the HE context. Therefore, through Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Person, Process Context and Time model lens student affairs research is analysed to identify themes/trends that will collectively enable HEIs to optimise their management of student learning and development.

### **1.4 PARADIGMATIC, DISCIPLINARY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY**

The demarcation of this study is nuanced, and include HE studies, Student Affairs, Student Development Theory, and Ecology of Learning. However, it is primarily positioned within the field of student affairs, the study area of student development theory. Jones and Asbes (2017:143) identified five categories in which student development theory can be divided, namely (1) theories focusing on the individual student – including social identities; (2) theories focusing on student learning, engagement and success – that is aspects that place students in the context of the entire institution; (3) theories focusing on the developmental impact of the interaction between students and the campus environment; (4) theories focusing on organisational aspects of higher education institutions; and (5) theories that are concerned with a holistic and integrative approach to student development. Although all these theoretical approaches to student development are valuable, this research is positioned within the third focus area listed above, because it specifically focuses on the ecological aspects of student development. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005) bio-ecological systems theory will specifically be used as

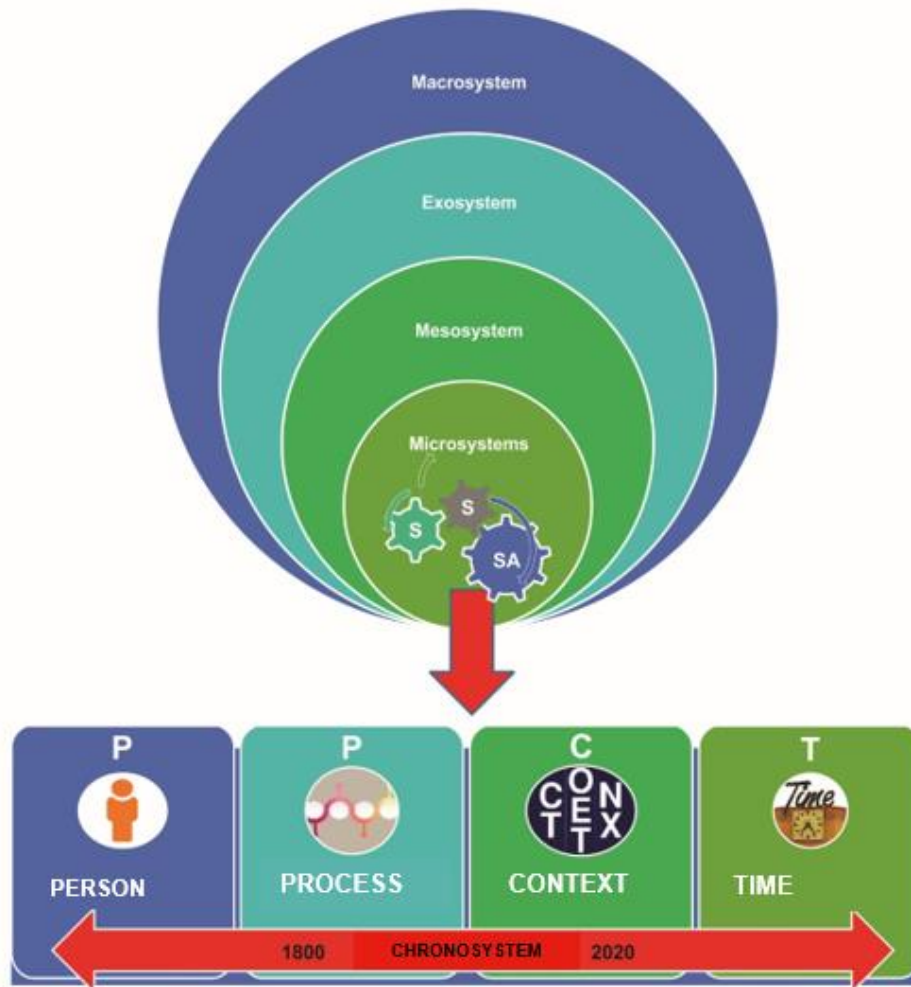
a theoretical lens. The five articles I envisaged were grounded on the philosophical assumptions originated from the ambit of an interpretive paradigm which aim is to make meaning in order to understand. In drawing on interpretivism as my paradigmatic orientation, I worked with the ontological assumption that multiple realities exist, that are socially constructed. Framed in the context of my study, I worked with the assumption that human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world (e.g. confirm the applicability of the theoretical framework). Special emphasis on the role of student affairs practitioners, student affairs research themes/trends, policy issues and assessment criteria related to PG article-style studies as selected person-, process-, context- and time-related student affairs issues (Teichler 2015; Tight 2012; McNay 2010; Teichler 1996; Tight 2004; Tight 2003). In alignment with this ontological assumption, I further premised my study on the epistemological assumption that the understanding of knowledge of reality is interactive and can be constructed through the acknowledgment, recognition and exploration of the relationship between humans and ecology (cf. Mertens 2010; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005). The interconnectedness between humans and ecology alludes to the actions of the person, process, context and time of the environment, communities and individuals, that influences the outcomes of one another (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005). Finally, to make values explicit and create findings (Mertens 2015).

These above-mentioned themes overlap with other key themes identified in HE literature (Tight 2012; McNay 2010; Tight 2004; Tight 2003), namely the student experience, institutional management and leadership, academic work, knowledge, and research/contributing studies, as well as with South African HE themes stipulated by Wilkinson and van Jaarsveldt (2009), namely transformation and socio-cultural links/relationships/responsibilities of HE. Also, I compared the 47 Student Affairs functional areas of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) to with the worldwide and African HE contexts to distinguish student affairs research trends during the 2008-2019 chronosystem interlude (CAS 2019). This choice was justified for this historic interval because of 40 years' student affairs research experience and a sound professional basis (CAS 2019). Furthermore, as a foundation for Student Development Theory (including Ecology of Learning), I found the literature source *Student Development in College* (Evans *et al.* 2010) a comprehensive, historic, and masterful blend of student development

lenses and the application of developmentally appropriate practice for both HE, and, especially student affairs fields. However, the theoretical framework that predominantly guided this study is Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner 2005), which constitutes the process-person-context-time (i.e. PPCT) model. This model not only conceptualises the integrated developmental system, but also how this research approached human development. This Bioecological theory conceptualises development as the "phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and as groups. The phenomenon extends over the life course of successive generations and through historical time, both past and present" (Bronfenbrenner 2005:3), which links with the developmental contextualism rationale (see 1.2, third bullet).

#### **1.4.1 Bronfenbrenner's Developmental Ecology Model**

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, based on the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005), is the most relevant model for this research. This decision was based on the researcher's desire to reflect on the history "inside the interactions between" the four roles of student affairs practitioners (see 2.3.1-2.3.4 & Figure 2.1 with special reference to article 1), considering the three stipulated criteria (see 2.3.1-2.3.4 in all three sections [a], [b] & [c]) for a transforming context of HE, to establish the "how and why these outcomes occur as they do" (Evans *et al.* 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006). Themes that emerged from Bronfenbrenner's original research were prominent here too, in particular, the social and historical contexts, the active person, and the impossibility of considering individual developmental processes in isolation. The core of Bronfenbrenner's bioecology theory is multiple personal and interpersonal interactions and engagements – during which the person is sandwiched between and among these systems, which are primarily responsible for development. The PPCT model used for this study is depicted in the following figure (Figure 1.1):



**Figure 1.1: Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory via the PPCT model (adapted)**

The four principal components of this model in Figure 1.1 were developed and are applied as follows (Evans *et al.* 2010:161-167; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006):

*Process* is at the centre of the model, and refers to the primary and diverse interactions (in a state of constant change) between the student affairs practitioner (SA, as central gear as demonstrated in Figure 1.1) and other relevant stakeholders (S as other student gears as demonstrated in Figure 1.1), within the transforming HE context. To achieve optimal student development, “the *proximal processes*, that operate overtime ... [are key tools that must become] progressively more complex and be buffered appropriately” (Evans *et al.* 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006) to avoid overpowering/devastating the evolving student and, instead, achieving optimal development.

*Person* refers to the particular personal attributes – Bronfenbrenner’s so-called four developmentally instigative characteristics, which involve *activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations where the microsystem acts as “the centre of gravity”* (2005:xvi) – that determines the “how and what of the person-environment interaction” (Evans *et al.* 2010: 161). These four characteristics are the following:

1. Acting to invite or inhibit responses from the environment;
2. selective responsivity - which describes how an individual explores/reacts to surroundings;
3. structuring proclivities - that is, how individuals engage/persist in progressively more complex events that are fundamental to their development, for instance, seeking stronger leadership/positions; and
4. directive beliefs – how individuals experience agency with environments, for example, high achievers believe their accomplishments are due to hard work (Evans *et al.* 2010:161-162).

In brief, the person-environment interaction refers to how the developing student affairs practitioner experiences the transforming HE environment, and how this environment will react to that individual.

*Context* signifies the critical location of interaction and refers to the transforming HE institution. This concept incorporates the activities, relationships, and roles of the developing person with other persons, “and the world of symbols and language” (Bronfenbrenner 2005:xvi-xvii). In this context, the person (in this case, the developing student affairs practitioner) is in the centre, nested in four systems, like a set of Russian dolls: a) The microsystem signifies the “activities, roles and interpersonal relations” within a transforming information-technology-mediated HE context; b) the mesosystem represents “linkages and processes between two or more settings” within a transforming HE campus peer culture and, in this article, the four historical moments; c) the exosystem includes all external influences beyond the control of the transforming HE context and the micro- and mesosystems; and d) the macrosystem, which encapsulates all three other systems, as well as “socio-historic influences related to economics, the world of work and societal values” (Evans *et al.* 2010:162-167). It is important to note that interaction with the micro- and

mesosystems has a *direct* impact on the development of the individual, whereas the exo- and macrosystems *indirectly* influence development.

The critical location for interactions, that is, the process (Evans *et al.* 2010:162), is sandwiched between the developing student affairs practitioner and the transforming HE environment. For example, the developing student affairs practitioner's developmental instigative characteristics inhibit or provoke reactions, based on forces and resources present in a transforming a HE context in the course of increasingly complex proximal endeavours.

*Time*, or the chronosystem as Bronfenbrenner referred to it earlier, refers to lifetime experiences, such as environmental events, major life transitions, and historical events. The notion of time furthermore refers to the likelihood of developmental processes varying according to specific historical events that occur at the time when the developing individuals are at one or another age. Therefore, student affairs practitioners must understand the chronosystem to understand the *what* and *how* of learning, "... development and change" (Evans *et al.* 2010:165-166). Bronfenbrenner's level of time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006:796), refers to "microtime (i.e., continuity versus discontinuity during episodes of the proximal process); mesotime (i.e., certain periods within time intervals); or macrotime (i.e., the focus on changing expectations and events in larger society within and across generations)". The level of time influences all three above-mentioned components. Thus, the interrelations between time and the three components guide evolving encouragement of proximal processes that "affect and are affected by the process and outcomes of human development over the life course" (Bronfenbrenner 2005:xiii-xx; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006:796).

Consequently, these four components of the PPCT model were integrated (by the researcher) in the historical moments of this study. This integration is built on two pillars, namely learning (Criterion 1), and the learning and development via social and academic integration (Criterion 2), which are addressed via a specialised service/role. Notice how this framework also mirrors the aim of this study (see 1.6).

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The primary research question which triggered this study was:

In what ways are HEIs implementing the most important student affairs research themes, identified through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's model, to transform student development?

In my endeavours to find an answer to the above-mentioned, the following subsidiary questions were formulated:

1. Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's model: How did student affairs research (with special reference to the roles of student affairs practitioners) historically develop and what are the implications thereof? (Article 1)
2. Through Bronfenbrenner model's lens (macro-level): What are the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development in HE worldwide, and why? (Article 2)
3. Through Bronfenbrenner model's lens (macro-level): What are the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development in African HE, and why? (Article 3)
4. Through Bronfenbrenner model's lens (focusing on the exo- and macro levels): What are important policy and assessment issues in the assessment of PG students (article option) for HE supervisors that uphold the student affairs practitioners' functions to address, and why? (Article 4)
5. Through Bronfenbrenner model's lens: How can differences identified in student affairs research themes contribute to the body of knowledge, with special reference to PG student learning and development in HE, and why? (Article 5)

## **1.6 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study was to determine, through Bronfenbrenner model's lens, the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development (including PG students) in HE, and how these themes might be managed or implemented best by HEIs.

Therefore, the objectives with this study were to:

- Evaluate through Bronfenbrenner model's lens how student affairs research (with special reference to the roles of student affairs practitioners) developed historically and its implications (Article 1).
- Evaluate through Bronfenbrenner model's lens the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development (including PG students) in HE worldwide and to provide a rationale for the existence of these themes (Article 2).
- Evaluate through Bronfenbrenner model's lens the most important African student affairs research themes for transforming African student learning and development (including PG students) in HE and to provide a rationale for their existence (Article 3).
- Explore through qualitative questionnaires and interviews national HE champions' and UFS (Faculty of Education) PG supervisors' perceptions and experiences on what are important policy and assessment issues for HE supervisors when assessing PG students (article option), and how it can support the function of student affairs (Article 4).
- Integrate the literature, document analysis, and empirical research results, and to compile and substantiate learning and professional development directives for managing or implementing similarities and differences identified in student affairs research themes that contribute to the body of knowledge, with special reference to PG student learning and development in HE, and to determine why (Article 5).

## **1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This subsection is devoted to a discussion and explanation of this study's qualitative research approach, with diverse designs and methodologies (see 1.6.1 & 1.6.2).

### **1.7.1 Research Approach**

A qualitative approach (McMillan & Shumacher 2014; McMillan & Shumacher 2010; Robberts 2010) was applied, namely validating findings through triangulation of research information provided in the literature, policy documents, published research, and qualitative data reported by relevant stakeholder participants.

### 1.7.2 Research Design and Methodology

Although articles two and three form the basis for the research analysis, the research design and methodology for each article were determined within its parameters.

Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5
Non-experimental, explorative design and methodology	This qualitative study followed a mixed analytical, instrumental (i.e. theme-based), collective case study (with a multi-focus) approach (except Article 4). Article 4 reports on a qualitative case study with an empirical component, as human behaviour cannot be divorced from its context. This permitted the researcher to transform the lived experience by allowing for analysis, reflection, and interpretation (McMillan & Schumacher 2014; Merriam 2009). In article 4 HE experts and PG supervisors with experience in article-style PG studies (i.e. Faculty of Education, UFS) served as participants.			

See detail on the motivation for the research design and the methodology of the study reported in the five articles in Appendix C. Multiple methods of data generation were applied in this collective case study. These are explained in the next section.

### 1.7.3 Data Generation

In this qualitative student affairs and HE case study (reported in five articles), data were collected through a document analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional documents, policies, qualitative questionnaires, and interviews with relevant stakeholders (McMillan & Schumacher 2014; Cresswell 2013:213; McMillan & Schumacher 2010). Regarding the peer-reviewed journal articles, research reported during the time interval (2008-2019) was analysed, while the views of HE experts and PG supervisors (Faculty of Education, UFS) were obtained during 2020. The multimethod strategy of the collective case study design allowed triangulation in data generation and data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher 2014), which in turn served to validate the findings (Robbarts 2010). Rigour was maintained by keeping to the guidelines for ensuring trustworthiness

of research such as credibility, transferability, confirmability, and pragmatic utility (Maree 2012; Lincoln 2008; Rolfe 2006; Coenen & Khonraad 2003; Lincoln & Guba 1986) and authenticity, including a balance or fairness (Mertens 2015; Lincoln & Guba 1986).

#### **1.7.4 Selection of Research Participants**

For articles 1 to 3, no human research participants were selected, as only two data sets were used, namely publications on student affairs in the context of HE worldwide (articles 1-2) and student affairs in African HE (article 3) for the period 2008-2019. The data collected for these three articles originated from published research the focus of which, as specified, differed.

The investigation reported on in Article 4 required purposeful sampling, inclusive of criterion, opportunistic, and convenience sampling strategies. Information-rich cases were used that foster the Faculty of Education's transformation of learning for positive change and flourishing action. For article 4 I selected participants from two populations, namely (specifying inclusion criteria):

- Purposively selected PG HE experts in article-style postgraduate studies in South African HE.
- All PG supervisors with experience in article-style PG studies (Faculty of Education) during 2020 at the UFS.

The data collected for these two articles were qualitative data (for article 4) and published research (as stipulated for articles 1-3), and qualitative data (for article 5) the focus of which differed.

### **1.8 DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETING, AND REPORTING**

An inductive process of analysis through NVivo-12 software was followed in this qualitative research, namely:

- 1) reading published research and qualitative data,
- 2) labelling (coding – first open, then focused - and categorising),
- 3) reducing, comparing, and sorting data,

- 4) displaying data,
- 5) interpreting data meanings,
- 6) summarising findings,
- 7) reflecting on the patterns elicited from the data collected from the Faculty of Education supervisors (Maree 2012; McMillan & Schumacher 2010; Robberts 2010).

The purpose of the analysis was to provide explanations of a phenomenon (*cf.* McMillan & Schumacher 2014), namely selected person-, process-, context- and time-related themes in student affairs (based on Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model) for transforming HE. I employed ethical responsibility (*cf.* Robberts 2010) by being non-biased, accurate, and honest throughout the data analysis, interpretation and reporting by applying verifiable methods like thick/detailed descriptions and tables.

## **1.9 VALUE OF PROPOSED RESEARCH**

This HE study contributed to an improved understanding of selected person-, process-, context- and time-related student affairs themes within a transforming South African, African, and worldwide HE landscape. Therefore, the pertinent contribution of this study is a proposed student affairs mapping framework for transforming HE. Based on the data of 1047 research articles published between 2008-2019 (i.e. 926 articles reported on in Article 2, and 121 articles reported on in Article 3), as well as qualitative data from PG supervisors in South Africa (SA), this student affairs mapping framework can assist higher education scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to overcome some of the framing, contextual and conceptual shortcomings identified in the existing body of literature (see 1.2). Furthermore, beyond its theoretical significance, this envisaged framework also may hold practical significance for student affairs staff, PG supervisors, and managers in HE who are committed to invest in the learning and development of students. In this regard, the practical significance of this study, therefore, will extend to students themselves; especially PG students in developing countries. Also, the identified policy and assessment issues of article-style PG studies may be specifically worthy to the Faculty of Education's PG supervisors and, finally, to the students themselves. It is believed that this research created a deeper

understanding of the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development (including PG students) in HE, and how these themes might be managed or implemented best by HEIs.

### **1.10 ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

I adhere to the ethical clearance guidelines for researchers of the UFS (Ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2017/1371/1007 – also see Appendices A & B). The selected institutions were requested officially to provide permission to involve their staff, and/or relevant documents/data that might assist in the data generation and analysis processes. These institutions' and participants' involvement/participation was voluntary; they could withdraw from the research at any time without any subsequent repercussions. The identity of participants and institutions were and will be kept anonymous in all reports by applying pseudonyms or codes instead of the institutions'/participants' real names. The data and field note documents are password protected and/or locked away in a cabinet, cupboard, or safe. Although the data and documents will be kept and made available as an audit trail, they will be destroyed after five years.

### **1.11 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

In reflecting on the study, the researcher recognises the distinctive demands of organising and presenting the multiplicity of findings in a five-article format. I had to accept the overlapping and/or intersecting information which manifested in a presentation of this nature, and throughout I had to keep in mind that each article should be a fully independent entity on its own (see Article 1 in Chapter 2, Article 2 in Chapter 3, Article 3 in Chapter 4, Article 4 in Chapter 5 and Article 5 in Chapter 6). It was not so difficult to ensure that each article contributes to the overall aim of the study (see 1.6 and Epilogue in Chapter 7). Therefore, each article's list of references is listed separately with the relevant article. Finally, the most challenging aspect, however, was to present the articles in such a way that the focus on holistic student learning and development, within the fields of student affairs and higher education, would become visible.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Article 1

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#### ARTICLE ONE

Article one is a research article (peer-reviewed) proposed to be adapted (after graduation) according to the guidelines for authors for *The Journal of Higher Education*<sup>3</sup>.

#### A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW, THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S LENS, OF THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

##### ABSTRACT

By using Bronfenbrenner's lens, the authors scrutinised the four historical moments of the student affairs practitioner's role in higher education. This historical systematic review is based on four theoretical directives. The study aimed to create a more nuanced understanding of how the developmental role of student affairs practitioners has been understood over a period spanning more than 220 years (see Figure 2.1), up to the present. The importance of this investigation lies in its identification of central issues that student affairs practitioners focused on in the past, and providing guidelines for what they should focus on in the future when they help students to cope with challenges in their learning process towards the postgraduate level.

*Keywords:* Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory; historical reflection; postgraduate development; student affairs practitioner roles; systematic review

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<sup>3</sup> See detail of justification for this journal choice in Chapter 7 (Epilogue).

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) stressed the importance of student affairs role in higher education (Ludeman & Schreiber 2020:39-47), which is worth exploring to inform professional theory and practice. Despite demands that universities increase their postgraduate outputs (Le Roux, Taylor, Kloot, & Allie 2019), the role played by student affairs has not been prominent in postgraduate development efforts (Gansemer-Topf, Ross & Johnson 2006). This nexus is emphasized by Young (2019), who reveals that too few supervised experiences are implemented to develop skills and competencies of postgraduate students, or of professional development of student affairs practitioners. Zusman (2017) determined that expansion in the number of professional doctoral degrees resulted mainly in an increase in professions/practitioners, instead of responding to the needs of complex professional work environments. In addition, “[l]earning is fundamental to living ... but also the reason for higher education” (Keeling 2006:3), and should be supported by the role of student affairs, which is the core of this article. However, the classroom (a space that also includes academic interaction with postgraduate students) is not the sole place where learning takes place. Learning, through high-impact practices (Magna Report 2016), is interwoven throughout the student experience, as a holistic and transformative experience about which multiple views exist. Therefore, student learning (including that of postgraduate students) is also about student learning and development – something to which student affairs should make a noteworthy contribution.

This systematic review is based on four theoretical book directives, that is, *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education – A Return to the Academy* (Brown 1972), *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators 1998); *Learning Reconsidered 2: Implementing a Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling 2006), and *Student Development in College: Theory, Research and Practice* (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn 2010). These American theoretical directives have guided the student affairs profession, which “defines learning as a comprehensive, holistic and transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development” (American Association for Higher Education *et al.* 1998:2). The authors describe the influence of momentous

historical contexts that redefined the role of student affairs within higher education. In general, the trajectory of this role has been the same in most countries, though there may be minor differences regarding timelines, due to contextual factors. In brief, the authors wished to determine how the historical influence of the developmental role of student affairs practitioners, within a transforming higher education landscape, has been understood and how it contributes to student learning and development, with special reference to four focal historical moments of student affairs practice, namely, *in loco parentis*, service providers, out-of-class developmental officers, and multiple-reflective-educators (see Figure 2.1). These four prominent student affairs moments are not fixed regarding trait or process, but are, rather, evolutionary.

This historical reflection on student affairs proposes to provide new insight into and deeper understanding of the developmental roles practitioners have fulfilled to date, by focusing on three criteria: the role of the student affairs practitioner, the learning process, and the integration of social and academic contexts of the student experience. The reason for these three criteria is that student success is achieved on a continuum, and is institutionally anchored by students, staff, government agencies and the institution itself (Seifert 2011). The three criteria are based on three pillars, namely, learning (Criterion 2), learning and development (Criterion 3), and service (Criterion 1). The authors of this article describe these criteria as nested within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005), which serves as the guiding framework (see Figure 2.1). In addition, aspects of the model that are related to persons, process, context, and time (PPCT) of the higher education environment surrounding the student affairs practitioner, will be integrated<sup>4</sup>.

The research findings indicate that various historical roles of student affairs practitioners have addressed the many and varied social and academic challenges students face in their learning processes towards development and success. Student affairs practitioners' involvement in postgraduate development efforts appears to be limited, and the researchers urge leaders to create more engaging co-curricular programmes and services to support postgraduate student learning. The authors argue that, by using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (i.e., the PPCT model) as lens to conduct this systematic review of the historical development of the role of the student

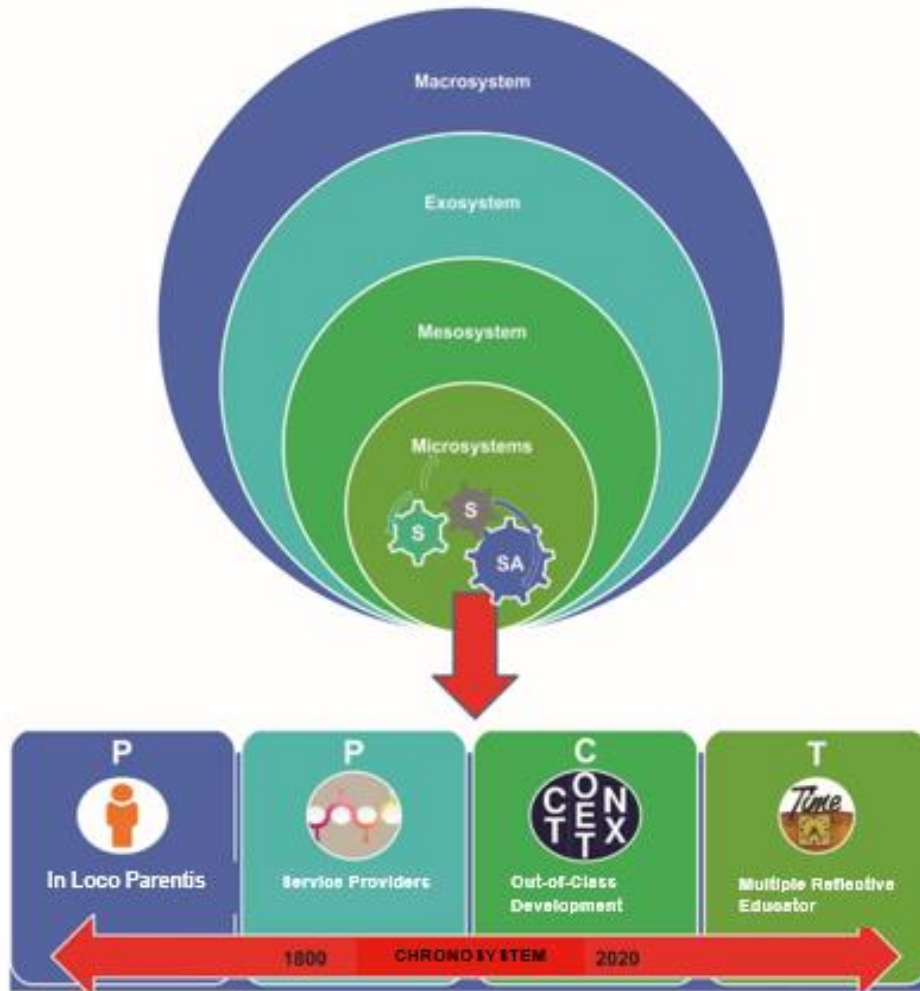
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<sup>4</sup> These limitations, especially limitation one and three overlap to some extent.

affairs practitioner, new insights into the depth and complexity of interactions and engagements can be gained, and used to address shortcomings.

## **2.2 BRONFENBRENNER'S DEVELOPMENTAL ECOLOGY MODEL**

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, which is based on the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), is the most relevant model for this research. This decision was based on the authors' desire to reflect on the history "inside the interactions between" the four roles of student affairs practitioners (see Figure 2.1), considering the three stipulated criteria of a transforming context of higher education, to establish the "how and why these outcomes occur as they do" (Evans *et al.* 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006). Themes that emerged from Bronfenbrenner's original research were valid here too, such as the social and historical context, the active person, and the impossibility of considering individual developmental processes in isolation. The core of Bronfenbrenner's bioecology theory is multiple personal and interpersonal interactions and engagements, during which the person is sandwiched between and among these systems, which are primarily responsible for development.



**Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory via PPCT model with four roles of student affairs (adapted)**

The four principal components of this model in Figure 2.1 were developed and are applied as follows (Evans *et al.* 2010:161-167; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006).

*Process* is at the centre of the model, and refers to the primary and diverse interactions (in a state of constant change) between the student affairs practitioner (SA, as central gear) and other relevant stakeholders (S, as other student gears), within the transforming higher education context. In order to achieve optimal student development, “the proximal processes, that operate over time ... [are key tools that must become] progressively more complex and be buffered appropriately” (Evans *et al.* 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006) in order to avoid overpowering/devastating the evolving student and, instead, striving to achieve optimal development.

*Person* refers to the particular personal attributes – Bronfenbrenner’s so-called four developmentally instigative characteristics, which involve activities, social roles and interpersonal relations where the microsystem acts as “the centre of gravity” (2005:xvi) that determine the “how and what of the person-environment interaction” (Evans *et al.* 2010:161). These four characteristics are, firstly, that which invites/inhibits responses from the environment; second, selective responsivity, which describes how an individual explores/reacts to surroundings; third, structuring proclivities/dispositions, that is, how individuals engage/persist in progressively more complex events that are fundamental to their development, for instance, seeking stronger leadership/positions; and fourth, directive beliefs – how individuals experience agency in relation to environments, e.g., high achievers believe their accomplishments are due to hard work (Evans *et al.* 2010:161–162). In brief, the person-environment interaction refers to the way the student affairs practitioner experiences the transforming higher education environment, and how this environment will react to that individual.

*Context* signifies the critical location of interaction and refers to the transforming higher education institution. This concept incorporates the activities, relationships and roles of the developing person with other persons “and the world of symbols and language” (Bronfenbrenner 2005:xvi-xvii).

In this context, the person (in this case, the student affairs practitioner) is in the centre, nested in four systems, like a set of Russian dolls: a) The microsystem signifies the “activities, roles and interpersonal relations” within a transforming information-technology-mediated higher education context; b) The mesosystem represents “linkages and processes between two or more settings” within transforming higher education campus peer culture and, in this article, the four historical moments; c) The exosystem includes all external influences beyond the control of the transforming higher education context and the microsystem; and d) The macrosystem, which encapsulates all three other systems, as well as “socio-historic influences related to economics, world of work and societal values” (Evans *et al.* 2010:162–167).

The critical location for interactions, i.e., the process (Evans *et al.* 2010:162), is sandwiched between the student affairs practitioner and the transforming higher education environment. For

example, the student affairs practitioner's developmental instigative characteristics inhibit or provoke reactions, based on forces and resources present in a transforming higher education context in the course of increasingly complex proximal endeavours.

*Time* (or the chronosystem, as Bronfenbrenner referred to it earlier, which refers to lifetime experiences, such as environmental events, major life transitions, and historical events) refers to the likelihood of developmental processes varying according to specific historical events that occur at the time the developing individuals are at a certain age/stage of development. Therefore, it is imperative that student affairs practitioners understand the chronosystem in order to understand the *what* and *how* of learning "... development and change" (Evans *et al.* 2010:165–166). The level of time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006:796), whether "microtime (i.e., continuity versus discontinuity during episodes of proximal process); mesotime (i.e., certain periods within time intervals); or macrotime (i.e., the focus on changing expectations and events in larger society within and across generations)," influence all three above-mentioned components; interrelations between time and the three components guide evolving encouragement of proximal processes that "affect and are affected by the process and outcomes of human development over the life course" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006:796; Bronfenbrenner 2005:xiii-xx).

Consequently, these four components of the PPCT model were integrated in the historical moments according to the three criteria that were stipulated.

### **2.3 SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUR HISTORICAL MOMENTS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

The objectives of the systematic review were to systematically collect, document, scrutinize and critically analyse the current research literature on student affairs in the higher education context, to establish the historic moments of the role of student affairs; to identify gaps in the research literature; and make recommendations for further research in this field. The systematic review identified four historical moments of student affairs practice unfolding within a transforming higher education context (see Figure 2.1), namely, *in loco parentis* (1800-1960s), service providers (1945-1990), out-of-class development officers (1900-2000), and multiple-reflective-educators

(2001-today). The boundaries of these periods are blurred, and periods overlap.

### **2.3.1 The role of the student affairs practitioner as in loco parentis**

*In loco parentis* is Latin for in the place of the parent, and this moment was identified in the literature as the first role of student affairs practitioners (Beavers 2013:3; Lee 2011; Sweeton & Davis 2004; Nuss 1996;). Historically, this role was not only an element of student affairs practice, instead, practitioners, by implication, shared this role in the higher education institution context, and acted as parents/guardians of students under their care (i.e., microsystem). This diverse role was situated in a few persons on meso-, exo- and macrosystem levels, and it consisted mainly of discipline and authority (Sweeton & Davis 2004) and supervising academic standards and studies (Beavers 2013) – oversight that was practically and viably due to the relatively small size of institutions at that time.

The in loco parentis role represents a meso-time period (i.e., mid-1800 to the 1960s), during which higher education institutions, specifically before 1880, obtained the legal responsibility to act as authoritarian guardians/caretakers of the students delegated to them (Beavers 2013:3; Lee 2011). During this meso-time period, up to the 1950s, the higher education institutional context (thus, by implication, the student affairs practitioner as the mesosystem) had free reign – limitless power – regarding how they operated, disciplined and monitored students (as the microsystem). However, from the 1960s, students’ constitutional rights started being taken into consideration within student development (Lee 2011). In the view of Thelin (2004), this meso-time period was lacking in standards and accountability. Diverse functions of the in loco parentis role were centred in one or two persons who represented the meso-, exo- and macrosystems. By implication, the decision-making control over these systems and over student life in the university context came with boundless power and minimum requirements for standards and accountability. The in loco parentis role was fluid within the three systems, and represented an evolving meso-time notion (Carlisle 2017; Sweeton & Davis 2004). This means the original in loco parentis role was the product of a more secure and regulated higher education context, where stronger parent-student relationships (i.e., exosystem) involved greater parental participation, involvement and concern. Carlisle argues

that there appears to be a return of the so-called in loco parentis Plus role today, to a transforming higher education context in which both the legal landscape and parents' expectations (e.g., "helicopter parents developed into snowplough parents") has changed (2017:48). The in loco parentis role represented an autonomous lifestyle for student affairs practitioners within a less structured higher education context. The relationships could transfer to partnerships among the three systems due to a more team-oriented and community-focused approach, though personal liability was problematic (Carlisle 2017).

(a) *Focus of learning (learning process)*

During the period 1820-1870, the first curriculum transformation, "from the classical to the liberal professional", occurred (Brown 1972:9). In addition, in reaction to the industrial revolution and changes in social class, the Morrill Acts of 1890 and 1962 not only increased access to higher education, but also shifted the focal point of "teaching towards practical agriculture, science, military science, and engineering," without excluding classical studies. The "original purpose of classroom management shifted towards an excuse for teachers to defend the use of corporal punishment, especially in the courtroom" (Stoehr 2011), as demonstrated in the Supreme Court Case *State v. Pendergrass*, North Carolina, in 1837<sup>5</sup>. Within this higher education context, the personal, arbitrary relationship was also present in cooperation between the parent (as the primary educator) and teacher/lecturer (as the secondary educator) (Oosthuizen 1992). This association was voluntary, rather than a formal partnership, and shared a common aim, namely, the learning and development of the learner/student. This voluntary association or partnership had undefined boundaries and, thus, non-statutory forms of participation. The interaction of the person (microsystem) and process (mesosystem) within a transforming higher education context was rather random and unrestrained/uncontrolled, and characterized by voluntary activities and interpersonal relationships.

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<sup>5</sup> Supreme Court Case *State v. Pendergrass*, North Carolina (USA) in 1837: In *S. v. Pendergrass*, 19 N.C. 365, it is held that the law confides to schoolmasters and teachers a discretionary power in the infliction of punishment upon their pupils, and will not hold them criminally responsible, unless the punishment be such as to occasion permanent injury to the child, or be inflicted merely to gratify their own evil passions.

Additionally, the role of the teachers/lecturers and, by implication, the higher education institution, during the learning process included maintaining discipline based on rules, punishing lawbreakers, and ensuring the safety of students (Oosthuizen 1992). Thus, the *in loco parentis* historical moment permitted universities, including the student affairs practitioner, to practice boundless discretion within a rigid set of “character-building” rules that were strictly enforced without reference to students’ constitutional rights (Lee 2011). For example, students were summarily expelled in the late 1800s for poor work habits and “weakness of character” (Anderson 1988:54), while some higher education institutions imposed restrictive social rules on their female students with regard to speech, socialization, and movement (Horowitz 1984).

Situating the main decision-making control over student life with the university had a profound influence on the learning process (Lee 2011). It is evident that, during this meso-time period, the macrosystem’s power invited persons, including the student affairs practitioner, whose disciplinary role was focused on student conduct and administration functions, to make internal decisions without displaying accountability to external stakeholders (Long 2012). Bickel and Lake (1999:179) state that “most problems were handled within the university, by the university, and often quietly.” The transforming higher education context had limited standards or accountability in matters of institutional quality and legitimacy (Nkoane 2015) in relation to the exo- and macrosystems.

*(b) Relationship/integration of social and academic aspects*

A personal, *arbitrary* relationship existed between students, faculty, and staff (Beavers 2013). One of the first missions of higher education was character development, which was part of the refinement of the “person” – one of the goals of attending a higher education institution. The student affairs role in integrating social and academic aspects was random, casual and inconsistent, as well as unrestrained, due to unlimited power; however, from the 1960s, higher education institutions/student affairs practitioners started observing students’ constitutional rights. One or two persons were responsible for all the different functional areas currently served by various student affairs divisions. For example, Oxford and Cambridge Universities integrated residential and learning environments (Edwards & Sweeton 2000), and focused on academic and character

development (Nuss 1996); residential dormitories implemented strict supervision by faculty to ensure general well-being of students (Sweeton & Davis 2004).

In brief, the *in loco parentis* role was not confined to one historical moment, but is a fluent, evolutionary role, which was not enforced as legal standard under higher education law, but as societal pressure to perform parental responsibilities – the role transformed as the higher education institution transformed. An example of this evolution is references to Carlisle’s (2017) “*in loco parentis Plus*,” which refers to replacing so-called helicopter parents by snowplough parents. These snowplough parents establish concrete expectations of how they expect students to be supported, which create new liabilities and standards of care, depending on social and policy fluctuations, political movements, legal decisions, and demographic features. This new *in loco parentis Plus* role involves broad and diverse duties to protect students (e.g., to care, protect, monitor and regulate by means of restriction), which creates substantially more liability for higher education institutions (Carlisle 2017). When both the legal landscape and parent expectations change rapidly, it leads to increased stress and higher anxiety levels. These personal, arbitrary relationships – person and process interaction within the transforming higher education context – become more defined and specific, because the exo- and macrosystems play a more vital role.

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Between the two historical moments, *in loco parentis* and service provider, a transitional phase existed, during which boundaries were blurred and lacking in detail. During this transitional phase, the student affairs practitioner’s role shifted gradually after the World War II, to that of service provider, as a result of massification trends in higher education. This meso-time period, from 1945 onwards, influenced not only the person and process interaction, but also the role of the student affairs practitioner, who became a mediator of service within a challenging higher educational context.

Higher education, with special reference to America, transformed from 1940 to 2005. Higher education (including the student affairs practitioner) was no longer allowed to dismiss or punish students arbitrarily, without some form of formalised process (refer to the case *Dixon v. Alabama*

reported by Beavers [2013:5]). This trend was confirmed in 1961, when higher education institutions could no longer act in loco parentis to discipline or expel students. The in loco parentis was reduced further in 1972, when 18-year-old students obtained suffrage (Pollet 2002). This event led to greater autonomy and independence in personal and public matters, which affected the higher education landscape and resulted in anti-war as well as civil rights movements for minorities and women (Sweeton & Davis 2004).

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### **2.3.2 The role of student affairs practitioners as service providers**

The second role of student affairs practitioners, that of service providers, became noticeable after World War II, when higher education institutional service providers were confronted by increased student enrolment, and a variety of issues related to diversity, gender, and social concerns (Nkoane 2015). Furthermore, the 1960s, specifically, were characterized by turbulent social change and policy shifts (Pollet 2002) in relation to change, alcohol, housing and fraternities, as well as political movements, legal decisions and demographics (Sweeton & Davis 2004; Howe & Strauss 2000).

The massification of higher education was due to its democratization (Schofer & Meyer 2005), the rise of the knowledge economy (Zha 2009; Altbach & Knight 2007), the rapid development of new technologies (Teichler 2001) and globalization (Mohamedbhai 2008; Vaira 2004; Schuetze & Slowey 2002; Strydom 2002; Teichler 2001). This trend created challenges for maintaining high standards and student success rates (Fraser & Killen 2005; Kivinen & Kaipainen 2002).

These historical events within a transforming higher educational context meant the service provider role of student affairs practitioners expanded, “from behaviour correction and/or academic standards and studies alone towards regulating personal lives of students” (Beavers 2013:4); these new duties were executed by means of education and coordination of campus life (Nuss 1996). This change necessitated that student affairs practitioners, until the 1970s, establish diverse student development theoretical frameworks for their practice (Long 2012), in order to understand and respond effectively to the required development and learning needs.

Between the 1980s and 1990s, the profession developed into a professional practice of service providers based on student development theory (Long 2012). Because these theories concentrate on traditional undergraduate students aged between 18 and 22 years, this group appeared to be the centre of student affairs practitioners' focus throughout this meso-time period. Student affairs practitioners' role and institutional relationships changed further when student governance bodies gained prominence, and students became change agents for civil rights and liberty movements (Nuss 1996). This evolution increased the complexity of proximal processes, due to greater demand for standards and accountability, and required diverse persons in the meso-, exo- and macrosystems to safeguard the changing students (microsystems). These microsystems functioned with greater autonomy within a less structured higher education context, and the relationships among the three systems mentioned above transformed, to involve a more community-focused approach.

*(a) Learning process*

Social changes and policy shifts (Sweeton & Davis 2004; Pollet 2002; Howe & Strauss 2000) from the 1960s forced courts, and universities themselves, to redefine the relationship between universities and their students in important ways. These historical events, and the transforming higher education context, resulted in more formal relationships, and service providers' role expanded to comprise "behaviour correction and/or academic standards and studies as well as regulating personal lives of students" (Beavers 2013:4) by means of learning instruction and management of campus life (Nuss 1996). Although higher education contexts exhibited differences in different countries, Nokoane (2015) refers to the period between 1970 and 1990 as the era of adjustment and accountability. Massification trends and the development of new technologies influenced how students learn (Teichler 2001) and students were required to learn skills relating to multiculturalism (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005). In this context, the interaction of the person (microsystem) and the process (mesosystem) was more systematic and restrained/controlled, and specified by activities and interpersonal relationships. The service provider historical moment permitted universities/teachers or lecturers, including the student affairs practitioner, to practice a set of "character-building" rules, with discretion, and taking into consideration students' constitutional rights (Lee 2011).

*(b) Integration of social and academic aspects*

In the 1960s turbulence was caused by social changes and policy shifts (Sweeton & Davis 2004; Pollet 2002; Howe & Strauss 2000), which resulted in universities redefining their relationship with their students for student learning and development purposes. Consequently, the service provider role of student affairs practitioners changed, from being exclusively professors and figures of discipline and authority, to being involved in training and organization of campus life (Nuss 1996) – this was done by regulating and integrating students’ personal lives (Beavers 2013:4). Relevant student affairs areas include academic affairs, advising, residence life, diversity and health, wellness, sports, recreation, and new-student services (Beavers 2013:7). To achieve success with this new, enlarged service provider role, the student affair practitioner was required to possess insight into the impetuses and skills of a transforming higher education context that drives, creates, and defines students’ “intellectual, psychosocial, or emotional development and growth” needs (Nkoane 2015:23). During this historical meso-time moment/period, both the person and context elements of the PPCT model in this study focused on holistic student development (Brown 1972:7-8; Williamson 1949), in order to embrace/encompass a “liberally educated” person, whose independent and critical thinking skills, citizenship, emotional and cultural intelligence, and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships prepared them for the world of work (Brown 1972).

Furthermore, in the 1980s and 1990s, the service provider’s professional development was substantiated by student development theories that focused on the “traditional undergraduate student between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two years” (Long 2012). Two of the personal instigative characteristics of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (2005) and PPCT model person are represented in this transforming and demanding higher education context of this historical meso-time period, namely complex engagement and leadership. These socio-historic influences were starting to extend into the economy, the world of work and societal values.

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There seems to be a transitional phase between these historical moments, thus, the overlap in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Nuss 1996).

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### **2.3.3 The role of student affairs practitioners as out-of-class developmental officers**

This third role of the student affairs practitioner, namely, out-of-class developmental officer, started in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when experts were put in charge of out-of-class activities (Dunn 2013; Ludeman, Osfield, Hidalgo, Oste & Wang 2009; Nuss 1996) to address the basic personal needs of students and to focus intentionally on their development outside the classroom. However, it is important to note that, in this time period, a clear distinction was still being made between the in-class and out-of-class experiences of students. During this historic moment, the transforming higher education context was also confronted with demands relating to access, diversity, policy, quality, and globalization (Sandoval-Lucero 2017; Van Damme 2001; UNESCO 1998), which influenced the learning process.

Although globalisation lead to a noticeably altered higher education context for universities to function in, worldwide it also appeared that this higher education context is exposed to complex and diverse meanings of the globalisation concept (Van Damme 2001:1). The impetus of politics, technology, the economy, knowledge, people, and culture (values and ideas) brought changes to teaching practices (Lam 2010), and to the out-of-class developmental role of student affairs practitioners. This change required professional development of student affairs professionals and the field, and the creation of a networking platform, so that practitioners could become more assertive in their personal expertise to learn and grow, and promote the learning process among students (Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017; Evans & Ranero 2009) through appropriate judgements and team partnerships, to address the demands of the world of work.

#### *(a) Focus of learning (learning process)*

Demands relating to issues such as access, diversity, policy, quality, technology, and globalization

(Sandoval-Lucero 2017; Lam 2010; UNESCO 1998) provoked the higher education environment and changed the learning process. Despite limited institutional or government financial resources for universities, the focus of this transforming context was mainly to provide access to higher education learning to all who qualify, irrespective of learners' demographic and personal characteristics (UNESCO 1998). Within this complex and transforming higher education context, globalization involved the process of integrating inter-curricular dimensions into the three functions of the university, namely, teaching, research, and service learning. To address the demands of the world of work and to make sense of different situations, the out-of-class developmental role involved the holistic integration of diverse mechanisms to enhance students' access to and adoption and application of knowledge, and to promote their independent thinking, their exercise of appropriate judgment, and their collaboration with others. Stimulate involvement in politics, technology, the economy, knowledge, people, and culture (values and ideas) brought changes in teaching practices (Lam 2010), and also to student affairs practices. The out-of-class developmental role of student affairs practitioners was required to progressively incorporate new forms of electronic learning. This all-inclusive technology influenced the interaction among micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems, and resulted in drastic transformations of the nature of learners and learning (Lam 2010).

*(b) Integration of social and academic aspects*

Massification trends and globalization (Sandoval-Lucero 2017; UNESCO 1998) influenced the transforming higher education context substantially regarding the role of higher education in social and economic transformation and change. The out-of-class developmental role of student affairs practitioners should not only focus on integrating social and academic aspects, but also on new technologies that influence the learning process (Lam 2010). Within this role, greater autonomy was evident within a less structured higher education context, where relationships now involved partnerships among academics, student affairs practitioners and students, with a more team-oriented approach. These wide-ranging interaction processes of the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems are complex, due to the diverse role players involved. Therefore, this out-of-class developmental role requires appropriate judgment and collaborative skills for making suitable decisions about social and academic integration and to achieve quality learning that satisfy the

demands of the world of work (Lam 2010).

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There also seems to be a transitional phase between these two historical moments, thus, the overlap in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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#### **2.3.4 The role of student affairs practitioners as multiple-reflective-educators**

The development of the student affairs practitioner in relation to socio-economic development of the transforming higher education context is continuous, and focuses on student access with success, accountability, outcomes, student retention, graduation, engagement, the development of graduate attributes, postgraduate research, and leadership (Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017; Sandoval-Lucero 2017; Wilson-Strydom 2015; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005). This development resulted in the fourth moment, namely, the role of the multiple-reflective educator. This diverse role manifests when the student affairs practitioner is confronted with demands for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for learning, such as core character, communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, citizenship, and connectivity. This student affairs role is now defined within context of learning outcomes or student learning (Keeling 2006).

This meso-time period within the chronosystem started in 2001, and continues today. The multiple-reflective educator's role continues to expand, and incorporates being a partner in the broader curriculum, while remaining responsible for the safety, health and wellness or wellbeing of students (including international and postgraduate students) (Beavers 2013; Long 2012; Keeling 2006; Love & Estanek 2004). Within this transforming higher education context, "identifying key relationships" (Keeling 2006:15) remains critical for integrating map learning environments within the person-and-process interaction to achieve "engaged, integrated, deeper learning" (Keeling 2006:14). The role and relationship are different when this mapping results in the macrosystem, where the integration of the "academic, institutional and social components" (Keeling 2006:15) of the higher education institution takes cues from the campus culture (Keeling 2006:16). Doing so

demonstrates that, “with new ideas, people and new ways of achieving it”, the student learning environment (Keeling 2006:15) can function optimally.

It is evident that this holistic approach has transformed the higher education context, which has resulted in policies and practices that promote rigor, accountability, outcomes, postgraduate studies/students, and leadership) to shape the university, academic staff, student affairs (as multiple-reflective-educators) and, subsequently, students’ identities and learning. This holistic approach demonstrates that the student affairs role has transformed. It is no longer limited to punitive measures, but integrates modelling, advising, ensuring access, and providing resources (Beavers 2013:8). These historic moments demonstrate that the professional development transformation is a multifaceted, intra-personal process that is spiral, and that has a focus that is dependent on the interpersonal process. As Luescher emphasizes (in Schreiber, Moja & Luescher 2016:v-viii), during political unrest within transforming higher education, student affairs practitioners’ roles are diverse. They do not only facilitate the higher education learning experience, but also create a “personal transformation experience that enriches students’ personal, familial, communal and professional lives as fully formed critically constructive and engaged citizens” (Schreiber *et al.* 2016:vi).

(a) *Focus of learning (Learning process)*

During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the transforming higher education context has modified its focus to completion (adult and postgraduate students) through student access with success, accountability, outcomes, student retention, graduation, engagement, the development of graduate attributes, postgraduate research, and leadership. This modification required a drastic amendment to the way the learning process is approached and taken forward, especially regarding the specific graduate attributes that would be applicable to postgraduate students. This learning process is distinguished as “a complex, holistic, multicentric” (Keeling 2006:5), multidimensional, “physiological, social and emotional, cognitive and developmental,” powerful, challenging and engaged, ”flowing process in which students acquire, analyse” and continuously reflect verbally and personally to

place information into an original frame of reference, then regularly expanding or changing that meaning frame (Keeling 2006:6).

Within this transformative lifelong learning process, knowledge progresses towards wisdom and the development of cross-cultural skills (Keeling 2006). Within this chronological, methodically fluent process, learning, development, context, and time remain interdependent components (Keeling 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005; Asbes & Jones 2004; Jones & McEwen 2000). The multiple-reflective-educator role of the student affairs practitioner is a way of providing leadership, via strategic planning, within this active, transformed higher education context and to facilitate a culture that develops more integrated and engaged learning experiences within co-operative relationships, to obtain the required outcomes/skills without taking the reign for this learning (Keeling 2006). In this approach, student learning is an end result of multiple sources, including courses and curricular and co-curricular programming (including both intentional and unintentional learning experiences). These multiple sources of learning formed the foundation for student affairs practitioners when their role transformed into that of multiple-reflective-educators who facilitate educational experiences for responsible, skilled, democratic, self-aware and interpersonally sensitive adults (Beavers 2013:6; Hamric, Evans & Schuh 2002). Student affairs practitioners should, then, become life-skill managers and, for these students, “academic learning and personal development are an intertwined reciprocal, proximal process” (Keeling 2006:19; Bronfenbrenner 2005). Undergraduate quality is crucial for student-centredness, with special reference to accountability (success rates), assessment (student engagement) and accreditation, and to identify student outcomes. The transforming higher education context presents support of accountability regarding matters of institutional quality and social justice in relation the exo- and macrosystems (Keet & Nel 2015; Nkoane 2015). In addition, this historic moment’s cooperative learning partnership demands challenge the student affairs practitioner, through the multiple-reflective-educator role, to provide a new definition of a student, with special reference to postgraduate students.

*(b) Integration of social and academic aspects*

In this historical moment, with its focus on integration of learning (i.e., embracing out-of-

classroom experiences and all formal academic curriculum aspects), it is important for student affairs practitioners to have a “blueprint to guide their work”, and to purposefully clarify the quality of learning and student experiences (Keeling 2006:1). Within this demanding learning and transforming higher education context, the multiple-reflective-educator role of the student affairs practitioner should, as its foundation, consider diverse learning outcomes, a focus on student-centred learning, and support the completion of undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The reason for this need is that, within the transforming higher education context, the multiple-reflective-educator should integrate aspects of academic learning and personal (social) development, which are part of the integrated reciprocal and proximal process. This integration of social and academic aspects has resulted in deepening student learning engagement by “re-thinking learning and mapping the campus learning environment”, as well as developing student outcomes (Keeling 2006:vii, 1, 23) to create an “empowered, informed and responsible and ethical” adult learner. In this interaction process of the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems, the relationship between higher education institutions (by implication, student affairs practitioners) and students shifted to being less personal and arbitrary, to one with the focus on self-responsibility and privacy (Beavers 2013:5-6), and with “parents’ rights being reduced and student rights being expanded.” Accordingly, the multiple-reflective-educator provides leadership, via strategic planning, when facilitating these educational experiences and recognizing students as responsible adults (Beavers 2013:6), and potential postgraduate scholars in their personal and professional lives (Wood & Louw 2018). However, to safeguard expanding the focus in this role, and to ensure that it does not remain limited to rights and responsibilities, as was the case with the *in loco parentis* role, it is essential to facilitate the establishment of clear, dual expectations for both students and parents, to formulate and enforce clear policies for high-risk areas of campus life, and create a learning community that promotes social education, positive study habits and mental health, in which students have the freedom of independent living in structure and resources (Beavers 2013:8). The intervening decades since the first moment have challenged student affairs professionals’ complex engagement and leadership during this historical meso-time period, and encouraged them to shift towards a scholarly, intentional, and theory-based practice.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

This systematic review scrutinised the complexities, challenges, and sophistication of the four historical moments of student affairs in higher education across the academy, through Bronfenbrenner's lens. Although four historical moments were identified, the reader should note that the student affairs role is not bounded in one historical moment. Instead, student affairs roles flow and progress in a dynamic way – depending on the person, process, context, and time continuum defining it. This historical reflection also demonstrates that scholarly student affairs practitioners should be flexible and theory-based in their praxis, and should function under a contemporary umbrella, which has advanced from corporal punishment (behaviour correction) to higher education's broad and diverse responsibilities, such as ensuring student safety, and monitoring and evaluating student engagement, to fostering and mapping graduate attributes.

Throughout this chronological history, higher education has changed along with student demographics, the job market, public policy, and societal trends, while the person, that is, the student affairs practitioner, learning process, development and context remained interdependent components. However, the transforming higher education landscape resulted in more defined and specific relationships, due to the interactions within the exo- and macrosystems. The historic moments also demonstrate that the professional development transformation is a multifaceted, intrapersonal process that moves in spirals; the focus is dependent on the interpersonal process.

The learning process transformed into a complex, holistic, multicentric, multicultural, multidimensional, engaged process, and student affairs practitioners' boundless power was restricted in terms of their operations, to include, due to changes in constitutional rights and legislation, the practice of restorative justice and monitoring. Transformation involves the expansion of diverse and complicated roles, situated in greater representation among the meso-, exo- and macrosystems, in order to safeguard the changing student (microsystem), because the legal landscape and family expectations have changed. The internal interaction between the four roles resulted in greater autonomy and independence, due to the increasingly complex proximal processes, which, in turn, have resulted in greater demands for standards and accountability. In a less structured higher education context, the relationships transformed into partnerships among

these three systems, with a more team-oriented and community-focused approach. However, personal liability remains problematic.

Despite increasing demands on student affairs practitioners and for postgraduate outputs, it is interesting that there has been limited research focus on this role and little attention to postgraduate research. Some of the reasons for this lack of attention could be because student affairs practitioners concentrate on the *what*, and not the *why* of their functioning, while postgraduate research at most higher education institutions is addressed via the research function, and not necessarily the teaching and learning function/undergraduates (Personal communication, Prof. J. Nieuwenhuis). This research signposted four historical roles of student affairs practitioners that address the diverse social and academic challenges students face in their learning process towards achieving development and success. Student affairs practitioners' involvement in postgraduate development efforts appears to be limited, and the authors urge leaders to develop global frameworks for practice, and create a culture, through education and research, that encourages students to acquire postgraduate competencies during their student experience.

**Ethics statement:**

The researcher has obtained ethical clearance for this study from the University of the Free State's Faculty of Education Ethics committee (see Appendices A & B).

**Conflict of interest:**

Since this research consists of document analysis, there is no conflict of interest involved in terms of content nor authorship.

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## CHAPTER 3

### Article 2

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#### ARTICLE TWO

Article two is a research article (peer-reviewed) proposed to be adapted (after graduation) according to the guidelines for authors for the *Journal of College Student Development*<sup>6</sup>.

#### **PLOTTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP TRENDS (2008-2019) THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S LENS**

#### ABSTRACT

The key driver in this Bronfenbrenner's model international research journey was: What are the most important student affairs (including variations thereof) research and scholarship trends for transforming student growth and development in higher education, and why? Therefore, in this article we discuss the student affairs research position worldwide between 2008 and 2019 in the light of an extensive document analysis of 926 student affairs research articles published in 91 peer-reviewed journals. The thematic categorization of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS 2019) was used to determine international publication trends as derived from the document analysis. Thereafter, I applied Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model, as an appropriate umbrella research design and guiding framework, to review the mapping of worldwide student affairs research.

From a comparison between the international CAS categorization and the worldwide categorization, it was concluded that the CAS mapping was largely confirmed by the worldwide student affairs research analysis, with nine main themes as the foci. Besides, five new themes have emerged. The findings suggest that more accurate and continuous mapping of the field can assist

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<sup>6</sup> See detail of justification for this journal choice in Chapter 7 (Epilogue).

policymakers, managers, scholars, and student affairs practitioners in making more informed choices on supporting growth and development in a transforming higher education context.

*Keywords:* Worldwide student affairs research and scholarship trends, Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), post-graduate research and studies

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Worldwide student affairs research and scholarship is a prominent and complex field of study, and has shown an increase in emphasis during the selected period (Liddell 2019; Seifert & Aderholdt 2019). This timeframe, 2008 to 2019, was selected as it reflects a transforming higher education (HE) context (Tumubweinee & Luescher 2019; Badat 2010), during which HE was confronted by multiple challenges and demands. The article elucidates the process of locating and interrogating studies into student affairs in a worldwide HE *context*, reported between 2008 and 2019 (this time period correlates with Bronfenbrenner's chrono system). I analysed an extensive number of 926 articles published in 91 selected academic journals. Then, in a qualitative, multi-focus case study, we used the 47 functional areas of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's (CAS 2019) professional standards as premise for the document analysis to establish international publication trends. Although other categorisations for student affairs functional areas exist (UNESCO, NASPA, IASAS etc.), I chose CAS because this historic decade best represented 40 years' research and a professional basis (41 US members and Canadian associations, and 115 000 practitioners) of CAS (2019). I specifically chose Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model as theoretical framework, because it allowed us to analyse the body of literature involved (reporting on student affairs between 2008-2019) from multiple perspectives. In this regard, the chrono system (i.e. *time*) was particularly relevant. The findings of this CAS thematic research signalled that the 47 functional areas were largely confirmed by worldwide student affairs research. Nine major worldwide student affairs research and scholarship focus areas were prominent, and five new themes became apparent.

### **3.2 WORLDWIDE STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN A TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE**

International student affairs research and scholarship trends (2008-2019) in a transforming higher education landscape were ascertained by applying the following five operating databases: Academic Search Ultimate, Africa-Wide Information, Education Source, ERIC, and Humanities Source Ultimate. This action rendered 926 peer-reviewed articles published in 91 selected academic journals. The CAS (2019) functional areas for higher education served as mapping framework for the chrono system period 2008–2019.

### **3.3 THEORISING CAS MAPPING OF STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH THE LENS OF BRONFENBRENNER’S PPCT MODEL**

Bronfenbrenner’s Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model, based on his bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), served as applicable guiding framework for this article. The reasons for this being that the authors hope for clarification on “how and why” these student affairs functional areas “occur as they do” in a worldwide higher education context (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006). This entails an actual curiosity in the *processes* supporting these functional areas within a specific context, and not essentially the outcomes they produce. Still Bronfenbrenner’s original research themes remain imperative, for example, the social and historical *context*, the active student affairs practitioner-student interaction, and the impossibility of considering individual developmental *processes* in isolation. In this context these themes provide beneficial theoretical lenses to analyse the body of literature of student affairs research worldwide, with the student affairs practitioner as principal person in the PPCT model (Evans *et al.* 2010; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), responsible for development. The CAS functional area categorisation (mostly identified in the North American *context*), probably was most appropriate to establish these research mappings, because CAS corresponds with the following:

- UNESCO’s student affairs/service functions in HE (UNESCO 2002), and with
- the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC & U) Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubrics (Rhodes 2009) as well as with

- International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS 2020:242-354).

Also, this historic *time* was best represented by CAS's 40-year research and professional basis (associations and practitioners) (CAS 2019).

Findings of this CAS thematic study on the chrono system *time* 2008-2019 indicated that the 47 functional areas largely were confirmed by the international student affairs research. Only five functional areas of CAS (2019) professional standards for higher education were not recognised, namely Auxiliary Services Functional Areas, Case Management Services, Collegiate Recreational Programmes, Conference and Event Programmes, and Dining Services Programmes (the clarification of the absence of these categories is beyond the focus of this article). However, the following nine main worldwide student affairs research cross-functional areas were identified as prominent themes - these functional areas are not linear, but have an emerging, evolving spiral and overlapping nature from multi- and inter-disciplinary perspectives/fields (CAS 2019):

### **3.3.1 Student Affairs: Postgraduate Studies and Professional Development Programmes**

With an increasing demand for student affairs postgraduate (referring here to either master's or doctoral study) programmes (Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017; Schreiber, Moja & Luescher 2016) and the professional development of student affairs practitioners (Goyal 2019; Seifert & Aderholt 2019; Shelton & Yao 2019; Yakaboski & Perozzi 2018), the next two functional area standards of CAS (2019) will jointly be discussed as one theme. The reasons for this are their interrelated focus and that they share common ground in the field, namely:

- 23 (i.e. Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services), and
- 31 (i.e. Master's Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes).

These two functional areas by far were the leading functional areas in the body of literature about student affairs research. Most articles on student affairs postgraduate preparation and professional development programmes fully recognised the unique and complex needs and challenges of students. The rising cognisance of these distinctive needs and challenges required a more student-centred model of education with attention to diversity and complexity of student profiles and contexts (Almuhammadi 2017; Kortegast & Hamrick 2009). Professional, ethical, cultural, integrity and flexibility skills are fundamental (Ardoin, Crandall & Shinn 2019; Reybold & Halx

2018; Cicchetti & Park 2018; Nguyen & Larson 2017; Buzo 2017; Sallee 2016; Keenan 2014; Cooper, Liddell, Davis & Pasquesi 2012; Dungy 2012; Liddell & Cooper 2012; Baird 2011; White & Nonnamaker 2011; Hornak 2009; Reybold, Halx & Jimenez 2008) for their supporting role (Harrison 2010) and for capacity-building as student affairs practitioners (James & Estanek 2012).

Additionally, evolving scholarship topics (Hirschy & Wilson 2017) such as interdisciplinarity (Hancock 2014) and competency-based learning (Lleó, Agholor, Serrano & Prieto-Sandoval 2018; Gansemer-Topf, Von Haden & Peggarr 2015; Ott, Baca & Cisneros 2015) are appearing, leading to advocacy for correlated support services (McCarthy 2019). Mentorship outcomes (Paterson & Hutchinson 2019), as well as peer mentoring assessment, evaluation, and research competencies (Baumgartner, Brunner & Nicolas 2019) have become a new impetus for the knowledge community. This influences student performance (Mashela & Mabika 2017) and success (Pérez, Ashlee & Do 2017; Perozzi, Seifert & Al-Sharif 2016), and the curriculum trends and characteristics (Eaton 2016, Underwood & Austin 2016). However, certain challenges influenced the development of outcomes assessment standards (Finney & Horst 2019), as well as guidelines for post-graduate and professional development programmes and services, namely:

- distinct types of degrees and multi-level reporting structures (CAS 2019),
- association affiliation, employment status and years of experience (Seifert 2014),
- sustainable development toward healthy environments, social justice, and strong economies (Edwards 2012),
- effective communication strategies (Varlotta, Jones & Schuh 2010),
- inventing in critical student-staff collaboration (Steffen 2017) for new challenges and opportunities (Bushnell 2012),
- quantitative observation (Campbell 2017),
- diverse student populations served, and related inclusivity (Linder, Harris, Allen & Hubain 2015),
- anonymous electronic threats such as social media (Reynolds, Platt & Malone 2017) or the ability to use these effectively (Manson & Cordovés 2018),
- collaboration with other institutional units that provide student and academic support services,

- demands for online programmes and virtual support (Schreiber & Aartun 2011),
- world of work (Sallee 2015; McAtee 2012, Smith 2012),
- professional administrators of services for graduate and professional students (CAS 2019:1039-1040).

Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering theory-driven practice and high-quality outcomes assessment in student affairs (Pope, Finney & Bare 2019). Thus, student affairs professional practice is steered by strategic needs such as the following:

- Issues of diversity of race, class, and gender (Duffy 2010), as well as the inclusion (LePeau 2015) of stigmatised and marginalised students (Goodman & Mueller 2009); matters which are valued in educational mission.
- Employing contemplative teaching and learning practices focusing on religious, personal (Liew & Servaty-Seib 2018), psychosocial/professional identity (Clarke 2016; Karkouti 2014), and leadership development (Craft, Weber & Menke 2009) in their classrooms. This assists students to become reflective, socially conscious scholar-practitioners in student affairs (Kanagala & Rendón 2013), who implement strategic plans (Whitney 2010).
- Building leadership with digital technology (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier 2016; Kolomitz & Cabellon 2016), university budgeting (Varlotta 2010), and innovative research strategies (Banning, Eversole, Most & Kuk 2008; Keim 2008).
- Making sound and competent decisions about students causing concern or related support services (Pittman 2012) by applying the Assessment-Intervention of Student Problems (AISP) model (Dunkel 2009; Sandeen 2009) that emphasizes assessment of problem identification and a coordinated team approach.
- Aligning competencies with successful, effective admissions (Gansemer-Topfet *et al.* 2015) and strategic enrolment management plans (Baillie & Gordon 2017; Seifert, Moore & Beaulieu 2017).
- Creating a culture of success for staff (Scully 2011) and communication with stakeholders (Eldridge & Mason 2010) and alumni (Rissmeyer 2010), to embrace the student affairs mission (Porterfield, Roper & Whitt 2011; Sandeen 2011). This should be based on an efficient evaluation of digital systems (Hongyu, Chaoyang, Zhanhao, Jingdong, Ziwei, Fei

& Maosheng 2016) and establishing university records management programmes (Matangira, Katjiveri-Tjiuro & Lukileni 2013).

- Preparing for disaster readiness (Jarrell, Dennis & Jackson 2008) as well as addressing the needs for new approaches to residential life (Henning, Cilente & Kennedy 2011) and sexual violence (Landreman & Williamsen 2018).
- Adding academics to the world of work (Sallee 2015) and providing international experience (Schuh 2014).

These identified worldwide strategic student affairs research trends in the transforming higher education context (Kuh 2016), challenged both student affairs practitioners and students (Dungy 2018). Thus, it is essential that post-graduate programme outcomes integrate contemporary and engaging theories, models and practice guidance (Gillett 2016; Kimball 2016; Spaid & Casey 2016; Kraus 2012; Herdlein, Kline & Boquard 2010; Miller 2010; Morgan & Policello 2010; Dunkel 2009). Furthermore, relevant and modern qualitative and quantitative observation (Campbell 2017; Fifolt 2013), and reflexive assessment practices are critical to serve as grounded models for making evidence-based decisions (Ryder & Kimball 2015). For example, assessment of student leaders' skills (Muthoni, Njagi & Wambugu 2018) are critical in managing and collaboratively supervising novice practitioners entering the field of Student Affairs (Mertz, Eckman & Strayhorn 2012; Shupp & Arminio 2012). Various other assessment trends and strategies are highlighted (Busby 2017), such as graduate student assessment, ensuring accountability, and equity during assessment by cultivating professional and / or assessment competencies (O'Brien 2018; Wikokwsky & Mendez 2018; Day, Bradley & Lopez 2017; Reynolds 2011; Kuk & Banning 2009; Bresciani 2008) through building a culture of continuous improvement and fulfilling accreditation purposes (Fallucca 2017). Therefore, advocating for standards via dialogues, and continued professional development appear to be important for conceptualization and expansion of the knowledge base (for promotion and own advancement purposes) (Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017). Furthermore, the professional practice of student affairs is guided by an evolving focus on innovation (Boaykye-Yiadom 2015), and research and scholarship (Carpenter & Haber-Curran 2013). Constant collaboration and conflict management between student and academic affairs (O'Halloran 2019; Bernardo & Baranovich 2014; Cooper & Boice-Pardee 2011) require comprehensive, professional networks and practices (Cox, Wingo & Todd 2015). Student affairs also entail theory-driven practices and high-quality assessment outcomes

(Pope *et al.* 2019). These aspects, due to the prominence of accountability and assessment, have transformed the HE curriculum and the student affairs practice. Additionally, diverse students prompted the expansion of areas such as student learning and development theory, programme development and cultural competency (Kennedy & Wheeler 2018). Therefore, professional programmes (accommodating online and social media, but also newer delivery modes) are necessary to deliver graduates, that is, well-prepared student affairs educators to the world of work (Montero 2018; Jackson 2016). Finally, because student affairs leadership appears to be multidimensional, complex and transactional peer leadership, new university leadership models, and an ecological framework seemed to be applicable (Taylor 2019; Walters 2018; Keup 2016).

### **3.3.2 Learning Assistance Programmes**

Our document analysis indicated that the second prominent theme student affairs practitioners are involved in is learning-assistance programmes, which remain one of the core functions of higher education institutions. Facilitating student development and fostering student academic success (Scott 2018) remain a challenge within economically trying times (Kahn, Sachs & Rambam 2018; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh & Whitt 2011). As the cost of higher education increases, government support wanes. This requires strategic thinking with integrity (Gallant 2008; Komives & Arminio 2011; Richards, Saddiqui & McGuigan 2016) to raise funds from external sources<sup>7</sup> (Miller 2010) or involvement of innovative partnerships (Buell, Love & Yao 2017; Roberts & Komives 2016; Wells 2016). Other noted developing concerns are student access (Arendale 2010), monitoring, support, and survey data (Blair & Wise 2017; Harrison & Rodriguez-Dehmer 2013; Paideya & Dhunpath 2018). These tasks are indispensable for student success (Scott 2018; De Klerk, Spark & Jones 2017; Strydom, Kuh & Loots 2017) and retention (Mkonto 2018) when transforming learning communities.

It is imperative to empower students and staff to promote student-centred learning (Clegorne & Mitchell 2013), to attain measurable personal and social responsibility learning outcomes (Ardaiolo, Neilson & Daugherty 2011; Sharp, Komives & Fincher 2011), or to apply code-

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<sup>7</sup> This is problematic statement, because it is not absolute that funds need to be sourced from “outside”, but seems to be the case in some HEIs and proposed by the cited authors.

switching to navigate social class (Elkins & Hanke 2018). Furthermore, the following are emphasised as central aspects in learning assistance programmes:

- first-year and/or student engagement and motivation (Cabrera, Miner & Milem 2013; Czerkawski & Lyman 2016; Faraa 2017; Hsieh 2014; Kinzie & Hurtado 2017; Mkonto 2018; Schreiber & Yu 2016) - with emphasis on mathematics (Jacobs & Pretorius 2016), indigenous knowledge (Waterman & Harrison 2017), living-learning (Haynes & Janosik 2012; Wawrzynski, Jessup-Anger & Stolz 2009), integrative learning (Taylor 2011) and generic skills in the medical curriculum (Jama 2016),
- web-based interactive knowledge-sharing platform for sex- and gender-specific medical education (Seeland, Nauman, Cornelis, Ludwig, Dunkel, Kararigas & Regitz-Zagrosek 2016), and
- internationalisation (Renn, Brazelton & Holmes 2014).

Learning-assistance programmes provided rewarding interactions and individualized instruction within a digital (Calhoun, Green & Burke 2017; Wang 2018), multilingual mentoring and tutoring space (Arend & Hutchings 2017; Du Buisson 2017; Spark, De Klerk & Maleswena 2017; Faraa 2017; McKay 2016; Seeto 2016). Also, student learning requires co-curricular involvement (Naik, Wawrzynski & Brown 2017; Trudeau & Herrmann 2014), inclusive education (Moswela 2011), high impact practices, and peer leadership (Keup 2016), as well as peer-assisted learning in high-risk subjects such as mechanical engineering (Makola 2017). Adult learning (Hutchings 2014) should be included to create comprehensive learning-assistance programmes that support students from their first academic year up to post-graduate/professional studies, especially those with learning difficulties (Poon-McBrayer 2013). Supplemental instruction, mobile technology, and a humanising philosophy are essential to improve access for diverse student populations (Jones, Williams & Whitaker 2018) and to support students in large classes; however, to respect their identity remains crucial (Boughey 2015; Erasmus 2017; Madambi & Mongena 2016; Robbins, Johnson, Kendall, Accapadi & Kniess 2019; Schreiber & Aartun 2011; Sedibe & Sedibe 2009). Additionally, academic partnerships with key campus and community partners have been proven to result in more effective steering of resources and policies (Berger, Caruccio & Lampe 2019). For example, concerning sensitive issues such as sexual assault (Freitas 2017). Furthermore, the

scope for learning assistance programmes becomes limited with the presence of tutoring, study strategies workshops, as well as learning assistance centre resources.

### **3.3.3 Multicultural Student Programmes and Services**

The third prominent theme that was identified during our document analysis, is multicultural student programmes and services. Transforming diverse physical spaces and artefacts (Azibo, Stacy & Casper 2013) into inclusive (LePeau 2015, 2018) and international (Jameson & Goshit 2017) learning environments is required for:

- holistic student learning,
- competence (Major & Mangope 2014),
- performance (Stewart 2015), and
- development.

This transcultural approach (Ryan 2011) promotes social justice that increases access and turns legal, equal opportunities into diverse, multicultural higher education learning communities, for example, by providing students with an equal (Palmer, Davis & Gasman 2011) indigenous voice through photovoice and photo-elicitation /dialogue (Minthorn & Marsh 2016; Kessi & Cornell 2015).

A culturally engaging and social networking campus (Wertheim 2014; Wortham 2013) demands a non-violent space (Haywood 2017) and could entail a respectful and religious campus culture (Scibetta 2019). Also, a mind shift to interdisciplinary living and learning, as well as inclusive pedagogical operations (Linder *et al.* 2015) is important to improve a sense of belonging (Museus, Yi, Saelua, 2017; Smith, Geleta, Dixon & Curtin 2015). Intercultural- (Kennedy & Wheeler 2018; Haber & Getz 2011; Mitchell & Westbrook 2016) and diversity-related partnership competence (LePeau *et al.* 2018) claims to improve the campus racial climate (Karkouti 2015). Within such a climate meaningful cross-racial interaction (Bowman & Denson 2012; Wertheim 2014) transforms the outsider to the “within”, that is, an inclusive position (West 2017) by building communication skills, relationships, and social justice (Dessel & Dessel 2012).

In brief, closing the gaps, according to Ahren (2008), in a multi-cultural learning community implies also being multi-racial in a society. Gasser (2008) also states that this is possible by using

the internet to define identity and community on campus. In addition, an inclusive multi-cultural learning community requires the following:

- advocating for policies, practices, and attitudes that promote student success on the campus (among students and employees);
- mentorship and creating cultural support systems that provide respect from the dominant culture;
- implementing inclusive educational and service-learning (Pasquesi 2013) programmes;
- facilitating cooperation among campus fraternity/sorority groups (Asel, Seifert & Pascarella 2015);
- integrating campus activities and student organisations;
- ensuring access to academic support services that are embedded, appreciated, and ensuring emotional well-being (Swanbrow & Drum 2015).

### **3.3.4 Assessment Services**

The fourth prominent theme stemming from our document analysis, is assessment services, a functional area that is essential to demonstrate that student learning and development have taken place. Casting a wide and diverse student assessment net (Getty, Young & Whitaker-Lea 2008) and appointing an assessment co-ordinator (Livingston & Zerulik 2013) is the foundation for student learning (Arendale 2010), development, and success (Whitt, Kinzie & Schuh 2008). Assessment services are internally driven for evidence to improve service, and externally for accountability or social justice (Zerquera, Reyes, Pender & Abbaday 2018) purposes. Also, the constant changes in technology and student demographics provide challenges and barriers (Balsler, Grabau & Kniess 2017; Busby 2017; Liping 2017; Blimling 2013; Mitchell & Ryder 2013) for student affairs practitioners and educators tasked with an assessment. Other assessment challenges have been identified for large-class first-year students (Erasmus, 2017) and medical students (Lomis, Russell, Davidson, Fleming, Pettepher, Cutrer, Fleming, & Miller 2017). However, assessment services could improve student understanding and collaboration (Shivers & McMillan 2013) if these challenges are addressed.

Thus, according to (Ballysingh, Hernández & Zerquera 2018; Grabau & Stolzenberg 2017; Ro, Menard & Kniess 2017; Snipes & Correia-Harker 2017; Zerquera, Berumen & Pender 2017;

Newton, Maher & Smith 2015; Banta 2015; Fifolt 2013; Fallucca & Lewis 2013, Gansemer-Topf, 2013; Haney, & McClellan 2009) the professionalisation of student affairs through qualitative and quantitative assessment by incorporating emerging voices and evaluation and research (Sawal & Yakaboski 2014) is essential. This also requires mapping and measurable standards for outcomes assessment practice (Finney & Horst 2019; Priniski & Winterrowd 2017), and competency-based models (Gómez, Aranda & Santos 2017; Hoffman 2015) that create a culture (Seagraves & Dean 2010; Schuh 2013) of reflexive practice (Ryder & Kimball, 2015) and fostering theory-driven practice (Pope *et al.* 2019). It also demands the utilization of institutional, administrative and student affairs, and appropriate, valid and reliable assessment resources for best student affairs practice and student engagement purposes (Groover, McBrayer & Cleveland 2019; Hathcoat, Penn, Barnes & Comer 2016; Pike 2014; Shutt, Garrett & Lynch 2012; Herdlein, Kline & Boquard 2010 ).

### **3.3.5 Leadership Education and Development**

Leadership learning (Gigliotti 2015) is pivotal in student affairs and HE fields - not only to offer comprehensive development programmes, but also to enrich and integrate student learning opportunities, competencies (Webb 2009) and scholarship (Stedman & Weeks 2013). Leadership education is especially important when managing change (Lumadi & Mampuru 2010; Roper 2011; Muthoni, Njagi & Wambugu 2018) such as the horizontal and vertical fragmentation of academic work and the challenge for academic governance and leadership (Jones 2013). It seems crucial that student affairs leadership educators critically reflect on existing leadership models, theories, and practices to reconstruct more inclusive, equitable, and just approaches. Examples, such as peer leadership (Frade & Tiroyabone 2017) and women leadership (Person, Saunders & Oganessian 2014) are present in the HE context. The Ecological Framework (Taylor 2019) assists the student affairs leaders to understand their role or challenges and possibilities (Murage, Njoka & Gachahi 2019; Nel 2016; Porterfield & Whitt 2016; Yakaboski & Birnbaum 2013) to steer the multiple ways in which students learn how to lead effectively in a transforming HE context (Lumadi & Mampuru 2010).

In conclusion, it is imperative for institutions' student affairs divisions to empower students for citizenship (Kgositthebe & Luescher 2015) and crisis preparedness (Catullo, Walker & Floyd 2009). Therefore, crucial knowledge, skills and experience of democratic engagement (Johnson 2019; Robiadek, Strachan & Bennion 2019), digital technology (Kolomitz & Cabellon 2016), budgeting (Varlotta 2010), student engagement and activism with agricultural, fiscal, socially responsible, emotionally intelligent, spiritual and transformational leadership (Manzano, Poon & Na 2017; Cantón 2016; Rozeboom, Frohardt & Carroll 2016; Parker & Pascarella 2013; Stedman & Weeks 2013; Stewart & Williams 2010.), and mentorship (Paterson & Hutchinson 2019) are essential. Lastly, Komives (2013) stated that leadership should be integrated “as weaving a tapestry”, based on multi-perspectives research and analysis as a foundation to develop and maintain trust (Ruthkosky 2013:171).

### **3.3.6 Academic Advising Programmes**

Academic advice and guidance are not only a fundamental success provider (Newton & Smith 2008) for first-year students (De Klerk *et al.* 2017; Jama 2016; Cabrera *et al.* 2013; Jessup-Anger, Wawrzynski & Yao 2011;), but also for large classes (Boughey 2015), high-achieving students (Johnson, Wlather & Medley 2018), and specific disciplines such as Engineering (Berger *et al.* 2019; Shange 2015) and Pharmacy (Payakachat, Gubbins, Ragland, Norman, Flowers, Stowe, DeHart, Pace & Hastings 2013). Also, student associations' leaders (Miles 2011) benefit from academic advising and guidance. Mentorship in academic advising programmes (Lle Ó *et al.* 2018), based on competency development, student engagement (Strydom *et al.* 2017; Strydom & Mentz, 2010) and multiple transitions (Patton & Davis 2014), is vital for student performance (Mashela & Mabika 2017).

Furthermore, academic advisors work with diverse (LePeau *et al.* 2018; LePeau 2015) students as partners to enable them to construct knowledge (Schreiber 2013), be innovative (Boakye-Yiadam 2015), and to empower themselves through their academic development (Shange 2015). In this collaborative partnership (Berger *et al.* 2019; O'Halloran 2019; Gulley & Mullendore 2014), academic advisors must be congruent (Hale, Graham & Johnson 2009) and ready to meet challenges (Martinez 2018; Yakaboski & Birnbaum 2013) to support the complexity and diversity

of current students. Finally, through internationalisation (Renn *et al.* 2014), as well as the integration of library referencing and instruction (Love 2009) academic advisors empower students with multi-perspective research and analysis skills (Komives 2013).

### **3.3.7 Housing and Residential Life Programmes**

Institutional involvement in housing and residential life has been transformed; not only the in loco parentis role of student affairs, but also the legal consciousness (Nguyen, Collier & Watts 2018) and education practice. This has been the forerunner for the historical progression of residence-life training programmes towards “living and learning” (McCluskey-Titus, Cawthon & Helms 2019; Buell *et al.* 2017), as well as the competency and partnership development of housing staff (Zeller 2017; Dunn & Dunkel 2013). Recognition of diversity (Smorenburg & Dunn 2014), equity, disability (Vaccaro & Kimball 2019), and politics (Mugume & Luescher 2015) resulted in the inclusion in the student experience of the residential environment as a tool to complement the formal classroom context, but also to foster learning outside the classroom. Thus, personal and social well-being, civic participation, cross-cultural responsiveness, and academic identity (Alcock 2017) are integrated, together with the student-centred approach, in residential programmes. Additionally, incorporating religiosity, spirituality, and mindfulness in the professional development of residence life staff (Burke, Dye, Sauerheber & Hughey 2014) in creating a full-rounded student experience. To this end, Oladeji, Raley, Smoth, Perez, Mcgwin and Ponce (2016) developed an instrument called “Match” in response to the chaotic residency selection process in an effort to match students with their living environment. Finally, the trajectory of housing and residential programmes is expressed by what Shushok and Manz (2012:100) defined as “Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We're Heading”.

### **3.3.8 International Student Programmes and Services**

International students move to host countries because of quality programmes and a broad selection of academic options offered (CAS 2019). This implies assistance for these international students with cultural adjustment and regulatory compliance. Subsequently, international students enjoy benefits such as service learning, social change (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman 2009), student engagement (McFarlane 2015), and co-curricular involvement (Naik *et al.* 2017). Also, these international students share in high-quality and diverse academic opportunities, while the host

university, staff and students gain the benefit of cultural modification and diverse perspectives which internationalise the campus. Within a diverse socio-demographic context, studying is stressful in terms of structural, linguistic, and internal and external dimensions (Martinez & Colaner 2017), and, sometimes, political and social instability in the home country. Therefore, mastering coping styles such as stress management is important for international students (Akhtar & Kröner-Hewig 2015).

In brief, international students are confronted with personal transformation, but their presence also results in transformation in the campus environment. Therefore, the student affairs practitioners also should adapt their role (McFarlane 2015) and reframe student support (Roberts, Dunworth & Boldy 2018) to provide culturally relevant (Onyenekwe, Angeli & Pinto 2017), postgraduate (Rasmussen 2015) and peer-led services (Frade & Tiroyabone 2017) for student success. They also should integrate the transcultural approach (Ryan 2011) in student-centred teaching and learning to assist with inclusivity (Jameson & Goshit 2017), student engagement and social justice. Thus, building capacity (Roberts & Roberts 2012) through international students is and remains an important aspect of HE transformation.

### **3.3.9 Undergraduate Admission Programmes**

User-friendly admission and enrolment processes in a transforming higher education environment are crucial for access with success (Pather & Dorasamy 2018). Other aspects worth mentioning that pave the road to successful admission and enrolment are the following:

- continuous student support (De Klerk *et al.* 2017),
- effective evaluation policies (Wasahua, Koesmaryono & Sailah 2018),
- successful transition of students with disabilities (Korbel, Lucia & Wenzel 2011),
- open-door policy (Romano, Gallagher, Shugart 2010) with effective technology and communication (Salas & Alexander 2008), and
- strategic enrolment management (Henderson 2017).

Thus, two new trends are emerging, namely the application of the Student Selection Examination (Karakaya & Tavsancil 2008) and the Access System for Educational Equity (Devés, Castro, Mora & Roco 2012).

In summary, these nine CAS functional areas appear to be prominent in the worldwide HE student affairs context in terms of personal and process engagements. The similarities in the CAS framework and the body of literature about student affairs are important, because they underline those functional areas perceived to be essential for the contextualisation of student affairs praxis in a worldwide context.

### **3.4 NEW STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH THEMES IDENTIFIED**

In our document analysis, five new themes, not listed in the CAS categorization, emerged, namely:

(i) *Professionalisation associations* result from voluntary student affairs leadership. In the transforming HE context professionalisation organisations (for example, the International Association of Student Affairs and Services [IASAS]) (Ludeman 2014) support the professional development (Li & Fang 2017) and identity development (Clarke 2016) of student affairs practitioners to address challenges towards a more effective administrative pathway. The dedication, collaborative efforts and collective expertise support student affairs staff as reflective practitioners to keep up with current worldwide HE trends and the needs of students in preparation (Ardoin *et al.* 2019; McCarthy 2019) for the world of work and managing conflict (Cooper & Boice-Pardee 2011).

(ii) *Legal responsibilities and ethical considerations* remain essential when interpersonal and process engagements are present. Student affairs staff has to perform duties within the scope of their position, training, expertise, and competence (e.g. rather refer if beyond own scope). Student affairs staff members must comply with governmental laws, institutional policies and procedures, as well as standards for good professional practice. This links with another student functional area (i.e. category two: Alcohol and other drug programmes) where alcohol (Cremeens, Usdan, Talbott-Forbes & Martin 2013) and tobacco (Fallin-Bennett, Roditis, & Glantz 2017) policies are relevant. Holistically this limits risks and liabilities for the institution. The *legal aspects* include Legal Consciousness of Residence Life (Nguyen *et al.* 2018) that reflects fear, drive, and survival

(Hernandez *et al.* 2010). However, the main focus remains the well-being and safety (Janosik & Gregory 2009) of students, dealing with demands of political, social and economic development (OECD 2019).

(iii) *Students and government* as theme refers to nurturing cooperative relationships with local and regional governance structures, civic engagement, and the inclusion of multiple sources of expertise, although strong leadership and government involvement or laws are not new in HE (CAS 2019). The history and activism of student governance (Bernardo & Baranovich 2016; May 2010; Meyer & Kroth 2010; Castellanos 2016) in higher education, as well as the love-hate relationship with government (Makunike 2015) have been stressed.

(iv) Parallel with the ongoing demand for publications, *citation styles* are more noticeable in the body of literature pertaining to student affairs research. Although a number of diverse citation styles exist and each journal has its own requirements, Nwadike (2018:147) proposed a scientific model, the Nsukka Multidisciplinary Citation Style. The value of this African scientific citation style lies in it being decolonised, as most other international citation styles are Western.

(v) Student success remains the main priority for higher educations' teaching and learning function. Although student success remains to be an underlying theme in most CAS functional areas, our document analysis indicated a distinct focus in the body of literature on *failure and retention* (Guerrasio, Furfari, Rosenthal, Nogar, Wray & Aagaard 2014) as something that must be addressed, not only for the survival of higher education, but also for the holistic ecological learning environment.

These five new trends identified, and expanded the vision of student affairs research with an increased emphasis on professional development to guide the professional practice. These trends also highlight that within the transforming higher education context student success remains the main focus. These trends indicate that professional development required of student affairs practitioners additional legal responsibilities, ethical considerations, and citation styles. Finally, cooperative relationships among governance structures, expertise and civic engagements are crucial for the survival of student learning, development and support – which should direct professional practice.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In this worldwide research journey through two fields, namely student affairs and HE, the spiralling circle learning curve of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model was employed to explore holistic student development. During this chrono system interval (2008-2019), the majority of the 47 functional areas of CAS seemed to have been applicable to student affairs worldwide. Nine prominent themes that the worldwide search for student affairs research trends reflected were: Postgraduate Studies and Professional Development Programmes; Learning Assistance Programmes; Multicultural Student Programmes and Services; Assessment Services; Leadership Education and Development; Academic Advising; Housing and Residential Life Programmes; International Student Programmes and Services; and Undergraduate Admission Programmes. Thus, mentoring, research and assessment competencies demands drive the knowledge community to promote the professional development of student affairs practitioners and students involved in student affairs programmes. For student success<sup>8</sup>, both academic and student affairs complexities should be seamlessly integrated through democratic engagement, professional development, and leader-mentorship. Five new themes have become apparent (professionalization associations; legal responsibilities and ethical consideration; students and government; citation styles; and failure/retention) which are apparent of HE's diverse and complex demands for professional development, legal and government solutions, and publication. These five themes indicate limitations in the current body of literature about how the different functional areas in student affairs have been conceptualised to date. Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, particularly the chrono system, provided critical insights in this study about how and why student affairs manifest in worldwide higher education. Thus, the student affairs' research vision has been expanded to guide professional practice. The question remains, however, "Are you ready and willing to transform personally and professionally?"

**Ethics Statement:**

The researcher has obtained ethical clearance for this study from the University of the Free State's Faculty of Education Ethics committee (see Appendices A & B).

**Conflict of Interest:**

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<sup>8</sup> Practice-based implication to merge complexities to enhance student success.

Since this research consists of document analysis, there is no conflict of interest involved in terms of content nor authorship.

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## CHAPTER 4

### Article 3

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#### ARTICLE THREE

*Article three is a research article (peer-reviewed) proposed to be adapted (after graduation) on the guidelines for authors for the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa<sup>9</sup>.*

#### MAPPING AFRICAN STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH DURING THE PAST INTERLUDE (2008-2019) THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S LENS

#### ABSTRACT

The research question we pursued was: What are the variations in the themes of research in the African higher education context that will enable Student Affairs practitioners to promote student development? Therefore, this contribution addresses three aspects of student affairs research in the African higher education context. First, it commences with tracing the African<sup>10</sup> position with a document analysis of 121 student affairs research articles published in 34 peer-reviewed journals over the past interval (2008-2019). Secondly, the thematic categorization of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS 2019) was used to determine international publication trends as derived from this document analysis. Thirdly, we applied Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model as an appropriate umbrella research design and guiding framework to review the mapping of African student affairs research. From a comparison between the international CAS categorisation and the African categorisation, it was concluded that the CAS mapping was largely confirmed by the African analysis, with nine main themes as the foci. Besides, four uniquely African themes have emerged, but it was clear that distinctly limited

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<sup>9</sup> See detail of justification for this journal choice in Chapter 7 (Epilogue).

<sup>10</sup> African position in this context, refers to the African continent.

research had been conducted into postgraduate programmes and services (hereafter referred to as PGP&S), despite the demands for increased enrolments. The findings suggest that more accurate and continuous mapping of the field can assist policymakers, managers, and student affairs practitioners in making more informed choices on supporting learning and development in African higher education, with special emphasis on postgraduate students.

*Keywords:* African student affairs research themes, Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), postgraduate research and studies

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Global trends have demonstrated an increase in and emphasis on African student affairs research (Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017; MacMaster 2014; Moja, Schreiber & Luescher-Mamashela 2014) within a transforming higher education (HE) context (Tumubweinee & Luescher 2019). Despite holistic approach engagement efforts to produce well-rounded students, limited research was conducted on African student affairs regardless of demands for increased enrolments (McCarthy 2019; Le Roux, Taylor, Kloot & Allie 2019; Cloete, Mouton & Sheppard 2015). The article elucidates the process of locating and interrogating studies into student affairs within an African HE *context*, reported between 2008 and 2019 (referred to as Bronfenbrenner's chrono system). The qualitative, multi-focus case study used the 47 functional areas of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's (CAS 2019) professional standards as premise for the document analysis to determine international publication trends. I analysed 121 articles in 34 selected academic journals. I chose CAS because this historic decade best represented 40 years' research and a professional basis (41 US members and Canadian associations, and 115 000 practitioners) of CAS (2019). Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model was applied as an appropriate research design and guiding framework to map African student affairs research.

The findings of this CAS thematic research signalled that the 47 functional areas were largely confirmed by the African student affairs research. Nine major African student affairs research

focus areas were identified, and four new, local themes became apparent. One noteworthy issue, postgraduate programmes and services, requires exploration to extend and promote student affairs research and studies in the African context.

## **4.2 STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH IN AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

International trends were established in student affairs research in the African HE context by applying the following operating databases: Academic Search Ultimate, Africa-Wide Information, Education Source, ERIC, and Humanities Source Ultimate. The CAS search for the chrono system period 2008–2019 rendered 121 peer-reviewed articles in 34 selected academic journals.

## **4.3 THEORISING CAS MAPPING OF STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH IN AFRICA THROUGH THE LENS OF BRONFENBRENNER'S PPCT MODEL**

Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model, based on his bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), was a relevant guiding framework for this study, as the authors wished to establish "how and why" these student affairs functional areas "occur as they do" in an African context (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006). This implies a particular interest in the processes underpinning these functional areas within a given context, and not necessarily in the outcomes they produced. Bronfenbrenner's original research themes remain important, such as the social and historical *context*, the active student affairs practitioner/student, and the impossibility of considering individual developmental *processes* in isolation, because these themes provide helpful theoretical lenses to analyse the body of literature focusing on student affairs in Africa. The student affairs practitioner is nested within and among these principal components of the PPCT model (Evans *et al.* 2010; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), which primarily are responsible for development. In the nucleus of the model multiple personal and interpersonal interactions and engagement *processes* (fundamental to Bronfenbrenner's bioecology theory and constantly changing) between the student affairs practitioner and other stakeholders, are transforming the African HE *context*. In the light of these interpersonal student affairs engagements in African HE, the CAS functional area categorisation (mostly identified in the American *context*), probably was most appropriate to establish these

research mappings, because CAS corresponds with UNESCO's student affairs/service functions in HE (UNESCO 2002), and with the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubrics (Rhodes 2009). Also, this historic *time* was best represented by CAS's 40-year research and professional basis (associations and practitioners) (2019).

Findings of this CAS thematic study on the chrono system *time* 2008-2019 indicated that the 47 functional areas largely were confirmed by the African student affairs research. However, the following nine main African student affairs research focus areas were identified:

#### **4.3.1 Learning Assistance Programmes**

Most of the 121 articles confirmed that African student affairs practitioners mainly are involved in learning-assistance programmes. This task is indispensable in student success (Scott 2018; De Klerk, Spark & Jones 2017; Strydom, Kuh & Loots 2017) and retention (Mkonto 2018), especially in terms of first-year student engagement (Mkonto 2018; Faroa 2017; Schreiber & Yu 2016), with emphasis on mathematics (Jacobs & Pretorius 2016) and generic skills in the medical curriculum (Jama 2016) and at-risk students (Mayet 2016). Learning-assistance programmes provided rewarding interactions and individualized instruction within a digital, multilingual mentoring and tutoring space (McKay, Naidoo & Simson 2018; Arend & Hutchings 2017; De Klerk *et al.* 2017; Du Buisson 2017; Faroa 2017). Also, student learning requires co-curricular involvement (Naik, Wawrzynski & Brown 2017), inclusive education (Moswela 2011), high impact practices, and peer leadership (Keup 2016), as well as peer-assisted learning in high-risk subjects such as mechanical engineering (Makola 2017). Adult learning (Hutchings 2014) should be included to create comprehensive learning-assistance programmes that support students from their first academic year up to postgraduate/professional studies (not widely addressed in the African HE context). Supplemental instruction, mobile technology, and a humanising philosophy are essential for diverse student populations and large classes to make learning accessible to students, but also to respect their identity (Robbins, Johnson, Kendall, Accapadi & Kniess 2019; Erasmus 2017; Madambi & Mongena 2016; Boughey 2015; Schreiber & Aartun 2011; Sedibe & Sedibe 2009).

Additionally, academic partnerships with key campus and community partners resulted in steering resources and policies (Berger, Caruccio & Lampe 2019).

#### **4.3.2 Master's Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes**

In fourteen articles student affairs preparation programmes were addressed (although the master's level was indicated in this functional area's title, no recognised articles were found, despite the demands for postgraduate outputs). This is a noteworthy link with Dunn and Dunkel's (2013) viewpoint that in African HE professional competency development is executed via associations rather than institutions offering formal qualifications. Continued professionalisation of African student affairs (Snelznick 2013) appeared to be important for conceptualization and expansion of the knowledge base (for promotion and own advancement purposes) and the profession, with evolving focus on innovation (Boaykye-Yiadom 2015), research and scholarship (Carpenter & Haber-Curran 2013), social justice (Schreiber 2013), democratic engagement (Johnson 2019), social identity and professional role transitions (Robbins *et al.* 2019), collaboration between student and academic affairs (O'Halloran 2019), and theory-driven practice and high-quality assessment outcomes (Pope, Finney & Bare 2019). These aspects, due to the prominence of accountability and assessment, have transformed the HE curriculum. Additionally, diverse students prompted areas such as student learning and development theory, programme development and cultural competency. Therefore, these professional programmes (accommodating online and social media, but also newer delivery modes) are necessary to render graduate, well-prepared student affairs educators for the world of work. Dialogues are required on advocating for standards in Student Affairs Departments in African institutions (Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017) and inter-association, which are crucial to stipulate "anchors guiding with a strong foundation", whilst adjusting to developing areas in the field (CAS 2019:1354). Finally, because student affairs leadership appears to be multidimensional, complex, and transactional peer leadership (Keup 2016), new university leadership models (Walters 2018), and an ecological framework (Taylor 2019) seemed to be applicable.

### **4.3.3 Academic Advising Programmes**

Academic advice and guidance are not only a fundamental success provider for first-year students (De Klerk *et al.* 2017; Jama 2016), but also for large classes (Boughey 2015), and to mentor the influence of academic advice and guidance on student performance (Mashela & Mabika 2017) through student engagement (Strydom *et al.* 2017; Strydom & Mentz 2010). Academic advisors work with students to enable them to construct knowledge (Schreiber 2013), be innovative (Boakye-Yiadam 2015) and to empower their academic development (Shange 2015). Academic advisors must be ready to meet challenges (Yakaboski & Birnbaum 2013), to integrate library referencing and instruction (Love 2009), and to pursue a collaborative partnership with academic affairs (Berger *et al.* 2019; O'Halloran 2019) to support the complexity and diversity of current students.

### **4.3.4 Leadership Education and Development**

Leadership learning is pivotal in African student affairs and HE fields - not only to offer comprehensive development programmes, but also to enrich and integrate student learning opportunities. Lately, it seems that student affairs leadership educators critically reflect on existing leadership models, theories and practices to reconstruct more inclusive, equitable and just approaches. Examples, such as peer leadership (Frade & Tiroyabone 2017) and high-impact practice (Keup 2016), as well as women leadership (Person, Saunders & Oganessian 2014) are present in the African HE context. The Ecological Framework (Taylor 2019) assists the student affairs leaders to understand their role or challenges and possibilities (Murage, Njoka & Gachahi 2019; Nel 2016; Yakaboski & Birnbaum 2013) to steer the multiple ways in which students learn in a transforming HE context (Lumadi & Mampuru 2010). To be true African Leadership Universities, it is imperative for institutions' student affairs divisions to prepare students for citizenship (Kgosithebe & Luescher 2015), democratic engagement (Johnson 2019; Robiadek, Strahan & Bennion 2019) and mentorship (Paterson & Hutchinson 2019).

#### **4.3.5 Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services**

The rising cognisance of the distinctive needs of postgraduate and professional student affairs students led to advocacy for support services (McCarthy 2019), tailored to the more diverse and complex African student profile. Mentorship outcomes (Paterson & Hutchinson 2019) and peer mentoring assessment, evaluation and research competencies (Baumgartner, Brunner & Nicholas 2019) thus became a new impetus for the knowledge community, which influences student performance (Mashela & Mabika 2017) and is regarded important in the professional preparation of student affairs practitioners (Ardoin, Crandall & Shinn 2019). However, certain challenges influenced the development of outcomes assessment standards (Finney & Horst 2019) and guidelines for graduate and professional programmes and services, namely:

- distinct types of degrees and reporting structures,
- diverse student populations served,
- collaboration with other institutional units that provide student and academic support services,
- demands for online programmes and virtual support,
- professional administrators of services for graduate and professional students (CAS 2019:1039-1040).

Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering Theory-Driven Practice and High-Quality Outcomes Assessment in Student Affairs (Pope *et al.* 2019).

#### **4.3.6 Housing and Residential Life Programmes**

Operational involvement in housing and residential life has been transformed; not only the *in loco parentis* role of student affairs, but also the legal and education practice, which led to the historical progression of residence-life training programmes (McCluskey-Titus, Cawthon & Helms 2019) and competency development of housing staff (Dunn & Dunkel 2013). With the recognition of diversity (Smorenburg & Dunn 2014), equity, disability (Vaccaro & Kimball 2019), and politics (Mugume & Luescher 2015), the inclusion of the residential environment became a tool not only to complement the formal classroom context, but also to assist learning outside the classroom for

personal and social well-being, civic participation, cross-cultural responsiveness and academic identity (Alcock 2017). This is in line with the student-centred approach in African HE, addressing social changes (Dunn-Coetzee & Fourie-Malherbe 2017).

#### **4.3.7 College Unions/*Governance* (emphasis added)<sup>11</sup>**

In the African HE context, the term “governance” is used to refer to a university’s operations. In African higher education research, democratic engagement in student affairs (Johnson 2019) is emphasised. This occurs through student organizations’ representation (Robiadek *et al.* 2019; Macharia 2015), where students are involved in voting, decision-making, and leadership (Hester 2019; Oni & Adetoro 2015) to address challenges (Murage *et al.* 2019), past and present (Moja *et al.* 2014).

#### **4.3.8 International Student Programmes and Services and Internship Programmes**

International students enjoy benefits such as service learning and social change (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman 2009), student engagement (McFarlane 2015) and co-curricular involvement (Naik *et al.* 2017), and share in high-quality and diverse academic opportunities, while the host university gains the benefit of cultural modification and diverse perspectives. Within a diverse socio-demographic context, studying is stressful in terms of structural, linguistic, and internal and external dimensions (Martinez & Colaner 2017), and, sometimes, political and social instability in the home country. Therefore, mastering coping styles is important for international students (Akhtar & Kröner-Hewig 2015), but the student affairs practitioners also should adapt their role (McFarlane 2015) to provide culturally relevant (Onyenekwe, Angeli & Pinto 2017) postgraduate (Rasmussen 2015) and peer-led services (Frade & Tiroyabone 2017) for student success. Although the CAS categorization makes provision for internships, it is not always obvious in the African HE context.

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<sup>11</sup> Researcher added own emphasis which is not present in original CAS categorisation.

#### **4.3.9 Assessment Services**

Student assessment is the foundation for student learning, development, and success. Assessment services are driven internally for support to improve service, and externally for accountability purposes, despite the constant changes in technology and student demographics. For example, supplemental instruction for large-class first-year students (Erasmus 2017) could improve student understanding. However, the professionalization of student affairs through assessment (Gansemer-Topf 2013) is essential, but also requires mapping standards for outcomes assessment practice (Finney & Horst 2019), and fostering theory-driven practice (Pope *et al.* 2019), as well as the utilization of institutional administrative and student affairs assessment resources (Groover, McBrayer & Cleveland 2019).

In summary, these nine CAS functional areas appeared to be prominent in the African HE student affairs context in terms of personal and process engagements. The similarities in the CAS framework and the body of literature about student affairs in Africa are important, because they underline those functional areas perceived to be essential for the contextualisation of student affairs praxis in an African context. Although it could be expected that scholars generally study different student affairs functional areas in Africa, it is surprising that these research outputs emerged within definite clusters during the past decade. Furthermore, four new themes, not presently listed among the CAS functional areas, unexpectedly emerged from this study.

#### **4.4 NEW STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH THEMES IDENTIFIED**

Four new themes, not listed in the CAS categorisation, emerged, namely:

##### **4.4.1 Professionalisation associations result from voluntary student affairs leadership**

In the African HE context professionalisation organisations, for example, the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) (Ludeman 2014) support the professional development (Li & Fang 2017) and identity (Clarke 2016) of student affairs practitioners to address challenges towards a more effective administrative pathway. The dedication, collaborative

efforts and collective expertise support student affairs staff as reflective practitioners to keep up with current African HE trends and the needs of students in preparation (Ardoin *et al.* 2019; McCarthy 2019) for the world of work.

#### **4.4.2 Legal responsibilities and ethical considerations remain essential when interpersonal and process engagements are present**

Student affairs staff has to perform duties within the scope of their position, training, expertise, and competence (e.g. rather refer if beyond own scope). Student affairs staff members comply with governmental laws, institutional policies and procedures, as well as standards for good professional practice. Holistically this limits risks and liabilities for the institution. In the African HE environment, the *legal aspects* include human rights or norms, with emphasis on improving accountability and the quality of the provision of nutrition and health relief (Ali & Kabau 2014). However, the main focus remains the well-being of students dealing with demands of political, social and economic development (OECD 2019).

#### **4.4.3 Students and government as theme refer to nurturing cooperative relationships with local and regional governance structures, civic engagement, and the inclusion of multiple sources of expertise**

Strong leadership and government involvement or laws are not new in HE (CAS 2019). The history of student governance (May 2010) in African higher education, as well as the love-hate relationship with government (Makunike 2015) has been stressed.

#### **4.4.4 Citation styles**

Parallel with the ongoing demand for publications, *citation styles* are more noticeable. Although a number of diverse citation styles exist and each journal has its own requirements, Nwadike (2018:147) proposed a scientific model, the Nsukka Multidisciplinary Citation Style. The value of this African scientific citation style lies in it being decolonised, as most other international citation styles are Western.

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

This study entailed a research journey through two fields, namely student affairs and HE on the African continent. The learning curve is not linear, but rather a spiralling circle, by means of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, towards holistic student development. During this chrono system interval (2008-2019), the majority of the 47 functional areas of CAS seemed to have been applicable to African student affairs. Nine prominent trends that African student affairs research reflected were: Learning Assistance Programmes; Master's Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes; Academic Advising; Leadership, Education and Development; Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services; Housing and Residential Life Programmes; College Unions/Governance; International Student Programmes and Services, and Internship Programmes and Assessment Services. Thus, mentoring, research and assessment competencies demands drive the knowledge community to professional preparation of student affairs practitioners. For student success, both academic and student affairs complexities should be seamlessly integrated through democratic engagement, professional development, and leadership mentorship. Four local themes have become apparent: professionalisation associations, legal/*human rights*, student and government, as well as citation styles which are apparent of African HE's diverse and complex demands for professional development, legal and government solutions, and publication. These four themes indicate limitations in the current body of literature about how the different functional areas in student affairs have been conceptualised to date. Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model provided critical insights in this study about how and why student affairs manifest in African higher education. Finally, the authors highlighted a noteworthy issue (postgraduate programmes and services) requiring future exploration to extend and promote student affairs as a field of research and studies in the African context.

### **Ethics Statement:**

The researcher has obtained ethical clearance for this study from the University of the Free State's, Faculty of Educations Ethics committee (see Appendices A & B).

**Conflict of Interest:**

Since this research consists of document analysis, there is no conflict of interest involved in terms of content nor authorship.

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## CHAPTER 5

### Article 4

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#### ARTICLE FOUR

*Article four is a research article (peer-reviewed) proposed to be adapted (after graduation) on the guidelines for authors for the Perspectives in Education<sup>12</sup>.*

#### DEVELOPING THE FIELD OF STUDENT AFFAIRS: QUALITY ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDIES UNDER BRONFENBRENNER'S SYSTEMS MICROSCOPE

#### ABSTRACT

The crux of this article is an interrogation, whereby useful information will be elicited to establish how scholarly article-style postgraduate studies will enrich the field of student affairs? In this higher education qualitative research journey, undertaken through Bronfenbrenner's theoretical microscope on article-style postgraduate studies, there are three key system drivers, namely: (i) **at a microsystem level:** How can article-style postgraduate student development be supported by student affairs practitioners? (ii) **at an exosystem level:** How do institutional policy decisions influence scholarly article-style postgraduate studies? (iii) **at a macrosystem level:** Which proposed postgraduate attributes represent a quality assessment of successful scholarly article-style postgraduate studies? The lack of literature addressing the above-mentioned as well as examiners' concerns regarding clear assessment guidelines sparked the researcher's drive for this microscope research approach. Higher education/supervisor champions are very positive towards the article option for postgraduate studies, but confirmed that it is implemented differently in different countries/institutions/disciplines. All participants agreed that article-style postgraduate studies merely are intended for research-active academics' preference, experiences, and needs.

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<sup>12</sup> See detail of justification for this journal choice in Chapter 7 (Epilogue).

Furthermore, South African universities' institutional policies only embrace a holistic conceptualisation of the article option postgraduate study. Therefore, clear institutional guidelines/faculty or departmental requirements, support, and quality assessment are required. I trust these research findings will contribute, through article-style postgraduate studies, to the potential enhancement of the scholarly focus of the student affairs field and proposed postgraduate attribute development.

*Keywords:* article-style postgraduate studies, Bronfenbrenner's Person, Process, Context and Time model, graduate attributes, institutional policies, quality assessment, student affairs

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This article originated from the first three articles in this article-style doctoral journey (see Chapters 2-4), as steppingstones. Thus, this research is situated within the parameters of Higher Education studies, Student Affairs, Student Development Theory, and Ecology of Learning. Thus, but predominantly positioned within the field of student affairs, especially in Jones and Asbes's (2017:143) third student development theory category. This is because it specifically focused on the ecological aspects of student development - with special emphasis on the four roles of student affairs as identified (Article 1). In this regard, Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005) Bio-ecological systems theory i.e. the Person- Process-, Context- and Time (PPCT) model was relevant as a theoretical lens. Also, based on the above-mentioned as well as on the document analyses of articles two and three of this article-style doctoral journey, two aspects that remain prominent are professional development of student affairs and assessment (where the researcher has an interest in article-style postgraduate studies). Furthermore, the researcher was intrigued (based on the document analyses of articles two and three) by the reasons for student affairs research focusing on the functional area of postgraduate studies differing between the worldwide and African higher education context; especially because a high demand exists on an increase in and improvement of the quality of postgraduate outputs within higher education (Cloete, Mouton & Sheppard 2015). This served as the forerunner to join, link and contribute to some of the dialogues on non-traditional article-format postgraduate studies (Ferrell, Ensminger & Coleman 2019; Fong 2017; Sims 2016; Munn, Collins, & Greer 2014; Olson & Clark, 2009;

Maxwell 2006; Louw & Fouché 2002; Duke & Beck 1999; Louw & Fouché 1999; Krathwohl 1994) to ascertain how this can enrich the field of student affairs.

A shift towards article-style postgraduate studies does NOT imply lowering academic standards! This is the qualitative view from twenty South African higher education experts and supervisors. However, this modification of postgraduate studies into the article option arrived with its own set of international, national, and institutional requirements, which emphasised the need for support, institutional guidelines, and quality assessment.

Thus, the question in this study (through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model) is to determine how article-style postgraduate studies can enhance the field of student affairs specifically?

1. **At a microsystem level:** How can article-style postgraduate student development be supported by supervisors that intentionally uphold specific student affairs functions<sup>13</sup>?
2. **At an exosystem level:** In which manner do institutional policy decisions influence scholarly article-style postgraduate studies?
3. **At a macrosystem level:** Which proposed postgraduate attribute indicators represent a quality assessment of successful scholarly article-style postgraduate studies?

For practical reasons only the term “postgraduate studies” will be used in this article for both master's and doctoral studies. A departure from the traditional dissertations/theses towards article-style postgraduate studies also entails the following:

- special institutional/departmental preparation (Duke & Beck 1999),
- multiple scholarly formatting considerations (Duke & Beck 1999),
- concise writing style prerequisites concentrated on applicable literature, results, and findings (Maxwell 2006),
- extending the audience towards academics, practitioners, journal editors and peer reviewers (Duke & Beck 1999),

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<sup>13</sup> Although there exists a distinct difference between postgraduate supervisors and student affairs practitioners. In this research, the supervisor acts within the ambit of a particular student affairs functional area to provide support to postgraduate students. In this context, specifically, those who are doing the article option.

- promoting students' scholarly contributions in the field by reducing the time gap between findings and dissemination (Sims 2016; Munn *et al.* 2014; Olson & Clark 2009; Duke & Beck 1999; Krathwohl 1994),
- generating a new critical advisor and mentorship relationship (Ferrell *et al.* 2019) to create a publishing culture (Ferrell *et al.* 2019; Louw & Fouché 2002).
- determining authorship credit and order of authorship (Louw & Fouché 1999).

Previous debates focused on the benefits of article-style postgraduate studies such as research engagement to develop multiple scholarly products with guidance and support of the supervisor; and the provision of mentorship in writing for publication (Ferrell *et al.* 2019; Sims 2016; Munn *et al.* 2014; Olson & Clark 2009; Maxwell 2006; Louw & Fouché 2002; Duke & Beck 1999; Louw & Fouché 1999; Krathwohl 1994); as well as the shift towards a meaningful mentorship relationship (Ferrell *et al.* 2019). In this article, the researcher asserts that the article format in postgraduate studies influenced institutional policy decisions and the way of assessment. The motivation for this study was a lack of literature on the above-mentioned essential topics, limited supervisors with article option experience (established in 2020 by applying the databases: Academic Search Ultimate, Africa-Wide Information, Education Source, ERIC, and Humanities Source Ultimate), and examiners' concerns regarding clear assessment guidelines. The study followed a qualitative approach to explain how twenty South African higher education practitioners and postgraduate supervisors perceived and experienced the article-format postgraduate studies (see Appendices D-F). The researcher engaged retrospectively with the findings of the qualitative data to analyse and share experiences with the non-traditional, article-style postgraduate studies through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's micro-, exo- and macrosystems levels. This approach provided a double-edged sword for supporting article-style postgraduate students towards developing the field of student affairs research prospects, but also the enclosure of article-style postgraduate studies as a functional area for student affairs support.

## **5.2 A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY INQUIRY**

This qualitative collective case study's in-depth exploration on article option postgraduate studies was conducted in two phases, namely:

1. First, I obtained the views of twenty South African higher education experts via qualitative questionnaires (see Appendix D).
2. Second, I gained the perspectives of postgraduate supervisors at the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa, through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix F). These qualitative data were gathered in co-operation with the Postgraduate Directorate at the same university. Thus, the UFS serves as a case study university for this research. It is important to note that after the qualitative questionnaires (see Appendix D) had been distributed to twenty South African higher education experts, it was established that a limited number of supervisors employed at the UFS Faculty of Education were experienced in article option postgraduate studies. Thus, four interviews (see faculty approval and semi-structured interview schedule in Appendices E-F) were conducted with these available, willing, and experienced supervisors. Here the transcriptions provided the researcher with a valuable opportunity to actively engage with the data generation. This served as possible trustworthiness and validity actions that the researcher applied by being aware of his/her own influence in the data generation process (e.g. transferability) and then connect with data in a grounded manner (Mertens 2015).

This approach permitted the researcher to transform the lived experiences of article option postgraduate studies by allowing for analysis, reflection, and interpretation (McMillan & Schumacher 2014; McMillan & Schumacher 2010; Merriam 2009). Also, the purposeful sampling provided information-rich reflections that foster the transformation of learning for positive change and enhancement of postgraduate studies. The selection criteria for selection were:

1. Purposively selected article-style postgraduate champions (i.e. experts and supervisors) in South African higher education.
2. All supervisors (UFS Faculty of Education), who had experience in supervising article-style postgraduate studies during 2020 at the case study university (see Dean's approval Appendix E).

As stipulated in 1.7, an inductive process of analysis of qualitative research data, using NVivo-12 software, was followed. The following seven steps were applied: 1) reading published research and qualitative data 2) labelling (coding – first open, then focused - and categorising) 3) reducing, comparing and sorting data 4) displaying data 5) interpreting data 6) summarising findings and 7) reflecting on the patterns elicited from the data collected from the Faculty of Education supervisors (*cf.* Maree 2012; McMillan & Schumacher 2010; Robberts 2010). To provide explanations for the phenomenon “article-style postgraduate studies” (McMillan & Schumacher 2010), the findings of this qualitative inquiry are discussed according to Bronfenbrenner’s micro-, exo- and macrosystem levels microscope.

### **5.3 BRONFENBRENNER’S PPCT MODEL: COMPLEMENTING POSTGRADUATE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

Bronfenbrenner’s developmental ecology model supplements student (including postgraduate students) development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005) due to the inward focus on “the interactions between individuals and their environment to see how and why these outcomes occur as they do” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn 2010:161). The four focal components (person, process, context, time of the PPCT model) and the interactions among them embrace Bronfenbrenner’s model. In the PPCT model, the *person* (i.e. postgraduate student) is surrounded by a series of layered contexts, namely micro-, meso-, macro-, and exosystems (Evans *et al.* 2010). In this article the focus remains on the following three systems (Evans *et al.* 2010:164-165; Bronfenbrenner 2005):

- Microsystems represent the activities, roles, and interpersonal relations of the developing postgraduate student (where social, physical, and symbolic features may arouse/delay engagements with the environment, including technology and online education). In this regard, the academic department and faculty (if small enough), therefore, could function as a microsystem for postgraduate students.
- Exosystems exclude the developing person, but signify the utilisation of an influence on his/her environment through interactions with microsystems – here referring to higher

education institutional policies on and quality assessment of the article option of postgraduate studies. The institutional governance structures and faculty boards that decide on policies and assessment criteria, therefore, could function as an exosystem to postgraduate students.

- Macrosystems embody the overarching micro-, and mesosystems within a given culture/sub-culture/social structure, which is shaped by “socio-historic influences related to economics, the world of work and societal values”. Thus, general standards and quality stipulations concerning the higher education sector could function as a macrosystem for postgraduate students.

It is important to note that interactions within the microsystem have a *direct* influence on the development of a person, while the exo- and macrosystems have an *indirect* impact on the development of the individual. These three systems of Bronfenbrenner’s development ecology model, through interaction, affect the development of the individual postgraduate student (who are doing article option studies) in multiple ways.

#### **5.4 HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERT/SUPERVISOR VIEWS ON ARTICLE OPTION POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Most of the higher education experts and/or supervisors in this research were employed at one of the three types of public universities in South Africa (Badat 2015; Hall 2015; PWC 2014; RSA DHE&T 2013; RSA MoE 2001; RSA DoE 1997), namely traditional universities (which are academic in focus), universities of technology (which are more vocational) or comprehensive universities (which offer a combination of academic and vocational qualifications). The departmental and/or disciplinary representation were diverse, but mostly included Faculties of Education, -Higher Education, -Health and Environmental Sciences; executive management, and the postgraduate school. In these universities, the acceptable postgraduate study types found predominantly were single-authored- or scholarly article-style postgraduate studies (the second type is the focus of this article).

It appears that the required number of completed articles to be delivered for the successful completion of article option postgraduate studies differ for different qualifications at different institutions. For example, a master's qualification requires one to two publishable articles, while for a Ph.D. qualification two to three publishable articles are compulsory. These inconsistencies are even more problematic if one considers that in the recent past, some universities required even more articles than stipulated above. However, during the data gathering supervisors indicated that these expectations were unrealistic - something which underlines the scholarly demand of an article option for postgraduate studies. They regarded an article option as definitely not an easy route, due to the following reasons:

- The article option demands “just too much of them, almost like five dissertations” (P7);
- “The article option is “... too much” which results in a completion challenge and “... getting them to finish and get it done” (P7).

Additionally, distinct views exist on the final article-style product. For example, journal submission or published articles before graduation seem to be an optional choice for some universities, while other universities stipulate clearly that the articles may only be published after graduation. Furthermore, all higher education experts/supervisors confirmed that co-authorship with the supervisor is essential and one of the main benefits of article-style option postgraduate studies, while some indicated that it is custom in some departments for the statistician's name also to appear as co-author. On the other hand, some institutions regard one single-authored doctoral article, after graduation, as crucial evidence to demonstrate independence as a researcher.

Feedback received from the higher education experts and supervisors is very positive towards the article-style postgraduate study option; however, there exist several hurdles to pass on this route. Publication brings several advantages for the higher education institution (subsidy for research outputs), the supervisor (as a co-author of the published article; benefiting from the publication(s) financially or in terms of career promotion) and the student (making name as a scholar in his/her field of expertise). Also, all participants confirmed that this article-format is predominantly intended for research-active academics with experience, who are in need of “... improving

academic qualifications, critical skills and innovation due to exposure to current trends and research; timely dissemination and communication of research outputs/outcomes to a wider audience (especially with publication as a sword over academics heads) or embark on new specialisations areas for professional development or to build Curriculum Vitae or earn credits” (P4).

However, the article-style postgraduate study is not the ideal format for all students, nor suitable for all disciplines. Thus, it is essential when considering article-style postgraduate studies, that the decision should be taken very carefully, with full consideration of the nature of the research topic, the ability of the student, and the experience of the supervisor. Although these benefits are closely associated with an article option for postgraduate study reports, participants indicated that it did not imply superiority above a single-authored postgraduate dissertation or thesis.

Higher education experts and supervisors participating in this study believe that a single-authored postgraduate study option holds different benefits for postgraduate students. Participants proclaimed that a single-authored postgraduate study is “not inferior to the article option, if properly done”, nor is it a “softer option, but rather an opportunity to integrate research insights gained over time” (P4). While others think that the article-style postgraduate study is “less suited for people who are not actively engaged with research” (P4), or have “no broad insight into theory or methodology” (P7). Additionally, all the higher education experts/supervisors agree that there is a risk involved in an article-style option for postgraduate studies; that is that the acceptance of an article, or the publication process is time-consuming, or could delay completion/graduation. Therefore, clear guidelines for the article-style option are crucial to:

- ensure the successful roll-out process in terms of “the rest of their academic environment” (P3),
- keep focus within the length restrictions (all participants), and
- ensure fair and transparent assessment by external examiners “who have different opinions about the article option” (P6).

This indicates a much-needed focus on the essential student affairs functional area that could support the developing postgraduate student doing the article-style studies (as part of the primary dyadic supervisory relationship). As well as clear institutional policies and guidelines (including faculty or departmental requirements), and quality assessment to guide the development of scholarly article-style postgraduate studies.

## **5.5 BRONFENBRENNER’S MICROSYSTEM LEVEL; SIGNIFYING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENROLLED POSTGRADUATE STUDENT FOR AN ARTICLE-STYLE STUDY**

In Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem level, the prominent dyadic relationship between supervisor and student steers the article-style postgraduate studies. Thus, scholarly article-style postgraduate studies demand not only a mind shift in terms of the mentoring relationship in the supervisor-student collaboration but also entails training and support for successful completion of article option postgraduate studies.

From the data analysis, it appeared that higher education institutional preparation and training of non-traditional article-style postgraduate studies are diverse. While some South African higher education institutions have research, academic, and consultancy support, others offer writing workshops/seminars and publication/writing retreats for proposal writing, and article-based research for postgraduate students and staff. Such training is not necessarily focused on non-traditional article-style postgraduate studies - maybe because it is planned for research-active academics. However, other higher education institutions have a more directive approach such as “writing boot-camps for postgraduate students” (P8). This usually is an online course that students can follow in their own time, with support from the supervisor. More examples of student support are “... three-day face-to-face workshops, immediately followed by a two-day writing dyad with a research mentor and their supervisors to formalise/transfer the training of the contact session to their research documents” (P3). Other higher education institutions avail a dedicated mentor (e.g. retired researcher) to assist students on an individual basis (P12). Thus, it is clear that “the article-option must still comply with the same requirements for awarding a doctoral degree in terms of

independent research, contributing to the body of knowledge and innovation” (P9). As the article option is chosen by a limited number of postgraduate students, some participants expressed the opinion that it does not warrant a training need that necessitates “dedicated intervention” (P4).

Furthermore, in the research partnership – between supervisor and student conducting an article-style postgraduate study, support is cardinal for consistent progress and on time completion. Higher education practitioners/supervisors signalled the following support is required by supervisors:

- To have the policies, guidelines, rules, writing skills, and supervision process explained,
- To know they can depend on the experience and expertise; supervisors with limited experience may require support and mentorship from more experienced supervisors, and
- training in this new and different supervision style, as well as the differing requirements.

The higher education practitioners’/supervisors maintained that students required support in the following domains:

- Explanations of policies, guidelines, rules, academic writing skills, understanding the supervision process but also to be taught the nuts and bolts of how to write scholarly articles,
- guidance in the compilation of a coherent piece of scholarship, demonstrating expertise in a specific area, and
- understanding that their limited experience in a research environment and that they may find the article option daunting and would require much more support.

At the UFS (van Tonder 2020) institutional library support is available to postgraduate students through *research support* and *effective training*. *Research support* entails assistance in formulating research ideas (finding a topic), finding literature (searches and getting to the full text), locating research partners (collaboration), conducting research, writing, research data management/data

management plan, and publishing/submitting. *Effective training* involves training in effective search strategies, different databases, Bibliometrics/Altimetric, and referencing. Both these aspects are relevant and utterly important for article-style postgraduate studies.

In summary, the dyadic supervisory role and the interpersonal relations in article-style postgraduate studies demand attention and transformation. Such transformation probably has to be on this critical, advisor and mentorship relationship. Furthermore, increased social and scholarly engagements guide and coach the postgraduate student (i.e. doing article-style studies) towards independent research and publishing. This necessitates article option postgraduate development training and support.

## **5.6 BRONFENBRENNER'S EXOSYSTEM LEVEL INDICATES INSTITUTIONAL POLICY DECISIONS WITH REGARDS TO SCHOLARLY ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDY REPORTS**

Bronfenbrenner's exosystem level refers to external influences, outside the immediate postgraduate student setting, on the higher education environment of article-style postgraduate studies. The dynamics within the exosystem, therefore, indirectly influences the development of the postgraduate student.

In this research study respective higher education institutions and academic departments, including their related governance structures, represented the exosystem. The data analysis of this research confirms that between 2012-2016 the scholarly article-style postgraduate study option(s) have started to be implemented at various South African higher education institutions/departments/disciplines. The rationale for the institutional implementation of the article-option(s) seemed diverse. Most of those participants who were involved in the original institutional decision-making process of implementing article option postgraduate studies indicated that "it was primarily introduced to assist academics in universities to improve their academic qualifications/research outputs. Secondly, for postgraduate students working in laboratories on larger projects that can lead to several smaller publications rather than a large thesis" (P4). Some individuals who were not informed about the original rationale when the decision was taken to implement article-style postgraduate studies, specified

that the already stipulated benefits (see 5.4) served as their main reasons for this mind shift towards article option postgraduate studies reports.

### **5.6.1 Institutional policy conceptualisation of an article-style postgraduate study**

It appeared that institutional policies of the South African universities, involved in this research on article-style postgraduate studies focused mainly on the following aspects:

- a holistic conceptualisation of the article option postgraduate study,
- the number of completed articles required to form a coherent set,
- whether these articles should be publishable or published – before or after graduation, and
- co-authorship with the supervisor.

First distinct opinions exist on how institutional/faculty/departmental policies conceptualise the article-style postgraduate studies. Some institutions clearly delineated it in the Master's and Ph.D. policy (e.g. UFS 2016), and in these institutions' under "General Rules" (P3, P4). While other institutions' general rules make provision for the article-style postgraduate studies, but do not prescribe the detail (rather left these to the individual faculties to decide on). Although it appeared that at faculty and departmental levels discussions for integration and guidelines do take place - this remains a 'grey area'. Additionally, sometimes institutional guidelines are available, but "not always followed" (P6).

Secondly, one of the conceptualisation qualities of article option postgraduate studies on which all participants reached agreement is that it exists of a set of articles (although the number of stipulated articles differs). This scientific contribution collection "should form a convincing and coherent whole covering a specific topic or area of specialisation" (P9). If these students submit their articles as they finish them (throughout the research process), "postgraduate students tend to maintain more momentum than those completing their studies by dissertation – also resulting in better graduation rates and lower residency time" (P3).

Thirdly, variances exist in certain institutional policy regulations regarding the status of publishable or accepted for publication or published articles - mostly after having registered for the respective degrees (before or after graduation and its related implications). For example, “if the student does not publish the article(s), some policies make provision that the supervisor then has the option to publish the article” (P10). The reason for this is because “copyright lies with the university since it forms part of the degree” (P10). Regarding the peer review of these publishable/accepted for publication/published articles diverse opinions exist. Some institutional policies stipulate the expectation that the publishable articles should be peer-reviewed, or at least that “critical comments are sought from experts in the field who have not been appointed as examiners” (P8).

Fourthly, institutional/faculty/department management of authorship of article-style postgraduate studies remain a complex and tricky issue, especially in terms of conflict of interest. In general, the researcher (postgraduate student) is considered as the first author of all publications and the supervisors as second and/or third authors. This could also include the statistician as another author if he/she assisted with data analysis. Some universities indicated that once the degree has been conferred, and the candidate submits articles to journals for possible publication, the convention is that the supervisor(s) will be added as co-author(s) of at least the first article submitted for publication. This depends on the agreement reached between the supervisor(s) and the candidate. There are no hard and fast rules in this regard. A helpful guideline that some universities apply to preclude unnecessary disagreements and conflict, is that supervisors and candidates are required to enter into a memorandum of agreement when the study commences, spelling out the ‘rules of the game’ for both parties.

Despite the four identified institutional policy focus areas of article-style postgraduate studies (i.e. conceptualisation, number of articles, publishing status, and authorship), higher education experts/supervisors confirmed that broad format details are found in the General Rules and other related institutional policy documents. However, the practical application of the above-mentioned when the final product is assessed could be problematic, if no clear guidelines exist.

In summary, institutional policies or related decisions on article-style postgraduate studies here served as what Bronfenbrenner called the exosystem level. This provides a way for supervisors that intentionally uphold student affairs functions to assess and address diverse article-style postgraduate study experiences, as a result of institutional policy decisions taken outside the immediate postgraduate student setting.

### **5.7 BRONFENBRENNER’S MACROSYSTEM LEVEL DENOTING QUALITY ASSESSMENT FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOLARLY ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Bronfenbrenner’s macrosystem level is not only an overarching umbrella term for the collective micro-, meso- and exosystem levels of a given culture/social structure, but also refers to its cultural *blueprints*, value systems, and worldviews. Thus, the higher education sector, especially in the context of South Africa, acts as a particular macrosystem that indirectly impacts on the development of a postgraduate student. For example, in this article higher education institutions constitute a macrosystem, especially for article-style postgraduate supervisors and students – who are shaped by the socio-historic workforce and societal influences such as demands for postgraduate outputs. In this article Bronfenbrenner’s microscopic focal point, at the macrosystem level, is the quality assessment of scholarly article-style postgraduate studies. Within the South African higher education context, the extended formal structures for quality article-style postgraduate studies remain the following (HEQSF 2013:7-8):

- “Minister of Higher Education and Training overall responsibility for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and qualifications structure,
- South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA): development of policy and criteria for registering standards and qualifications on the NQF on the recommendation of the Council on Higher Education (CHE),
- CHE: responsible for the development and management of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), and

- Professional bodies have a role, derived from legislation or undertaken in terms of international professional conventions or agreements, to set requirements for professional registration, membership or licensing and to regulate professional conduct.”

Thus, the development of standards is an important element in contributing to the successful implementation of the HEQSF, as standards provide benchmarks to guide the development, implementation, and quality assurance of programmes leading to qualifications (here with special reference to postgraduate studies). Despite these formal structures and frameworks supporting the quality of postgraduate studies (including the nested approach of qualifications design of the HESQF), the responsibility and practical implementation resonate with the specific higher education institution (e.g. institutional policies – exosystem) and supervisor (e.g. guidelines and procedures – microsystem). Therefore, higher education experts/supervisors confirmed the essential aspects for article option postgraduate studies are guidelines and procedures. In doing so they underlined the impact that the macrosystem might have on the dyadic relationship between supervisor and student, as well as on the individual development of the postgraduate student that opted for an article-style study. To this effect, higher education experts and supervisors highlighted the following:

- Adhere to the specific institutional technical format and ethical requirements (which may differ internationally, nationally, and institutionally).
  - The manner of presentation transforms towards a more concise (i.e. toward the lower end of the range suggested 100-140 pages for a master and about 70 000 words for a Ph.D. or 240 pages), scholarly format.
1. Firstly, an introduction that conceptualises the study and provides a rationale for the articles indicating how they cohere the extent, depth, and the contribution that they make to the body of knowledge (with special reference to doctoral students).
  2. Secondly, insert the set of required articles based on the scope and guidelines of the selected journal(s).

3. Thirdly, there should also be a conclusion summarising the insights gained, the conclusions drawn, and the contribution made). The difference here, respectively between master's and doctoral studies, is qualitative, where doctoral graduates demonstrating a higher level of attainment of the same knowledge, skills, qualities, and abilities.
- Identify upfront potential, relevant journals in which the student wants to publish with special reference to author guidelines (e.g. length, scope, referencing, etc.), which should then be followed.
  - The conceptualisation of the research contribution in articles is on good academic writing- and statistical standard (e.g. the skill of writing concisely while still conveying the most important information to the reader) - with support that editing, plagiarism, and statistics have been addressed.
  - Meeting the exist-level outcomes as stipulated in the SAQA exist-level descriptors.

Furthermore, the higher education experts/supervisors share the same opinion, namely that the academic standards and scholarly contribution of article-style postgraduate studies remain the same as single-authored postgraduate studies. To establish whether the required quality is maintained in article-option postgraduate studies, higher education experts/supervisors stated that the following proposed assessment criteria (What do I need to see to know they can do it?) serve as basic support:

- relevant and in-depth research and reading,
- conceptual clarity of research focus/problem and its justification (including the relevant choice of journals),
- understanding, selecting and applying appropriate research methods for a research topic,
- logical and realistic planning, completing and presenting research (data generation and analysis),
- discussion and evaluation of research ethics,
- appropriate linguistic form and style, which recognise disciplinary conventions and use of sources,
- designed and meaningfully presented, displaying support of research, and

- the ability to communicate the main points in verbal form and with appropriate visual aids.

Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem level is the umbrella term for the micro-, meso- and exosystem levels and refers to the cultural *blueprints* and value system of broad social systems. In this article, it signifies the higher education sector. The formal standards of the higher education sector are implemented by higher education institutions' formal social structures to enhance and nurture a quality research and publishing culture - especially for article-style postgraduate supervisors and students, but also areas where student affairs can provide support. In this article Bronfenbrenner's microscopic focal point, at the macrosystem level, is the quality assessment of scholarly article-style postgraduate studies. The impact of the micro-, exo- and macrosystems on the development of individual students who have chosen an article-style postgraduate studies, should ultimately develop certain attributes in these postgraduate students (which signify the student affairs support area).

## **5.8 PROPOSED POSTGRADUATE ATTRIBUTE INDICATORS**

Postgraduate attributes for postgraduate studies are important to equip the students for higher education and the world of work – especially since the article option is intended for research-active academics' future careers. These postgraduate attributes for article option postgraduate studies refer to qualities, skills, and understandings beyond discipline-specific expertise or technical knowledge. This relates to Kuh's eleven High Impact Practices (Kuh & Kinzie 2018; Kuh 2008) as well as Linder and Hay's (2018) High Impact Practices in online education. The reason for this is that the focus here is on active learning practices that promote deep learning which stimulates student engagement. At the core, relationships and the transformation from theory to practice are important here. This is also crucial in article-style postgraduate studies where the mentorship relationship steers towards independent research practice.

Therefore, the higher education experts/supervisors participating in this research were of the opinion that the following comparative postgraduate attribute indicators for article-option postgraduate studies are important:

## **Academic communication and reporting**

### ***Oral/written/digital technology communication and effective reporting***

- The ability to academically communicate ideas accurately to a diversity of experts within and outside the field of study or discipline and the wider community (e.g. the skill of writing concisely, while still conveying the most important information to the reader).
- The ability to transfer information that is then constructed into knowledge for educational purposes, which may include teaching and supervision.
- The capacity to report scientifically founded findings, and thoroughly and insightfully justified implications for both theory and practice.
- The capacity to use an academic writing style for publication purposes.
- The capacity to render an edited final product that testifies of quality and is appropriate for publication purposes – depending on the journal guidelines.
- The capacity to ensure that the research design is clear evidence of congruence/alignment with the problem statement and purpose of the study.
- The ability to manage conflict and to identify one's conflict management style/method.
- The ability to communicate effectively with others in diverse teams and contexts (including using digital technology), concerning specified roles and responsibilities.
- The ability to ethically control existing digital technologies.
- The ability to competently act in situations requiring problem-solving, achieving goals, and completing tasks.

## **Critical thinking/problem solving abilities**

### ***Discipline or field specific knowledge and skills***

- In-depth, important knowledge leading the field.
- Sophisticated comprehension of essential views related to the field.

### ***Critical judgement and research skills***

- Ability to engage appropriately with the philosophical interrogation and discourses in the discipline/field (i.e. in-depth conceptual application of the discipline/field of study);
- Ability to independently deliver original research and scholarship, proven by
  1. Comprehension of emerging concepts;
  2. a clear research void is demarcated;
  3. formulating realistic and feasible research questions;
  4. enhanced level of accessing and managing information;
  5. applying designs and methodologies applicable to the discipline or field of study (in-depth empirical application);
  6. the analysis and synthesis of information or data from a diversity of sources;
  7. positioning one's research within an international theoretical, practical and policy context;
  8. logically following research goals and planning to finish a multifaceted project within accessible resources.
- Ability to implement comprehensive analysis and decision-making skills to solve problems.
- Ability to show originality and innovativeness when collecting and interpreting information, facts, and data in the research process.

### **Future Career management**

- Ability to recognise and express one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences for professional development purposes and the enhancement of future career opportunities.
- Ability to pursue research/conference opportunities as well as to understand how to network and improve one's own visibility for opportunities in the workplace.

### **Global/intercultural fluency**

- Ability to show respect for and distinguish among diverse values, cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions.
- Demonstrating openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences.
- Ability to distinguish and value the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and elsewhere.

## **Independence, creativity, flexibility, initiative, and learning**

- Ability to make an original, scholarly and independent contribution to knowledge in the discipline or field of study.
- The importance of self-confidence and taking responsibility for oneself.
- Ability to apply current skills and knowledge to develop inventive solutions for new problems.
- Ability to show flexibility and resourcefulness towards change.
- Ability to work with a positive attitude and revealing it to all relevant stakeholders.
- Ability to identify and take serendipitous advantage of research opportunities.
- Ability to show leadership in the discipline projects.

## **Leadership**

- Ability to influence others to achieve common goals.
- Ability to apply one's own interpersonal skills to coach others and for the professional development of others.
- Ability to evaluate and control one's emotions.
- Ability to apply empathetic skills to guide, motivate, organise, prioritise, and delegate work to others.

## **Teamwork/collaboration**

- Ability to work collaboratively and effectively with others, within a range of teams and contexts, respecting individual roles and responsibilities.
- Ability to build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints.

## **Time Management**

- Ability to effectively manage one's own time and keep to submission dates.

## **Work ethics, social understanding, and professionalism**

- Ability to adhere to university/research purpose, mission, and values ethically and legally.
- Ethical accountability is essential (e.g. in the examination report/the oral examination) where the candidate demonstrates the ability to adhere to ethical requirements, and make autonomous ethical decisions (including demarcated the terms of authorship).
- Ability to demonstrate integrity and responsible actions, including learning from mistakes, with the interest of the larger community in mind.
- The ability to comprehend and respect interdisciplinary and diverse cultural perspectives, as well as the roles and expertise of others;
- Ability to address appropriate topics (in a field of study/discipline) with regards to local, national, and global issues (including the social and philosophical contexts).
- Ability to commit to professional development and the discipline or profession, and a willingness to listen and respond to constructive feedback.
- Ability to show personal accountability and effective work habits (such as punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management).
- Ability to have insight into the influence of non-verbal communication on one's professional work image.

The distinction between the above-mentioned attribute indicators of postgraduates or research master's or doctoral students respectively is rather qualitative. For example, doctoral graduates should reveal a superior accomplishment of the same knowledge, skills, qualities, and abilities compared to the expectations of the master's candidate. Although it is evident from these themes ensuing from the data analysis that higher education experts and supervisors consider article-style postgraduate research as an effective way to develop certain postgraduate attributes in students, a question remains about how these attributes can contribute towards achieving research goals and constructing new knowledge. This is precisely why article-style postgraduate studies can expand the existing student affairs functional areas, namely two of CAS's (2019) current functional areas: assessment (3) and master's level preparation and professional programmes (31). Thus, the re-positioning of student affairs professional development for practitioners is proposed to enhance the support for article-style postgraduate students (Schreiber & Lewis in IASAS 2020:57-64).

Article-style postgraduate studies also enrich and develop the field of student affairs in terms of prominent new research and professional development areas, which is closely linked to Shuh, West and Dunn-Coetzee's assessment as a strategic planning area (in IASAS 2020:65:73).

## **5.9 HOW DO ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDIES CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS ACHIEVING RESEARCH GOALS AND CONSTRUCTING NEW KNOWLEDGE?**

Higher education experts/supervisors agreed that the article option postgraduate studies have a broader reader reach and will expose the student/scholar to a broader scholarly/academic community. This not only increasing research outputs but contribute in a more advanced way to achieving research goals and constructing new knowledge (especially since article writing a higher level of conceptualisation is needed in a competitive publishing environment). Also, well-planned and a soundly structured article-option degree does hold the promise to contribute as much to the scientific endeavour as a pure research-based dissertation. Thus, the second contribution that article-style postgraduate studies make towards the field of student affairs, is that it has the potential to enhance the scholarly focus of this field. This observation, together with the argument above that article-style postgraduate studies develop particular postgraduate attributes, are important contributions of this research article. To this end the research study introduces a double-edged sword that aims to support article-style postgraduate studies and will advance the student affairs field considerably in terms of research opportunities and the inclusion of article-style postgraduate studies as a functional area for student affairs support.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION**

The significance of this research manifests in the identification of an approach that provided a double edge sword for supporting article-style postgraduate students towards enriching the field of student affairs research and current functional areas. Bronfenbrenner's theoretical microscope steered this inquiry: In which way can article-style postgraduate studies specifically enhance the field of student affairs? To investigate this inquiry, the qualitative exploration was dissected into three system levels focus areas, namely:

1. **At a microsystem level:** How can article-style postgraduate student development be supported by supervisors that intentionally uphold student affairs functions? This qualitative research indicated that article-style postgraduate studies are merely envisioned for active research academics as empowerment and to create a publishing culture. Additionally, a revised mentorship supervisory relationship is necessitated. These new, supplementary, and distinctive aspects are thus core aspects of student affairs support.
2. **At an exosystem level:** How do institutional policy decisions influence scholarly article-style postgraduate studies? The holistic conceptualisation of article-option postgraduate studies only indicated the number of completed articles required, whether these articles should be publishable/published (before or after graduation), and the position of the supervisor as to co-authorship. This confirmed the essentiality of transformation of relevant institutional policies into well-defined institutional and departmental guidelines as well as procedures. Subsequently, the training and support of these postgraduate students, supervisors, and related professional development staff demand from student affairs practitioners to provide relevant support.
3. **At a macrosystem level:** Which proposed postgraduate attributes represent a quality assessment of successful scholarly article-style postgraduate studies? Finally, although clear guidelines for the assessment of article-style postgraduate studies have been identified as essential (see proposed assessment criteria and proposed postgraduate attribute indicators for article option postgraduate studies) - more detail and extensive research are necessary to address institutional and departmental requirements, but also to address and confirm the comparability thereof. This would not only enhance clarity on the part of the external examiners but would also facilitate the task of the examination division (e.g. the examination division would then in each specific case send the applicable directions to the external examiners).

Also, even though this qualitative research case study relates to some of the discourses on non-traditional article format postgraduate studies, it was only introductory and exploratory. This debate requires more extensive research to expand the sampling considerations in different research settings, contexts, and through applying various methods. While this research indicated that article-style postgraduate studies encourage the possibility of an extension of this functional area in the field of student affairs, more specifications for policy, assessment, and postgraduate

attributes are required - including the dependence on technology and online education with the current COVID 19 lockdown epidemic where “higher education stakeholders are compelled to innovate and collaborate more effectively” (Schreiber & Ludeman in IASAS 2020:19).

**Ethics Statement:**

The researcher has obtained ethical clearance for this study from the University of the Free State’s Faculty of Education Ethics committee (see Appendices A & B). Additionally, the Faculty of Education’s (UFS) institutional approval (see Appendix D) was obtained.

**Conflict of Interest:**

For this research I obtained written informed consent from South African higher education experts (see Appendix D) and postgraduate supervisors (see Appendices E & F) in the Faculty of Education (UFS) for participation in the study (i.e. participants could withdraw at any time from the research). There is no conflict of interest involved in terms of content or authorship.

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## CHAPTER 6

### Article 5

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#### ARTICLE FIVE

*Article five is a research article (peer-reviewed) proposed to be adapted (after graduation) on the guidelines for authors for the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa<sup>14</sup>*

#### **360° REFLECTION CIRCLE COVERING A RESEARCH JOURNEY WITHIN THE FIELDS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AND HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S PERSON, PROCESS, CONTEXT AND TIME MODEL LENS**

#### ABSTRACT

This 360-degree research circle explores a basic question: How can the difference in reporting the representativeness of postgraduate studies as a student affairs research theme, contribute to the body of knowledge of postgraduate student learning and development in student affairs and why? This qualitative research journey considered both student affairs and higher education as fields of study that play a fundamental role in endeavours to enhance student learning and development. Bronfenbrenner's Person, Process, Context and Time model provided an appropriate theoretical lens as four intervention guideposts. The study (i) funnelled from the contemporary to four historic movements of student affairs roles towards postgraduate development; (ii) the researcher plotted student affairs research world-wide; (iii) mapped student affairs research in the African context; and (iv) endeavoured to identify how article option postgraduate studies can enhance the field of student affairs from a policy and quality perspective.? Finally, all points of view were incorporated to stipulate lessons learned about student affairs and higher education practitioners. Thus, a double

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<sup>14</sup> See detail of justification for this journal choice in Chapter 7 (Epilogue).

reflection mirror was held up – to view support to postgraduate students (as a kind of student affairs function), but also seeing how using postgraduate studies can enhance student affairs.

*Keywords:* postgraduate studies, Bronfenbrenner’s Person, Process, Context and Time model; higher education, postgraduate studies, reflection, research, student affairs field

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, postgraduate studies are represented prominently in student affairs research themes. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programmes, and of importance for this study is number 31 on the list of current **functional areas** of CAS, namely Master’s Level Higher Education, and Student Affairs Professional Preparation (CAS 2019). African student affairs research themes showed limited reference to postgraduate programmes and services, despite the pressure for an increase in the number and quality of postgraduate studies and publications within higher education (Cloete, Mouton & Sheppard 2015).

This research entails pursuing a solution for the inquiry: How can the difference (i.e. worldwide versus African student affairs research themes) in the representativeness of postgraduate studies as a student affairs research theme, contribute to the body of knowledge of postgraduate student learning and development in student affairs and why?

To answer these questions, Bronfenbrenner’s (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006) Person, Process, Context and Time (PPCT) model provided an appropriate theoretical lens for the four intervention guideposts, namely:

1. How has student affairs research developed (with special reference to the roles of student affairs practitioners) historically, and what are the implications thereof? (Guidepost 1)
2. What are the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development in higher education worldwide, and why? (Guidepost 2)

3. What are the most important student affairs research themes for transforming student learning and development in African higher education, and why? (Guidepost 3)
4. What are important policy and assessment issues when assessing article-style postgraduate studies that student affairs practitioners need to address, and why? (Guidepost 4)

This article is a reflection on the full rotation of the qualitative research journey (conducted within the ambit of an interpretive paradigm). The research was demarcated within the fields of higher education and student affairs. The study funnelled these research areas predominantly from the field of student affairs by focusing on the study area of student development theory. Although all five student-development theory categories, which have been identified by Jones and Asbes (2017:143), are valuable, this study is positioned within the third category, namely theories focusing on the developmental impact of the interaction between students and the campus environment. The reason for this is that it specifically focuses on the ecological aspects of student development. The human development phenomenon extends over the life course of successive generations, and through historical time, both past and present (Bronfenbrenner 2005:3), which here is linked to the developmental contextualism rationale (see 1.2, third bullet).

Through a comprehensive historic and masterful blend of student development lenses, results revealed four pertinent, revolutionary student affairs roles. Additionally, through Bronfenbrenner's theoretical lens it has become evident that student affairs:

- predominantly function within the boundaries of undergraduate students, which has led to the lack of recognition of postgraduate learning and development – especially article-style postgraduate studies in terms of policy and assessment issues; and
- research themes, between worldwide and the African higher education contexts, differ.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model served as an appropriate theoretical lens for this higher education case study, predominantly in the field of student affairs. Thus, this research striving to understand the dynamic relationships between the developing individual and the integrated multilevel ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner 2005) now will be explored further.

## **6.2 BRONFENBRENNER’S PERSON, PROCESS, CONTEXT AND TIME MODEL AS THEORETICAL LENS**

Currently, higher education and student affairs face increasingly complex and multiple demands, which require effective management of transforming persons, processes, and contexts. Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model, based on the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), served as an appropriate theoretical lens for the four intervention guideposts (see 6.3-6.6) to promote postgraduate student development. This PPCT model evolved, thus permitting the researchers to establish the “how and why these outcomes occur as they do” (*cf.* Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn 2010:161; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006).

Bronfenbrenner’s original research themes such as social and historical context, the active person, and the impossibility of considering individual developmental processes in isolation were noteworthy here too. The core of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecology theory is multiple personal and interpersonal interactions and engagements – during which the person is sandwiched between and among these systems, which are primarily responsible for development (the PPCT model, as visually demonstrated in Figure 2.1 in this study report). Therefore Guidepost 1 focused on the four identified historic student affairs roles and the required postgraduate learning and development support (see 6.3).

## **6.3 GUIDEPOST 1: HOW DID STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROLES OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS) HISTORICALLY DEVELOP AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS THEREOF?**

This research journey’s first guidepost indicated a U-turn ahead where the researcher had to travel in the opposite direction (i.e. historically) to obtain a contemporary perspective on both higher education and student affairs fields. If “[l]earning is fundamental to living ...”, it is not only “... the reason for higher education” (Keeling 2006:3), but also is supported by the role of student affairs. Thus, it is quite extraordinary that despite an increase in the demands for postgraduate output, in the higher education context (Cloete *et al.* 2015; Cyranoski, Gilbert, Ledford, Nayar &

Yahia 2011; Le Roux, Taylor, Kloot & Allie 2019), the student affairs role has not been prominent in postgraduate development efforts (Gansemer-Topf, Ross & Johnson 2006). This concurs with Young's opinion (2019), that too few supervised experiences are implemented for postgraduate student development, or for the professional development of student affairs practitioners. Zusman (2017) established that growth in the number of professional doctoral degrees resulted mainly in an increase in professionals/practitioners, instead of responding to the needs of complex professional work environments. Therefore, student learning (including that of postgraduate students) is also about student development – something to which student affairs should make a substantial contribution.

This chronological review was based on five American theoretical directives, that is, *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education – A Return to the Academy* (Brown 1972), *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators 1998); *Learning Reconsidered 2: Implementing a Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling 2006), and *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (Evans *et al.* 2010), and Kuh's High Impact Practices (Kuh & Kinzie 2018; Kuh 2008). These theoretical directives guided the trajectory of the development of the student affairs profession, evolving in the ultimate understanding of learning “as a comprehensive, holistic and transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development” (American Association for Higher Education *et al.*, 1998:2). The focus of these reports had been on student learning and development, which provided noteworthy sources for practitioners in both the fields of higher education and student affairs. This was fundamental for the identification of central issues that student affairs practitioners focused on in the past, and then provided student affairs guidelines for the future to assist students to cope with higher education challenges and complexities in their learning process towards the postgraduate level. Four historical movements in student affairs practice unfolded in a transforming higher education context (see Figure 2.1), namely, *in loco parentis* (1800-1960s), service providers (1945-1990), out-of-class development officers (1900-2000), and multiple-reflective-educators (2001-today). The boundaries of these periods are blurred, and periods overlap. Additionally, the internal interaction among the four roles of student affairs practitioners resulted in greater autonomy and independence, due to the

increasingly complex proximal processes, which, in turn, has resulted in greater demands for standards and accountability. Furthermore, in a less structured higher education context, the relationships transformed into partnerships among these meso-, exo- and macrosystems, with a more team-orientated and community-focused approach (to safeguard the changing student [microsystem], because the legal landscape and family expectations have changed).

This historical reflection on student affairs provided new insight in and deeper understanding of the developmental roles practitioners have fulfilled to date, which greatly influence how they approach their work and create learning environments that promote success for all students. Here the focus was on three criteria, namely the role of the student affairs practitioner, the learning process, and the integration of the social and academic contexts of the student experience. The reason for the use of these three criteria is because they are based on three pillars that guide student affairs support, namely learning (Criterion 2), growth and development (Criterion 3), and service (Criterion 1). These criteria, as nested within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006), served as the guiding framework (see Figure 2.1). Furthermore, various historical roles of student affairs practitioners have addressed the many and varied social and academic challenges students face in their learning processes towards development and success. Student affairs practitioners' involvement in postgraduate development efforts appears to be limited. Some of the reasons for this lack of attention could be that student affairs practitioners concentrate on the *what*, and not the *why* of their functioning, while postgraduate research at most higher education institutions is addressed via the research function, and not necessarily the teaching and learning function as with undergraduates. Through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model lens, it has become clear that the four historic roles of student affairs often are limited to undergraduate students, which has resulted in the lack of recognition of the holistic development of postgraduate students. This necessitated an international student affairs research intervention to identify the academic and social challenges which student affairs research should address (see Guidepost 2).

#### **6.4 GUIDEPOST 2: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH THEMES FOR TRANSFORMING STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION WORLDWIDE, AND WHY?**

In this international research journey (through Bronfenbrenner's model lens, specifically the chrono system), the second guidepost postulated a warning sign ahead - student affairs research and scholarship are not only a prominent but also a complex field of study (Liddell 2019; Seifert & Aderholdt 2019). The research question steering this journey was: What are the most important student affairs research and scholarship trends for transforming student learning and development in higher education, and why? Therefore, to uncover the worldwide student affairs research position (between 2008-2019), an extended document analysis was conducted. This document analysis involved 926 student affairs research articles published in 91 peer-reviewed journals. For the case study the 47 functional areas of the professional standards proposed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS 2019) were applied as premise for the document analysis to determine international publication trends. Although other categorisations for student affairs functional areas exist (IASAS, NASPA, UNESCO, etc.), CAS (2019) was more appropriate because of its well-known 40 years' research and a professional basis (41 US members and Canadian associations, and 115 000 practitioners). Finally, Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model was applied as an appropriate umbrella research design and guiding framework to review the mapping of worldwide student affairs research (2008-2019) from multiple perspectives. In this regard, the chronosystem (i.e. *time*) was particularly relevant. The findings of this CAS thematic research signalled that the 47 functional areas were largely confirmed by the worldwide student affairs research. Nine major worldwide student affairs research and scholarship focus areas were prominent: Postgraduate Studies and Professional Development Programmes; Learning Assistance Programmes; Multicultural Student Programmes and Services; Assessment Services; Leadership Education and Development; Academic Advising; Housing and Residential Life Programmes; International Programmes and Services; and Undergraduate admission programmes. Five new themes also became apparent, namely professionalization associations; legal/*human rights*; students and government; citation styles; and failure/retention. The question then was whether student affairs research trends in the African context were similar. This served as a trigger for further investigation (see Guidepost 3).

## **6.5 GUIDEPOST 3: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH THEMES FOR TRANSFORMING STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION, AND WHY?**

Global trends have demonstrated an increase in and emphasis on African student affairs research (IASAS 2020; Pansiri & Sinkamba 2017; MacMaster 2014; Moja, Schreiber & Luescher-Mamashela 2014) in a transforming higher education context (Tumubweinee & Luescher 2019). The third guidepost of this qualitative research journey signalled me to a tunnel ahead, funnelling from a worldwide reconnaissance towards mapping African student affairs research during the interlude (2008-2019) involved. For the document analysis five operating databases were employed: Academic Search Ultimate, Africa-Wide Information, Education Source, ERIC, and Humanities Source Ultimate. The search rendered 121 articles (in 34 selected academic journals), that confirmed the presence of the majority of the 47 functional areas of CAS (see Article 3 for justification for applying CAS [2019] student affairs functional areas for African student affairs in higher education). Nine prominent trends that African student affairs research echoed were:

1. Learning Assistance Programmes;
2. Master's Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes;
3. Academic Advising;
4. Leadership Education and Development;
5. Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services;
6. Housing and Residential Life Programmes;
7. College Unions/Governance;
8. International Student Programmes and Services, and Internship Programmes and
9. Assessment Services (which differ in terms of order of significance).

Thus, mentoring, research and assessment competencies are demanded to steer the knowledge community towards the professional preparation of student affairs practitioners. Additionally, both academic and student affairs complexities should be seamlessly integrated through democratic engagement, professional development, and leader-mentorship to enhance student success. Four local themes also have been observed: professionalisation associations, legal/*human rights*, student and government, as well as citation styles, which are apparent of African HE's diverse and

complex demands for professional development, legal and government solutions, and publication. These four themes signify limitations in the current body of literature about how the different functional areas in student affairs have been conceptualised to date.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, especially the chronosystem, provided critical insights in this study about how and why student affairs manifest in African higher education. For example, this research highlighted an expressive issue (postgraduate programmes and services) that requires future exploration to extend and promote student affairs as a field of research and studies in the African context. This resulted in a continued exploration of an element of postgraduate programmes, namely article-style postgraduate studies (see Guidepost 4).

#### **6.6 GUIDEPOST 4: WHAT ARE IMPORTANT POLICY AND ASSESSMENT ISSUES WHEN ASSESSING ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS THAT STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS NEED TO ADDRESS, AND WHY?**

This qualitative research journey's fourth guidepost specified a stop sign ahead where the researcher had to delineate article-style postgraduate studies in terms of policy issues and quality assessment. This transformed approach in postgraduate studies is not easy and specially, but not exclusively intended for research-active academics, as the article-style postgraduate study is not the ideal format for all students, nor is it suitable for all disciplines. It must also be noted that this move towards article-style postgraduate studies does NOT imply lowering academic standards but it merely transforms the presentation manner to a more concise, scholarly product. A meaningful mentorship relationship assists with the publishing collaboration as a reviewer and coach (Ferrell, Ensminger & Coleman 2019).

Well-defined institutional policies, faculty/departmental guidelines and assessment criteria are essential for successful article-style postgraduate studies – also possibly future student affairs support areas. Proposed assessment criteria that have been identified (see 5.7) for article option postgraduate students and supervisors should be supported as a student affairs function, creating an environment of support, networking, and collaboration. Additionally, nine proposed postgraduate attribute indicators require extensive future research. They are:

1. **critical thinking/problem solving** (i.e. knowledge and skills in the field of study and critical judgement and research skills);
2. **oral/written/digital technology communication and effective reporting;**
3. **leadership;**
4. **career management;**
5. **global/intercultural fluency;**
6. **time management;**
7. **independence, creativity, flexibility, initiative, and learning;**
8. **teamwork/collaboration as well as**
9. **work ethics, social understanding, and professionalism.**

Finally, all four these guideposts indicated diverse student affairs support areas, but one area which requires more prominence and is linked to most of these areas is postgraduate studies, with special reference to article option postgraduate studies.

## **6.7 LESSONS LEARNT**

In the all-encompassing reflection on how postgraduate studies can enrich the field of student affairs, the following four intervention guideposts demonstrated how this research contributes to the body of knowledge of postgraduate student learning and development in student affairs and why.

**Guidepost 1:** Through Bronfenbrenner's lens four historical movements of student affairs practice were identified within a transforming higher education context (see Figure 2.1), namely in loco parentis (1800-1960s), service providers (1945-1990), out-of-class development officers (1900-2000), and multiple-reflective-educators (2001-today). These roles of student affairs practitioners address the diverse social and academic challenges students face in their learning process towards achieving development and success. Also, these four roles demonstrated that development is characterised by the sequential movement along the trajectory. Thus, scholarly student affairs practitioners should be flexible and theory-based in their praxis when confronted with complex decisions and with diverse responsibilities (e.g. postgraduate student safety, student engagement,

and attributes). Therefore, professional development transformation is a multifaceted, intrapersonal process that includes support for new ways of learning, conceptualisation, monitoring, and safeguarding the changing student. This changing of students is due to legal, environmental, and family expectations, as well as accountability demands. Inclusion of more team-oriented and community-focused approaches is essential to expand the student affairs field as more postgraduate competencies are obtained.

**Guidepost 2:** The chrono system interval (2008-2019) confirmed nine prominent worldwide student affairs research trends which require student affairs support (see Table 6.1):

1. Postgraduate Studies and Professional Development Programmes
2. Learning Assistance Programmes
3. Multicultural Student Programmes and Services
4. Assessment Services
5. Leadership Education and Development
6. Academic Advising
7. Housing and residential life programmes
8. International Programmes and Services
9. Undergraduate admission programmes.

Five new themes have become apparent (see Table 6.1), which could enhance the field of student affairs, namely professionalisation associations; legal/*human rights*; students and government; citation styles; and failure/retention. Thus, student affairs research vision has been expanded to guide professional practice – the question that remains is: “Are you ready and willing to transform personally and professionally?”

**Guidepost 3:** Nine prominent trends that African student affairs research echoed, and which require student affairs support, are (see Table 6.1):

1. Learning Assistance Programmes
2. Master’s Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes

3. Academic Advising
4. Leadership, Education and Development
5. Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services
6. Housing and Residential Life Programmes
7. College Unions/Governance
8. International Student Programmes and Services
9. Internship Programmes and Assessment Services.

Four new local themes (see Table 6.1) have been observed to broaden the African student affairs field, namely professionalisation associations, legal/*human rights*, student and government, and citation styles that are apparent of African HE's diverse and complex demands for professional development, legal and government solutions, and publication.

Briefly, Guidepost 2 and Guidepost 3 indicate important student affairs functional areas (visually displayed in Table 6.1). In guidepost 2 categories 23 and 31 were jointly analysed as postgraduate programmes and services, while in Guidepost 3 these two categories were analysed separately.

**Table 6.1: Prominence of student affairs research trends (2008-2019) in functional areas of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS 2019)**

<b>CAS functional areas (2019)</b>		<b>Guidepost 2: Worldwide student affairs research trends</b>	<b>Guidepost 3: African student affairs research trends</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Academic Advising Programmes</b>	6	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Assessment Services</b>	4	0
<b>23</b> *	<b>Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services</b>	1	5
<b>25</b>	<b>Housing and Residential Life Programmes</b>	7	6
<b>26</b>	<b>International Student Programmes and Services</b>	9	8
<b>27</b>	<b>Internship Programmes</b>	8	9
<b>28</b>	<b>Leadership Education and Development</b>	5	4
<b>29</b>	<b>Learning Assistance Programmes</b>	2	1
<b>31</b>	<b>Master’s Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes</b>	1	2*
<b>32</b>	<b>Multicultural Student Programmes and Services</b>	3	0
<b>44</b>	<b>Undergraduate Admission Programmes and Services</b>	9	0
<b>PROPOSED NEW STUDENT AFFAIRS FUNCTIONAL AREAS</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>Professionalisation associations</b>	1	1
<b>2</b>	<b>Legal and human rights</b>	2	2
<b>3</b>	<b>Student and government,</b>	3	3
<b>4</b>	<b>Citation styles that are apparent of African HE</b>	4	4
<b>5</b>	<b>Failure/retention.</b>	0	5

Most of the current CAS (2019) functional areas were confirmed by the worldwide versus African student affairs research trends, but the nine prominent were listed in Table 6.1. Also, it is significant that in the worldwide student affairs research analysis postgraduate studies and services were the most prominent functional area; however, from the African student affairs research analysis it became clear that postgraduate studies and services would require further exploration to extend and promote student affairs as a field of research and studies. Although category 31 is indicated in Table 6.1 as the second most important category, the articles analysed focused on student affairs preparation and professional development, and not on master’s level and student affairs professional preparation programmes. The five proposed functional areas (see Table 6.1)

that became apparent in these two student affairs research investigations also require further research due to a limited number of articles addressing these functional areas. Therefore, the researcher regards these new functional areas merely as a starting point for more extensive research.

Thus, based on the insights gained from guideposts 1, 2, and 3, the researcher chose one specific aspect, namely professional development of student affairs, and how it links with postgraduate studies, to determine how postgraduate studies can enrich the field of student affairs. This choice was essential because article-style postgraduate studies could be particularly relevant for the development of the field of student affairs.

**Guidepost 4:** Here the question addressed was how article-style graduate studies specifically could enhance the field of student affairs. Article-style postgraduate studies are merely envisioned to be used by active research academics for empowerment purposes and to support the publishing culture, thereby broadening the diversity of postgraduate student inclusion in the student affairs field. Furthermore, student affairs support needs to be expanded to address the issues of article-style postgraduate studies, for example, the mentor-mentee relationship, proposed assessment criteria (see 5.7), and the nine postgraduate attribute indicators, namely **critical thinking/problem solving** (i.e. knowledge and skills in the field of study, and critical judgement and research skills); **oral/written/digital technology communication and effective reporting; leadership; career management; global/ intercultural fluency; time management; independence, creativity, flexibility, initiative, and learning; teamwork/collaboration**, as well as **work ethics, social understanding, and professionalism**. It thus is evident that these content development functional areas are only the onset to enhance the field of student affairs. The implementation of the development process of these functional areas is dependent on the person, context, and time factors, but also on a relevant theory. Theories provide the necessary and important lens to student affairs and higher education practitioners through which to engage with their roles and responsibilities and make complex decisions.

## 6.8 CONCLUSION

A comprehensive reflection, covering the 360 degrees of this qualitative research circle focused on both the fields of higher education and student affairs. This research position was predominantly channelled towards the field of student affairs by focusing on the study area of postgraduate student learning and development. The delineation of trustworthiness and authenticity actions such as the chain of support and the use of external auditors were applied.

Bronfenbrenner's human phenomenon extends over the life course of successive generations, and through historical time, both past and present (Bronfenbrenner 2005:3), which links with the developmental contextualism rationale (see 1.2, third bullet). Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model provided an appropriate theoretical lens for the four intervention guideposts to engage with the roles and responsibilities of student affairs and higher education practitioners, as well as for enriching the student affairs profession for postgraduate students. Thus, a double reflection mirror was used – support to postgraduate students (as a kind of student affairs function), but also using postgraduate studies to enhance student affairs. However, no person, process, context, or time is exactly the same – thus no “one size fits all” solution exists for the enhancement of student affairs through postgraduate studies. Subsequently, this could serve as a contemporary springboard for further investigation. Finally, more holistic information is required of postgraduate learning and development as a broad functional area for support to enrich the field of student affairs.

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# CHAPTER 7

## Epilogue

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### 7.1 HOLISTIC SYNOPSIS OF A FIVE-ARTICLE DOCTORAL JOURNEY

In reflecting on this research journey, it has become apparent that this article-style doctoral research was holistically delineated within the parameters of Higher Education Studies, Student Affairs, Student Development Theory, and Ecology of Learning. However, this research is predominantly positioned within the field of student affairs, especially in Jones and Asbes' (2017:143) third student development theory category. The focus of this category on the ecological aspects of student development testifies to this. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Bronfenbrenner 2005) bio-ecological systems theory (the Person, Process, Context and Time model) served as the theoretical foundation for this series of five articles. Student affairs research, within a transforming higher education context, represents the convincing and coherent whole covered by this series of articles. Thus, to me the image of peeling an onion with five diverse layers (because it evolved evolutionarily), will now be used to demonstrate the above-mentioned.

### 7.2 SUMMARY OF ARTICLE 1

The first article (**Article 1**, with the title: **A systematic review, through Bronfenbrenner's lens, of the historical role of student affairs**) signifies the outer layer of this research. Here the researcher revealed, from a historic perspective (four North American theoretical directives<sup>15</sup>) towards a contemporary perspective (Kuh's [2018, 2008] High Impact Educational practices) the four roles of student affairs (in loco parentis, service providers, out-of-class developmental officers, and multiple-reflective-educators). These four roles of student affairs practitioners are likely to address the diverse social and academic challenges students face in their learning process

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<sup>15</sup> *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education – A Return to the Academy* (Brown 1972), *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators 1998); *Learning Reconsidered 2: Implementing a Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling 2006), and *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn 2010)]

towards achieving development and success. Also, these theoretical directives provided insight into how the developmental role of student affairs practitioners has been understood over a period spanning more than 220 years (see Figure 1.1), up to the present. During this period student learning and development had been distinguished as a wide-ranging, all-inclusive, and transformative activity that incorporates academic learning and student development. This highlighted the inclusion of both student affairs and higher education fields in the five articles of this research journey (where higher education's functions are supported by the role of student affairs).

### **7.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model lens as theoretical framework**

Although this study, using Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model as lens, has signposted four historical movements, the reader should note that the student affairs practitioners' role is not bounded in one historical movement, but is rather evolutionary. It has become clear that scholarly student affairs practitioners should be flexible and theory-based in their praxis, as student affairs practitioners function under a contemporary umbrella with broad and diverse responsibilities – depending on the person, process, context, and time continuum defining it.

Also, it has become apparent that in a less structured higher education context, the relationships transformed into partnerships among these meso-, exo- and macrosystems. This resulted in more team-orientated and community-focused approaches (to safeguard the changing student [microsystem] where the legal landscape and family expectations have changed).

### **7.2.2 Learning process within a transformed higher education context**

The learning process has been transformed into a complex, holistic, multicentric, multicultural, multidimensional, engaged process. In this transformed learning context, student affairs practitioners' boundless power became more restricted in terms of their operations, due to changes in constitutional rights and legislation. As a result, the practices of restorative justice and monitoring turned out to be essential. Furthermore, the internal interaction among these four roles of student affairs practitioners resulted in greater autonomy and independence. Subsequently, due

to the increasingly complex proximal processes, greater demands for standards and accountability are made on student affairs practitioners.

### **7.2.3 Student affairs role within a transformed higher education context**

Despite increasing demands on student affairs practitioners and for postgraduate outputs, it is interesting that there has been limited research on the student affairs role and little attention has been paid to postgraduate research. Some of the reasons for this lack of attention may be that student affairs practitioners concentrate on the *what*, and not the *why* of their functioning, as postgraduate research at most higher education institutions is addressed via the research function, and not necessarily the teaching and learning function as with undergraduates. Thus, the researcher urges leaders to develop global frameworks for practice and create a culture, through education and research, that encourages students to acquire postgraduate competencies during their student experience (this can be linked to the proposed postgraduate attribute indicators discussed in Article 4).

### **7.2.4 Justification of choice of journal for Article 1**

This comprehensive theoretical, historic, practice-relevant article attends to both student affairs and higher education fields. The awareness of scholarly student affairs should be more visible within higher education, with special emphasis on postgraduate student development. This might be helpful when pursuing postgraduate development support through two of higher education's functions (teaching and learning, and research), supported by the role of student affairs. This deliberation was the reason for deciding to submit this article to the *Journal of Higher Education*.

This research to a large extent, also focused on the current student affairs research trends in the present-day transforming higher education context (as supported in Articles two and three). This research was an endeavour to address the functional student affairs areas which are essential (Articles 1-5) in making student learning and development more meaningful.

### 7.3 OUTLINE OF ARTICLE 2

Worldwide student affairs research and scholarship is a prominent and complex field of study (IASAS 2020; Liddell 2019; Seifert & Aderholdt 2019). This stimulated the research inquiry in the second layer of this international research journey, namely: What are the most important student affairs research and scholarship trends for transforming student growth and development in higher education, and why? (**Article 2** with the title: **Plotting international student affairs research and scholarship trends (2008-2019) through Bronfenbrenner's lens**).

#### 7.3.1 Summary of document analysis of Article 2, based on CAS (2019) thematic categorisation

The worldwide student affairs research position between 2008 and 2019 (Bronfenbrenner's so-called chronosystem) was determined in the light of an extensive document analysis<sup>16</sup>. This document analysis entailed 926 student affairs research articles published in 91 peer-reviewed journals. The thematic categorisation of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS 2019) largely confirmed nine main worldwide student affairs research themes as the foci, namely (1) Postgraduate Studies and Professional Development Programmes; (2) Learning Assistance Programmes; (3) Multicultural Student Programmes and Services; (4) Assessment Services; (5) Leadership Education and Development; (6) Academic Advising; (7) Housing and residential life programmes, (8) International Programmes and Services; and (9) Undergraduate Admission Programmes. From these worldwide student affairs research trends it became noticeable that mentoring, research, and assessment competencies demands drive the knowledge community, in particular, to promote the professional development of student affairs practitioners and students involved in student affairs programmes. For student success, both academic and student affairs complexities should be seamlessly integrated through democratic engagement, professional development, and leader-mentorship.

Five new themes have become noteworthy (professionalisation associations, legal/human rights, students and government, citation styles, and failure/retention). These five themes indicated

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<sup>16</sup> Five operating databases: Academic Search Ultimate, Africa-Wide Information, Education Source, ERIC, and Humanities Source Ultimate.

limitations in the current body of literature about how the different functional areas in student affairs have been conceptualised to date.

### **7.3.2 Theoretical framework: Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model lens**

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, particularly the chronosystem, provided critical insights in this study about how and why student affairs manifest in worldwide higher education in terms of personal and process engagements. Additionally, the similarities in the CAS framework and the body of literature about student affairs are important, because they underline those functional areas perceived to be essential for the contextualisation of student affairs praxis in a worldwide context.

Thus, the student affairs’ research vision has to be expanded to guide professional practice. The question remains, however, “Are you ready and willing to transform personally and professionally?”

### **7.3.3 Justification of journal choice for Article 2**

*The Journal of College Student Development* (JCSJ) would be the most relevant journal choice for Article 2 because it not only represents the largest source of research about student affairs (which also was evident in the prominence of this journal in the document analysis conducted in this study). Since 1959, both higher education and student affairs fields have found their voice within JCSJ.

## **7.4 OVERVIEW OF ARTICLE 3**

Global trends have demonstrated an increase in and emphasis on African student affairs research (IASAS 2020; Pansiri & Sinkamba, 2017; MacMaster, 2014; Moja, Schreiber & Luescher-Mamashela, 2014) within a transforming higher education (HE) context (Tumubweinee & Luescher, 2019). This prompted the third layer focus in **Article 3** with the title: **Mapping African student affairs research during the past interlude (2008-2019) through Bronfenbrenner’s lens.**

#### **7.4.1 Summary of document analysis of Article 3, based on CAS (2019) thematic categorisation**

This student affairs research document analysis<sup>17</sup> (in the higher education context), within the chronosystem interval (2008-2019), verified that of the 121 articles (in 34 selected academic journals), the majority of the 47 functional areas of CAS<sup>18</sup> seemed to apply to African student affairs. The nine prominent trends that African student affairs research reaffirmed were: (1) Learning Assistance Programmes; (2) Master's Level and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes; (3) Academic Advising; (4) Leadership, Education and Development; (5) Graduate and Professional Student Programmes and Services; (6) Housing and Residential Life Programmes; (7) College Unions/Governance; (8) International Student Programmes and Services, and (9) Internship Programmes and Assessment Services. Please note, although category 31 of the CAS standards was indicated as the second priority trend, the focus of the articles was predominantly on Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programmes and not master's level programmes.

Also, four local themes have been observed: professionalisation associations, legal/*human rights*, student and government, as well as citation styles which are typical of African HE's diverse and complex demands for professional development, legal and government solutions, and publication. These four themes signify limitations in the current body of literature about how the different functional areas in student affairs have been conceptualised to date.

#### **7.4.2 Concluding thoughts and justification of journal choice**

Finally, the researcher highlighted a salient issue (postgraduate programmes and services) that requires future exploration to extend and promote student affairs as a field of research and studies in the African context. Based on this the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* was identified as the most relevant journal for publication of this practice relevant article due to its focus on the Student Affairs domain.

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<sup>17</sup> See details in Article 3, why CAS (2019) has been chosen (because this historic decade is best represented by 40 years' American student affairs research and a professional basis).

## 7.5 CONCISE NOTES ON ARTICLE 4

Two main contributions of **Article 4** (with the title: **Towards developing the field of student affairs: Quality article-style postgraduate studies under Bronfenbrenner's systems microscope**) manifest in the identification of an approach that provided a double-edged sword. First, it provided a rationale for supporting article-style postgraduate students towards enriching the scholarly focus of the field of student affairs research and current functional areas. The second contribution is that this article-style postgraduate study supported the development of postgraduate attribute indicators (which need to be refined).

### 7.5.1 Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model as theoretical microscope

Through Bronfenbrenner's theoretical microscope this qualitative research inquiry exploration was dissected into three system level focus areas, namely:

**At a microsystem level:** How can article-style postgraduate student development be supported by supervisors that intentionally uphold student affairs functions? This qualitative research indicated that article-style postgraduate studies merely are envisioned for active research academics as empowerment and to create a publishing culture. Additionally, a revised mentorship supervisory relationship is required. These new, supplementary, and distinctive aspects thus are core aspects of student affairs support.

**At an exosystem level:** How do institutional policy decisions influence scholarly article style postgraduate studies? The holistic conceptualisation of article option postgraduate studies only indicated the number of completed articles required, whether these articles should be publishable/published (before or after graduation), and the co-authorship with the supervisor. This confirmed the transformation of these institutional policies into well-defined institutional and departmental guidelines as well as procedures. Subsequently, training and support and related professional development are recommended for these postgraduate students, supervisors, and for student affairs practitioners to provide relevant support.

**At a macrosystem level:** Which proposed postgraduate attributes represent a quality assessment of successful scholarly article-style postgraduate studies? Although clear guidelines for the assessment of article-style postgraduate studies have been identified as essential, more detail and

extensive research are necessitated to address institutional and departmental requirements, but also to address and confirm the comparability of proposed assessment criteria and postgraduate attribute indicators. This would not only enhance greater clarity on the part of the external examiners but would also facilitate the task of the examination division.

### **7.5.2 Qualitative case study inquiry in Article 4**

The in-depth exploration of article option postgraduate studies in this qualitative collective case study was conducted in two sections, namely, first I obtained the views of twenty South African higher education experts via qualitative questionnaires (see Appendix D). Secondly, I gained the perspectives of postgraduate supervisors at the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa, through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix F). Thus, the UFS served as a case study university for this research. It is important to note that after the qualitative questionnaires (see Appendix D) had been distributed to twenty South African higher education experts, it was discovered that a small number of supervisors with experience in article option postgraduate studies were employed in the UFS Faculty of Education. Thus, four interviews were conducted with the limited available, willing, and experienced supervisors, with experience of article option postgraduate studies (see faculty approval and semi-structured interview schedule in Appendices E-F). This approach permitted the researcher to transform the lived experiences of article option postgraduate studies by allowing for analysis, reflection, and interpretation (*cf.* McMillan & Shumacher 2014; McMillan & Schumacher 2010; Merriam 2009). Also, the purposeful sampling provided information-rich reflections that fostered the transformation of learning for positive change and flourishing in postgraduate studies. The criteria for selection included: Purposively selected article-style postgraduate champions (i.e. experts and supervisors) in South African higher education, as well as all supervisors (UFS Faculty of Education), with article-style postgraduate study experience at the case study university (see Dean's approval Appendix E).

As already stipulated (see 1.7) an inductive process of analysis using the seven steps of the NVivo-12 software, was followed to analyse the qualitative research data (*cf.* McMillan & Shumacher 2014). To provide explanations for the phenomenon “article-style postgraduate studies”

(McMillan & Shumacher 2014), the findings of this qualitative inquiry are discussed according to Bronfenbrenner's' micro-, exo- and macrosystem levels microscope.

### **7.5.3 Concluding perspectives on Article 4 and justification of journal choice**

Even though this in-depth research case study relates to some of the discourses on non-traditional article-format postgraduate studies, this theme requires more extensive research. For example, to expand the sampling considerations in different research settings and contexts, and through applying various methods. While this research indicated that article-style postgraduate studies encourage the possibility of an extension of this functional area in the field of student affairs, more specifications are needed for policy, assessment, and postgraduate attributes - including and with special reference to the dependence on technology and online education in the light of the current COVID 19 epidemic and ensuing lockdown compelling “higher education stakeholders ... to innovate and collaborate more effectively” (Schreiber & Ludeman in IASAS 2020:19). *Perspectives in Education* would be the appropriate journal choice here because Article 4 represents cross-field interests, but also will stimulate dialogue and intellectual exchange on university matters – in this case article-style postgraduate studies.

## **7.6 ARTICLE 5: REVOLVING AROUND THE WHOLE DOCTORAL JOURNEY**

In **Article 5** (with the title: **360<sup>0</sup> reflection circle covering a research journey within the fields of student affairs and higher education through Bronfenbrenner's Person, Process, Context and Time model lens**) this 360-degree research circle explores: How can the difference in the representativeness of postgraduate studies, as a student affairs research theme, contribute to the body of knowledge of postgraduate student learning and development in student affairs and why?

### **7.6.1 Overview of Article 5: Research journey and theoretical framework**

This qualitative research journey considered the student affairs and higher education fields that both play a fundamental role in accomplishing student learning and development. Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model provided an appropriate theoretical lens for the four intervention guideposts (see detail in Article 5). First, the inquiry funnelled from the contemporary four historic

movements of student affairs roles towards postgraduate development, and second, student affairs research world-wide were plotted. The third step was to map student affairs research in the African context, followed by, fourthly, an endeavour to establish how article option postgraduate studies can enhance the field of student affairs from a policy and quality perspective.

### **7.6.2 Conclusion and justification of the journal choice for Article 5**

Through this comprehensive historic, and masterful blend of student development lenses, the existence of four evolutionary student affairs roles became evident (see detail in Article 1). Through Bronfenbrenner's appropriate theoretical lens, it also has become evident that student affairs predominantly are functioning within the boundaries of undergraduate students, ensuing in a lack of recognition of postgraduate learning and development – especially article-style postgraduate studies in terms of policy and assessment issues. Concerning research themes, it was established that a difference exists between worldwide and African higher education contexts, which requires future research to establish why this is the case.

Thus, the *Journal for Student Affairs in Africa* provides the best platform for this double-reflection mirror article that supports postgraduate students opting for the article option study report (as a kind of student affairs function), but that also uses postgraduate studies to enhance student affairs as a field.

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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE (ORIGINAL)



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

10-Jul-2019

Dear Dr Holtzhausen, Sophia SM

#### **Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**Transforming higher education: Quality and policy perspectives on selected person and process related themes in student affairs**

Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2017/1371/1007**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Derek Litthauer**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

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[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



## APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE (FINAL)



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

22-Apr-2020

Dear Dr Holtzhausen, Sophia SM

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#### **Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**ANALYSING STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL LENS.**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2017/1371/1007**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Derek Litthauer**  
**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

**APPENDIX C: MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE FIVE ARTICLES**

<b>RESEARCH APPROACH</b>				
A qualitative approach (McMillan & Shumacher 2014; Robberts 2010) is to be applied, namely validating findings through triangulation of research information provided in literature, policy documents, published research and qualitative data reported by relevant stakeholder participants.				
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>				
Although articles two and three form the basis for the research analysis, the research design and methodology for each article were determined within its parameters.				
<b>Article 1</b>	<b>Article 2</b>	<b>Article 3</b>	<b>Article 4</b>	<b>Article 5</b>
Non-experimental, explorative design and methodology	This qualitative study followed a mixed analytical, instrumental (i.e. theme-based), collective case study (with a multi-focus) approach (except Article 4). Article 4 reports on a qualitative case study with an empirical component, as human behaviour cannot be divorced from its context. This permitted the researcher to transform the lived experience by allowing for analysis, reflection, and interpretation (McMillan & Shumacher 2014; Merriam 2009). In article 4 HE experts and PG supervisors with experience in article-style PG studies (i.e. Faculty of Education, UFS) served as participants.			

**MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:**

Article 1: To provide an overview (McMillan & Schumacher 2014), i.e. to describe systematically, factually, and accurately the themes/issues pertaining to the phenomenon under study (Robberts 2010).

Articles 2-5: The design and methodology are appropriate because case study refers to “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system”.

Articles 1-5 are summarised. For example:

Article 1: To provide a holistic, historical perspective on student affairs research until 2019. This will be written according to the guidelines of an international journal of student affairs.

Article 2, *Worldwide student affairs research during the past decade (2008-2019)*, prepared for an international student affairs journal, will contain an analysis of research on student affairs reported in articles published in peer-reviewed journals worldwide over the past decade (2008-2019). The analysis of 976 articles published in leading journals focusing on HE and training during the past decade demonstrates both the breadth of interest in student affairs research across the academy, and variations between disciplines in the themes researched, the methods and methodologies employed and the theoretical perspectives applied.

Article 3, prepared for an African student affairs journal, titled *African student affairs research during the past decade (2008-2019)* will report on an analysis of research on student affairs reported in articles in peer-reviewed journals in Africa over the past decade. An analysis of 121 articles published in 34 leading journals focusing on HE and training during the past decade demonstrates both the breadth of interest in student affairs research across the academy, and variations between disciplines in the themes researched, the methods and methodologies employed and the theoretical perspectives applied.

In Articles 2 and 3 I shall discuss the methodologies that informed the research conducted on the themes which I identified as featuring more prominently over the past decade (world-wide and in Africa). The published articles will be categorised as theoretical and/or empirical research. One of the themes that feature in these peer-reviewed journals is postgraduate supervision, which will be the focus of Article 4, the reason being that postgraduate supervision is the researcher's focus and interest area.

In Article 4 I shall analyse PG supervision as a theme in student affairs research, with special emphasis on policy issues and assessment criteria in article-style PG studies in the UFS Faculty of Education, as a case study. The focus on this theme is due to the current large demand of prospective PG students in the field of higher education studies, and the current problem pertaining to clear assessment of article-style PG studies. I focused on the need for an appropriate quality assurance tool for article-style PG assessment in the context of the Faculty of Education (UFS).

Article 5: This article will report on a process of comparing and converging the research findings emanating from the first four articles and will aim at providing a conducive perspective on selected person- and process-related themes in student affairs that are important in the context of transforming HE as field of study. Therefore, multiple methods of data generation were applied in this collective student affairs and HE case study.

## APPENDIX D: QUALITATIVE DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENT



### Article-style post-graduate studies



#### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Dear Participant

Thank you for your willingness and time to participate in this research, which forms part of my second PhD study (five articles). The title of my study is: **ANALYSING STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL LENS.**

In the first three articles I discussed a specific student-affairs research theme that is addressed limitedly, despite the demand for an increase in postgraduate studies and publications. Thus, the focus of this fourth article is on policy issues (Section B) and assessment criteria (Section B) of article-style postgraduate studies.

As is evident from the title, the guiding theoretical framework for this study is Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time model. I obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2017/1371/1007**).

Kind regards

Dr Somarie Holtzhausen

**SECTION A: MICROSYSTEMS LEVEL OF SUPERVISOR**

1. By participating in this research, you agree to be a study subject and confirm your written consent.

Yes

No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

In turn, I agree to adhere to all the ethical principles strictly, such as confidentiality, anonymity, etc. in reporting this research.

2. Your university is defined as a:

a) Comprehensive university

b) University of Technology

c) Other: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Your department is a:

a) Department of Education

b) Department of Higher Education

c) Other: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Postgraduate studies traditionally have been reported as single-authored dissertations/theses. Lately, however, dissertations/theses at some universities have taken additional formats (e.g. article-style, web-based products, etc.). What types of postgraduate study reports are accepted at your university/faculty/department? (Select all that apply)

a) Single-authored dissertation/thesis

b) Scholarly article-style dissertation/thesis

c) Web-based products

d) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. If you answered b in Question 4 above, in the space below please provide additional information to explain the parameters involved for the scholarly article-style format.

In the context of the University of the Free State's General Rules 2020

([https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/policy-institutional-documents/2020-general-rules-for-publication-28-november-2019---with-web-links-to-legislation-and-govt-gazettes.pdf?sfvrsn=dafe9d21\\_2](https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/policy-institutional-documents/2020-general-rules-for-publication-28-november-2019---with-web-links-to-legislation-and-govt-gazettes.pdf?sfvrsn=dafe9d21_2)), postgraduate studies are defined as follows:

In general, a master's degree should be commensurate with the characteristics of the discipline and field, as well as the purpose of the programme, and, in addition to a dissertation or treatise, may take the form of a technical report, one (1) or more creative performances or works, or a series of interrelated, publishable manuscripts/published articles, or other research-equivalent outputs.

A doctoral degree requires of a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels, culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis, that is, a study report. However, candidates may also present academic, interrelated publishable manuscripts/published articles and papers and, in certain fields, creative work such as artefacts, compositions, public performances and public exhibitions in partial fulfilment of the research requirements.

*How many publishable articles must be **completed** for a postgraduate degree at your institution?*

*Master's \_\_\_\_\_ PhD \_\_\_\_\_*

*How many articles need to have been **published** by the completion of a postgraduate degree at your institution?*

*Master's \_\_\_\_\_ PhD \_\_\_\_\_*

*Do these publishable and/or published articles need to have been peer-reviewed? (Motivate)*

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*How many of the publishable and/or published articles must be single-authored?*

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*Provide any additional related information (e.g. How many publishable articles are regarded as adequate by your institution? Is the publication of articles required before or after completion of the postgraduate degree?).*

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*What are the advantages of article-style postgraduate studies?*

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*What are the challenges of article-style postgraduate studies?*

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6. If you answered b in Question 4 above, please explicate the training that your university/faculty/department provides to postgraduate students to assist students in the completion of this non-traditional article-style postgraduate study report?
- 
- 

**SECTION B: SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENTAL ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING (I.E. BETWEEN STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR) TOWARDS A SCHOLARLY ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDY - UNIVERSITY/FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES (EXOSYSTEM LEVEL)**

7. If you selected answer choice b for Question 4 above, when did your university/department approved non-traditional postgraduate studies? (where applicable)

b) Scholarly article-style dissertation/thesis **Year:**

8. If you selected b in Question 4, what was the rationale for this decision?
- 
- 

9. In your opinion, how do your institutional/faculty/departmental policies conceptualise the article-style postgraduate studies?
- 
-

10. How does your university/faculty/department manage authorship of article-style postgraduate studies? (Motivate, e.g. in terms of conflict of interest)

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11. What additional training does your university/faculty/department provide to article-style postgraduate students (e.g. related to the publishing process)?

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12. Are there any adaptations with regard to the completion time of article-style postgraduate studies?

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**SECTION C: SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENTAL ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING (BETWEEN STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR) TOWARDS A SCHOLARLY ARTICLE-STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDY - UNIVERSITY/FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (MICRO LEVEL)**

13. What do you regard as the core assessment criteria for article-style postgraduate studies in terms of the following?

a) *Format* (although countries, universities and departments may differ): What do you regard as essential for:

Master's study?

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PhD study?

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b) *Length*: What kind of guidelines is stipulated?

---

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c) *Scope*: What kind of guidelines is stipulated?

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d) *Quality*: What kind of guidelines is stipulated?

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---

14. In your opinion, how do article-style postgraduate studies contribute towards achieving research goals and constructing new knowledge?

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15. What institutional/departmental support do you regard as essential for the completion of an article-style postgraduate study?

Support for supervisor:

Support for student:

THANK YOU!

## **APPENDIX E: LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM DEAN, FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

21 April 2020

Dear Prof. L. Jita

### **PERMISSION TO DISTRIBUTE A QUESTIONNAIRE ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH REPORTED BY MEANS OF ARTICLES IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

I am in the process of finalising my second Ph.D. study (five article-style report), with the title: **ANALYSING STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL LENS**. As is evident from the title, the guiding theoretical framework in this research is Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time model. I have obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State (Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2017/1371/1007**).

The first three articles are devoted to a particular student-affairs research theme that is limitedly addressed, despite the demand for an increase in postgraduate studies and publications. Thus, the focus of this fourth article is on the policy issues (Section B) and assessment criteria (Section B) of article-style postgraduate study reports, which seem like important aspects on which external examiners lately request more clarity. This research will be conducted in two phases, namely obtaining the views of higher education experts, and then following that up with the Faculty of Education's supervisors' perspectives. The research will be conducted under supervision of Dr W.P. Wahl (my promoter) and in co-operation with the Postgraduate Directorate (Prof. J. Nieuwenhuis and his team).

I shall appreciate it if you kindly will grant me permission to distribute a questionnaire on the above-mentioned topic among the Faculty of Education's supervisors.

Thank you for your attention.

Kind regards

**Dr S.M. Holtzhausen**  
(Researcher/student)

**Dr W.P. Wahl**  
(Promoter)

## **APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ARTICLE STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

Dear Participant

Thank you for your willingness and time to participate in this research, which forms part of my second PhD study (five articles). The title of my study is: **ANALYSING STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL LENS.**

In the first three articles I discussed a specific student-affairs research theme that is addressed limitedly, despite the demand for an increase in postgraduate studies and publications. Thus, the focus of this fourth article is on policy issues (Section B) and assessment criteria (Section B) of article-style postgraduate studies.

As is evident from the title, the guiding theoretical framework for this study is Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time model. I obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2017/1371/1007**).

Kind regards

Dr Somarie Holtzhausen

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISORS (WITH EXPERIENCE WITH ARTICLE-STYLE  
POSTGRADUATE STUDIES)**

**SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND WRITTEN CONSENT OF  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISOR**

1. By participating in this research, you agree to be a study subject and confirm your written consent.

Yes

No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

In turn, I agree to adhere to all the ethical principles strictly, such as confidentiality, anonymity, etc. in reporting this research.

2. Your university is defined as a:

a) Comprehensive university

b) University of Technology

c) Other: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Your department is a:

a) Department of Education

b) Department of Higher Education

c) Other: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Postgraduate studies traditionally have been reported as single-authored dissertations/theses. Lately, however, dissertations/theses at some universities have taken additional formats (e.g. article style, web-based products, etc.). What types of postgraduate study reports are accepted at your university/faculty/department? (Select all that apply)

a) Single-authored dissertation/thesis

b) Scholarly article style dissertation/thesis

c) Web-based products

d) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: MICROSYSTEM LEVEL SIGNIFIES THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENROLLED POSTGRADUATE STUDENT FOR AN ARTICLE STYLE STUDY**

5. Describe the things you enjoy when supervising article style postgraduate studies. This is a conversational start in order to put the interviewees at their ease.

[PROBES: What are the advantages of article style postgraduate studies? What is important when supervising article style postgraduate studies? Is there anything challenging about article style postgraduate studies?]

6. In your opinion, what was the rationale for your university/faculty to approve article-style postgraduate studies?

[PROBES: Who will benefit from article-style postgraduate studies? Why? (Motivate) Are there any postgraduate students for whom article style postgraduate studies would not be suitable?]

7. Please explain the training that your university/faculty provides to article style postgraduate studies.

[PROBES: What kind of training do you as supervisor require for article-style postgraduate studies? What kind of online resources have you found that help you with your supervision? What kind of training do your article postgraduate students require to assist students in the completion of this article-style postgraduate study? Can you give us any examples of when you've asked your colleagues for help on your article style postgraduate supervision?]

**SECTION C: SUPPORTING SCHOLARLY ARTICLE STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDY - UNIVERSITY/FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES (EXOSYSTEM LEVEL)**

8. In what manner do institutional policy decisions influence scholarly article style postgraduate studies?

[PROBES: Please explain the parameters involved for the scholarly article-style format. How many publishable articles must be completed for a postgraduate degree at your institution? How many articles need to have been published by the completion of a postgraduate degree at your

institution? Do these publishable and/or published articles need to have been peer-reviewed? (motivate). How many of the publishable and/or published articles must be single-authored? How does your university/faculty manage authorship of article style postgraduate studies? (Motivate, e.g. in terms of conflict of interest).]

9. In your opinion, how do your institutional/faculty policies conceptualise the article-style postgraduate studies?

[**PROBES:** What is the distinction between master's and doctoral article-style postgraduate studies? Which aspects are covered in the institutional definition of article-style postgraduate studies? Which aspects are vague in the institutional definition of article style postgraduate studies?]

#### **SECTION D: QUALITY ASSESSMENT FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOLARLY ARTICLE STYLE POSTGRADUATE STUDIES (MACROSYSTEM LEVEL)**

10. What do you regard as the core assessment criteria for article style postgraduate studies?

[**PROBES:** What format considerations do you regard as essential for article style postgraduate studies? Do there exist any faculty guidelines to determine the length of article-style postgraduate studies? What kind of guidelines is stipulated for the scope of article-style postgraduate studies? What kind of faculty guidelines is stipulated to ensure quality article-style postgraduate studies?]

11. In your opinion, how do article style postgraduate studies contribute towards achieving research goals and constructing new knowledge?

[**PROBES:** How do you ensure the significant contribution in article style postgraduate studies? What postgraduate attributes do you regard as essential for the meeting the requirements of article-style postgraduate studies?]

Thank you!