FIRST-TIME ENTRY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH FRONT-LINE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES IN A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU NATAL

By **MTHOKOZISI LUTHULI**

STUDENT NUMBER 21607585

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management Degree

In the

Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at the Durban University of Technology. Durban, South Africa

29 February 2024

Supervisor: Dr S.P. Moyane

Co-Supervisor: Mr N. Nkomo

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Mthokozisi Luthuli, Student Number 21607585, declare that this thesis is my work and all other information used from various sources has been acknowledged accordingly.

29 February 2024

~~Student, Mthokozisi Luthuli~~

Date

APPROVAL FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

29 February 2024

Supervisors, Dr S.P. Moyane

Date

Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Information Science

29 February 2024

Co-Supervisors, Mr N. Nkomo

Date

Master of Arts in Library and Information Science

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to one special woman in my life (*Queen Patience Luthuli*).

This heartfelt dedication is a tribute to the extraordinary woman who has played an irreplaceable role in shaping my life and nurturing my existence. Words cannot express the depth of my love and gratitude for her. From the moment I took my first breath, she embraced me with love that knows no bounds. Her tender care, selfless devotion, and unwavering support have been the cornerstone of my journey. She has been my guiding light through every triumph and setback, offering a beacon of strength and encouragement. She has witnessed my growth, celebrated my achievements, and provided unwavering support during my darkest moments. Her love has been a constant source of inspiration, empowering me to embrace life's challenges with courage and grace. Her love has shaped my character, her guidance has shaped my path, and her unwavering belief in me has shaped my destiny. With this piece of work, I honour you, my precious Queen, for the extraordinary woman you are.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the divine entity, God, the eternal reigning Lord, who deemed me worthy and bestowed unto me the power and endurance to accomplish this study. Without vaunting, I can confidently affirm that it was by the grace of God that I have persevered to the completion of this study.

Moreover, I beseech the just Lord to open the gates of heaven and bestow blessings upon the following esteemed individuals, whom I consider them as being giants in their respective fields, as they provided their unwavering support, guidance, supervision, and wisdom:

- Dr S.P. Moyane and Mr N. Nkomo, whose patience, guidance, supervision, and wisdom have left an indelible mark on this study. Their invaluable contributions shall forever be treasured.
- To all the first-year students of ICM 2022 who willingly participated in this study, your involvement has played a vital role in its execution and ultimate success.
- To the DUT Grants Management Division for the Durban University of Technology Scholarship Scheme, your financial assistance towards my studies is much appreciated.
- To my colleagues in the FAI Engagement Lab (2023), the countless hours we spent together in vigil will be eternally etched in my memory as a testament to our enduring friendship.
- To the previous scholars who paved the way in this specific research domain, your eloquent writings have been indispensable in the completion of this study.
- Finally, to my family, The Gospel Cart (*Inqola*), you inspired me, kept me motivated, and disciplined, and gave me a reason to keep on moving.

… I truly believe I stood on the shoulders of giants …

ABSTRACT

The service of public servants has been a matter of concern over the years and tends to predominately manifest itself through frontline administrative staff, including in institutions of higher learning. Frontline administrative staff play a crucial role in providing efficient services to stakeholders, particularly first-time entry students (FTENs), who are still acclimatising to the tertiary environment, however, literature has highlighted inefficacies in the service provided. In this regard that this study aimed to examine the experiences of FTENs with front-line administrative services at a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. The objectives of the study were to determine the perceptions of FTENs in frontline administrative services, to assess, using the Batho Pele principles, the degree to which frontline administrative services influence the service experience of FTENs, and to determine the implications of frontline administrative services on the service experience of FTENs.

The Batho Pele Principles was adopted as a guiding conceptual framework, conventionally governing the interaction between public servants and the public. A post-positivist paradigm afforded the employment of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a survey research design. The questionnaire with Likert scale and both openended andclose ended questions was used through convenience sampling to collect data from a sample of 160 FTENs at Durban University of Technology in the Business and Information Management (BIM) programme and received a response rate of 67%. Thematic content analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyze data.

The findings of the study indicated that the students' perceptions of the front-line administrative service were mostly positive, with an insignificant minority indicating being unsatisfied. Regarding how the institution's adhesion to the Batho Pele Principles influenced the service experience, almost the entire group of participants stated that the institution has been adhering to the Batho Pele Principles with a very small faction of the participants stating an inverse experience. The study identified some areas of improvement in the institution's adherence to the Batho Pele principles. Regarding the implications of front-line administrative services, most of the students expressed positive sentiments about the service, indicating that they would highly recommend the institution to other prospective students. However, a minority of

students expressed negative experiences, making them more likely to be rejected and less keen to recommend the institution to other prospective students. emphasized areas of improvement such as responsiveness, friendliness, and overall service quality. Additionally, the study provides several recommendations to improve the service provided by frontline administrative staff in the institution. These include investing in staff training, monitoring, and increasing adherence to service delivery principles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIM: Business and Information Management

DUT: Durban University of Technology

FTENs: First Time Entry students

HEIs: Higher Education Institutions

ICM: Information and Corporate Management

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the introduction and background of the study that examines the experiences of first-time admission students with frontline administrative service in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. It starts by providing conceptual and contextual background. The research problem investigated was then stated. The purpose, research objectives and research questions of the study were then formulated. The rationale, scope and limitations were also provided. A brief review of the literature and the research methodology followed. Finally, the outline of the study and summary of the chapter are presented.

1.2 Conceptual background to the service of front-line administrative staff

In attempting to conceptualise the service rendered by frontline administrative staff in a public institution of higher learning, one would first need to look at the public service delivery. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the South African government has strived to render a friendly public service. Brauns and Mdlazi (2015) state that the quality of the service provided by frontline administrative staff is influenced by the intellectual and cultural traditions of organisations that govern what is right, fair, just, or good in the business context and how servants conduct themselves. Similarly, Msiza and Mthembu (2020) opine that public servants play and contribute significantly to the efficacy and inefficacy of service delivery. For that reason, building a professional, capable, ethical and developmental government has been a focal point for many researchers (Masiya, Davids, and Mangai 2019; Okinyi and Muturi 2016; Sewdass 2009).

To improve service delivery, the South African Department of Public Service and Administration gazetted the Batho Pele principles (Joel 2022). Batho Pele is translated from the Sesotho term and it means people first. It was created to inspire public servants to be more service-orientated and strive for exceptional service delivery (Joel 2022; Choeu 2019). Batho Pele is an initiative to inspire public employees to care about helping people and to look for methods to improve quality of service delivery (Noor *et al*. 2017). Furthermore, this initiative requires service recipients to become involved in holding public servants accountable (Joel 2022). The Batho-Pele principles have been

subjected to many revitalisations by both governmental and non-governmental institutions to keep them effective (Barbier and Tengeh 2022). This continuous review of the principles is the government's effort to build a capable, professional, ethical, and developmental state. However, unsatisfactory service delivery in the public sector resulting from poor work ethics has persisted for decades (Barbier and Tengeh 2022; Choeu 2019; Mosadi 2004).

The principles were gazetted to curb the inefficacy of service delivery rendered by public servants, inversely, the nation still has significant problems with public service delivery (Mamokhere, Musitha and Netshidzivhani 2021). This poor service delivery is asserted by protests, riots, vandalization of public infrastructures, looting, and police brutality (Gxothiwe 2022; Okinyu and Muturi 2016; Campbell 2014; Managa 2012). For example, the burning of the Durban Metro buses during service delivery protests by the informal settlers of Reservoir Hills (Maphumulo and Bhengu 2019).

In the Republic of South Africa, the public sector serves a population that is without alternatives (Maphumulo and Bhengu 2019). The state sector is the portion of the economy made up of both state services and state enterprises, it is commonly referred to as the public sector (Willems 2020). According to the Pitzer and Dupuis (2006) the public sector consists of the general government, which comprises the national government, provincial government and local government, and state-owned enterprises or public corporations. Public universities are public entities which fall under the social service cluster (South African Government Website 2022). Unlike private universities, public universities are partly self-governed and partly governed by the state (Sok, Un and Bunry 2019). These public universities report to the office of the Minister of Higher Education and Training and they are obligated to uphold the public service delivery standards set out by the state Department of Higher Education and Training (Mosadi 2004).

Public servants are also known as civil servants, persons employed in the public sector by the government, and they are hired on professional merit to serve the public (Cooke, Brant and Woods 2019; Trong-Tuan 2017). Public servants include a wide range of employees, including but not limited to teachers, nurses, police officers, clerks, and frontline administrative staff which this study focussed on (Willems 2020). According to Kirchner *et al*. (2012), frontline administrative staff refer to subordinate whose responsibilities are to help managers, groups, departments, or the organization, particularly by managing administrative duties such as filing, data entry, scheduling appointments,

and correspondence. The front-line administrative staff consists of office secretaries, office administrative staff and office clerks (Noor *et al.* 2017). They are the first line of service provision, and they deal directly with the service recipients (Stock, Jong and Zacharias 2017). Therefore, frontline administrative staff must be helpful, and personable, pay attention to details and have excellent customer service skills.

South African literature on public service delivery states that the rendered service is not satisfactory (Naidoo and Ramphal 2019; Gxothiwe 2022). In the same vein, public institutions of higher learning are also not immune to the inefficacy of service delivery. The annual nationwide student protests reported by the DHET Director-General (Sishi 2021), substantiate the student's grievances with service delivery at public universities. Sishi (2021) reports also affirm that public universities are not immune to unsatisfactory service among front-line administrative staff. Baloyi (2008) is of the notion that front-line administrative staff renders inefficacy service which substantiated student protests in public universities. Choeu (2019) also supports the view that public universities are fraught with challenges related to poor administration services. Consequently, public universities are susceptible to providing poor service delivery to students.

Public institutions of higher learning require front-line administrative staff that consistently adhere to high service standards to create a superior and pleasurable experience for service recipients (Gxothiwe 2022; Naidoo and Ramphal 2019; Tuurnas 2015). The significant role played by front-line administrative staff in public institutions of higher learning urges and signifies this study. This study focused on front-line administrative staff in public universities because they are the face and front of an office or department in an institution of higher learning. Tuurnas (2015) opines that front-line staff are critical for the institution's reputation and productivity. Researchers in different fields concur that ensuring a positive service experience gives the organisation/company/business a competitive advantage (Noor *et al*. 2017; Kabadayi *et al*. 2019; Glette *et al*. 2018). Therefore, the need to focus on frontline administrative staff in a public institution of higher learning is elevated to improve the service experience of the service recipients.

1.3 Contextual background of the study

The contextual background of the study was public Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in South Africa. HEIs refer to organisations dedicated to providing post-secondary education and academic

research degrees and the Republic of South Africa (RSA) has 26 public HEIs (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017). Like any organisation, HIEs have different stakeholders which include but are not limited to investors, the ministry, their primary customers which are students, cooperation partners, and most importantly the workforce (Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018).

The workforce in an institution of higher learning is a dynamic and diverse group of individuals who collectively contribute to the institution's mission of providing quality education, research, and service (Mayorga 2019; Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018). This workforce encompasses a wide range of roles and responsibilities, which can be clustered into two categories, academic staff, and support staff (Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018). Academic staff are responsible for delivering quality education, developing curricula, and advancing knowledge through research and publications (Szromek and Wolniak 2020; Ahmad and Jameel 2018). On the other hand, administrative staff provide vital support, and they act as instruments in delivering essential services that facilitate the day-to-day operations of the institution (Langrafe and Barakat 2020; Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018). The front-line administrative staff at an HEI serves as the face and backbone of the administrative operations (Langrafe and Barakat 2020; Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018). They form an integral part of the institution's administrative structure and ensure the effective functioning of various administrative processes.

Front-line administrative staff are often the first point of contact for visitors, students, and faculty members. They help students with various matters, such as admissions, enrolment, registration, financial aid, and academic policies (Langrafe and Barakat 2020). Furthermore, front-line staff perform various administrative tasks, such as managing office supplies, maintaining records, scheduling appointments and meetings, coordinating calendars, and handling correspondence (Zainun, Johari, and Adnan 2018). Their responsibilities extend beyond routine administrative tasks and encompass providing support, assistance, and guidance to students, faculty, and visitors (Carvalho and Videira 2019). Most significantly, front-line administrative services at HEIs have a significant impact on teaching and learning, for example, if the department of student housing does not timeously finish with student residence allocation, there may be delays with classes (Mikheev, Serkina, and Vasyaev 2021; Carvalho and Videira 2019). Similarly, the student admissions, the faculty office, and the finance department jointly administer most of the student registration processes. Inefficacy in these departments can lead to confusion and disruption of academic

activities, affecting students and the academic staff (Mikheev, Serkina, and Vasyaev 2021; Zainun, Johari, and Adnan 2018).

For this study, the examination of FTENs' experiences with front-line administrative services was conducted at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). DUT is located in Kwa-Zulu Natal province, with 5 campuses in the city of Durban (Steve Biko; ML Sultan; City Campus; Brickfield and Ritson campus) and 2 in Pietermaritzburg (DUT MIS data 2022; Mhlanga 2021). The overall student headcount stood at 33 000 with 3 500 support and academic staff as of 2023 (DUT MIS data 2022). The university consists of six faculties spread over its campuses, namely Auditing and Taxation; Finance and Information Management (Midlands); Financial Accounting; Information and Corporate Management; Information Systems; Information Technology and Management Accounting (DUT MIS data 2022). The study focused only on one faculty at the Durban campus due to cost and logistical constraints.

1.4   Problem statement

Over the years, service delivery in public institutions has received considerable interest from the research community and governments. Apart from the fact that there are measures in place to improve the efficacy of service rendered by public institutions and the significance revitalisations of these measures/mechanisms, poor service has persisted to date (Gxothiwe 2022; Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019; Green 2014; Green and Adekanmbi 2014; Green and Ramroop 2014; Green and Hardman 2014; Zvavahera 2013). Public institutions of higher learning are not immune from the inefficacy of service delivery because they also belong to the social service cluster in the public sector (Gxothiwe 2022; Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019; Green 2014).

The persistent gap between implemented measures and the actual efficacy of front-line administrative services in public institutions of higher learning remains a multifaceted challenge with significant implications. Despite the considerable attention and efforts directed toward improving service delivery, several factors contribute to the enduring disparity highlighted by scholars such as Gxothiwe (2022), Masiya, Davids, and Mangai (2019), and Green (2014). In light of these challenges, addressing the persistent gap in front-line administrative services requires a holistic approach. This approach should involve streamlining bureaucratic processes, securing adequate resources, actively engaging stakeholders, and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation

mechanisms. By addressing these underlying issues, public institutions of higher learning can strive towards delivering efficient and high-quality administrative services that meet the diverse needs of their constituents.

The inefficacy of the front-line administrative service has an inevitable impact on the core fundamental business of the HEI which is teaching and learning (Langrafe and Barakat 2020; Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018). The academic staff which is entitled to the responsibility of ensuring quality teaching and learning, ends up spending more time doing administrative tasks jeopardizing teaching and learning (Saurombe *et al.* 2017). The inefficacies in the frontline administrative services impact all HEIs' stakeholders (Sulasula and Moreno 2023). Choeu (2019) indicate that the front-line staff need to be equipped with good communication skills, customer care skills, and compassion through training programs. FTENs are more susceptible to bear the brunt, as they are still acclimating to the new environment (Owusu-Agyeman 2021; Green 2014). This inefficacy is further justified by Choeu (2019), who found that . . and Gxothiwe (2022) who also affirm that a need to examine front-line administrative services in HEIs. This inefficacy is underscored by Choeu's (2019) findings, which revealed the detrimental impact of subpar administrative support on the academic and personal well-being of incoming students. Moreover, Gxothiwe (2022) similarly affirms the significance of addressing the challenges faced by FTENs in navigating administrative processes, emphasizing the critical role of efficient frontline services in facilitating their successful integration into the academic community.

Therefore, this study sought to examine frontline administrative services within HEI, with a central focus on understanding FTENs' perceptions and experiences on the frontline services when they are adjusting to the university environment. Through this examination, the study seeks to contribute insights that can inform targeted interventions by management to enhance the overall FTENs' experiences with frontline administrative services.

1.5   Aim of the study

This study examined the FTENs' experiences with frontline administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal.

1.6   Objectives of the study

To achieve the above aim, the following objectives were addressed:

- To determine the perceptions of FTENs on the frontline administrative services.
- To assess using the Batho Pele Principles the degree to which front-line administrative services influence the service experience of FTENs.
- To ascertain the implications of front-line administrative services on the service experience of FTENs.

1.7   Research questions

To address the objectives of this study the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the perceptions of FTENs on the frontline administrative services?
- How does frontline administrative services measure, when assessed using the Batho Pele Principles?
- What are the implications of front-line administrative services on service experience of FTENs?

1.8   Rationale of the study

Conducting a study aiming to examine FTENs' experiences with front-line administrative service in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal has potential significance to several stakeholders (Langrafe and Barakat 2020; Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko 2018). These stakeholders include but are not limited to the government, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), researchers who are focusing on this area, management in the selected university, staff members in the selected institution and students of all levels in the desired university. This study's findings are significant to the chosen university's stakeholders in the following ways (Choeu 2019; Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019; Green 2014; Green and Adekanmbi 2014; Green and Ramroop 2014).

- It may assist the relevant senior management in developing relevant strategies for improving the service rendered by frontline administrative staff.
- It may help improve students' service experience at the selected university of technology.
- Improving the service delivery may help to curb the high number of student protests, failure rates and student turnover or attrition.

Most importantly, this study aims to add to the body of knowledge. The study also intended contribute to the body of knowledge, by narrowing the knowledge gap within the realm of public administration concerning the FTENs' service experience with the service of front-line administrative staff. The findings, theories and recommendations may also be employed in future studies.

1.9 Scope and limitations

Poor service delivery is a problem for both the public and private sectors, but it is more pronounced in the public sector (Gxothiwe 2022; Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019; Green 2014). Even though the issue is prevalent in the entire public sector, the study focused on a selected public institution of higher learning. Although the public servants in the selected institution of higher learning serve a wide range of stakeholders, this study focused on students as they are the primary customers of public institutions of higher learning. Although the issues of front-line administrative services are affecting the entire student population and other stakeholders in public universities, this study was limited to who are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of inadequate front-line service delivery (Choeu 2019; Green and Ramroop 2014). Focusing on this group of students limited the ability to generalize the study's findings to other students in other levels of study. However, it is anticipated that future research will be conducted to focus on other levels of study. In public HEIs' with various campuses, staff members easily adopt negative work cultures, than adhearance to good service standards among (Stevensons 2018). Similarly in DUT, the issues surrounding frontline administrative services are not unique to the Durban University of Technology (DUT) Durban campus, however, the other campuses situated in Pietermaritzburg and other universities were excluded due to logistical constraints regarding cost and time.

1.10 Literature review and theoretical framework

A detailed literature review is presented in chapter two (Literature Review) in the following themes: clarification of the key terminologies, and the perceptions of frontline administrative services in the public service. The chapter narrows to focus on the frameworks for service delivery and the theoretical framework for first-time entry students' experiences with front-line administrative services the implications of front-line administrative staff's service on the public service experience, and related studies and salient issues were discussed. The sources of the examined literature consisted

of scientific research literature such as journal articles, theses and dissertations, and official government reports. Following is a synopsis of the literature discussed in chapter two:

Client perceptions of frontline administrative staff in public service are shaped by several factors, such as professionalism, competence, effective communication, empathy, timeliness, and personalization. These factors significantly impact client satisfaction, trust, and the ability of public service agencies to meet diverse needs (Walle 2017; Kearney *et al*. 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017; Hakanen, Gummesson and Jaakkola 2012). Clients highly value staff members who demonstrate professionalism, competence, and efficient task handling, leading to increased trust and reliability (Pedersen, Stritch and Thuesen 2018; Kearney *et al*. 2017; Walle 2017; Wang *et al*. 2017). Moreover, clients appreciate active listening, clear explanations, and respectful interactions, which enhance overall satisfaction (Walle 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017; Pedersen, Stritch and Thuesen 2018; Kearney *et al*. 2017). These findings highlight the integral nature of effective communication in fostering positive client experiences. The display of empathy and emotional support fosters trust and creates the perception of a caring organization (Masia 2022; Kearney *et al*. 2017; Walle 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017; Hakanen, Gummesson and Jaakkola 2012). These emotional dimensions play a crucial role in shaping the overall client experience within public service agencies. Timeliness and efficiency in service delivery, including minimal wait times and prompt responses, positively impact client perceptions, while delays lead to frustration and decreased satisfaction (Ali *et al*. 2021; YuSheng and Ibrahim 2019; Masia 2022; Walle 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017; Matiti 2014). Additionally, personalized service that addresses unique circumstances enhances the organization's satisfaction, confidence and trust (Walle 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017; Matiti 2014; Masia 2022; Ali *et al*. 2021; YuSheng and Ibrahim 2019). Understanding and catering to individual client needs contribute significantly to positive perceptions.

The Batho Pele Principles framework was utilized to guide the assessment of FTENs' experiences with frontline administrative services as similar studies conducted by Gxothiwe (2022) and Choeu (2019) also adopted this frame work. It is a government initiative in South Africa that was officially promulgated by President Nelson Mandela on November 9, 1997 (Mohatle and Phori 2022; Matiti 2014; Mosadi 2004). This initiative was developed to transform and improve public service delivery in the country by emphasizing principles of efficiency, accountability, transparency, and a strong focus on meeting the needs and expectations of the citizens (Gxothiwe 2022). This framework

comprises eight principles, including customer consultation, service standards, accessibility, courtesy, information provision, transparency, error management, and value for money (Joel 2022; Gxothiwe 2022; Mohatle and Phori 2022). These principles govern the interaction between public servants and the public, promoting successful service delivery and internal responsibility (Mosadi 2004; Joel 2022). The Batho Pele program underscores the importance of respecting stakeholders and delivering high-quality, long-term service (Gxothiwe 2022; Noor *et al*. 2017). In this South African study, the preference for the Batho Pele framework over alternatives such as SERVQUAL stems from its compatibility with the South African context and the semi-autonomous nature of the university of technology under investigation (Gxothiwe 2022; Noor *et al*. 2017).

Apart from the Batho-Pele principles, other commonly utilized frameworks for relevant studies include SEVQUAL (Midor and Kuera 2018; Ravichandran *et al*. 2010; Van-Dyke, Prybutok, and Kappelman 1999), ISO 9001 (International Organisation for Standardization) (Sanchez-Lizarraga *et al*. 2020; Shaikh and Sohu 2020; Spansel and Ahmed 2020) and Six Sigma (Sisman and Orel 2020; Pereira *et al*. 2019; Raval, Kant and Shankar 2018). These frameworks are internationally used to benchmark service delivery mostly in private corporations, which renders them unfavourable for public service setups. Furthermore, the unsuitable of these frameworks is rooted in their potential mismatch with the contextual, qualitative, and socially oriented nature of public services. Public institutions often require frameworks that are more adaptive, inclusive, and capable of addressing the broader goals of public service delivery.

1.11 Research Methodology

A detailed presentation of the research methodology adopted by this study is presented in chapter three titled Research Methodology. The adopted methodologies are presented as follows; post-positivist research paradigm was employed to incorporate for the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. A survey research design was employed, and the chosen population were FTENs enrolled on the Business and Information Management (BIM) programme at DUT. The questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The phenomenon was observed and analysed using statistical tools such as percentages, tables, frequency counts, and graphs, the descriptive part was observed and analysed narratively.

1.12 Structure of the dissertation

The sequential order of the study was structured as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter introduced the study, and the conceptual and contextual backgrounds were provided. The research problem, objectives, rationale, and limitations of the study are discussed. An overview of the literature review is presented, and a brief description of the methodology used is provided.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Chapter two provides a thorough overview of the recent literature on first-time entry students' experiences with frontline administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. The chapter further provides a detailed theoretical framework adopted by the study.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodology employed for the study. The methods utilized in conducting the research are discussed and justified, taking into consideration the research objectives. The chapter addresses the research method, population, sampling approach, and data collection instrument concerning the aims and objectives of the study. Furthermore, the ethical considerations underlying the research are also discussed.

Chapter Four: Analysis and discussion of findings

A comprehensive range of findings is presented in this chapter, and these findings are interpreted and discussed concerning the study's aims and objectives. The implications and significance of the results are examined, considering the secondary data that support the analysis.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusion, and recommendations

The last chapter provides a complete overview of the study's summary and conclusion. It discusses in-depth the recommendations for practises that may help alleviate first-time entry students' experiences with frontline administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future studies.

1.13   Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, the study's conceptual and contextual backgrounds were introduced. It provided an in-depth exploration of the research problem, elucidated the study's aims, objectives, and research questions, and justified the significance of the research. The chapter also discussed its limitations, outlined the indicative literature review, and presented the methodology employed. Finally, it offered an overview of the upcoming chapters, establishing the groundwork for the dissertation. Chapter two will delve into a comprehensive literature review focused on FTENs' experiences with administrative services.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduced and provided the background of the study. This chapter reviews the literature to better understand the FTENs' experiences with frontline administrative services in the university environment. The chapter begins by conceptualizing the key terminologies, followed by a presentation of the perceptions of frontline administrative services in public service, and then the framework for service delivery. Following was the theoretical framework for FTENs' experiences with front-line administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. The focus shifted to the implications of front-line administrative staff's service on the public service experience. Furthermore, the related studies and salient issues are discussed, and the chapter concluded with a summary.

2.2 Clarification of the key terminologies

For a better understanding of the phenomenon studied, the study's key terminologies are defined. Key terminologies are first-time entry students; service delivery; public service, public servants, and front-line administrative staff are discussed in this section. Scholarly sources were used to clarify these terms.

First-time entry students

The South African Department of Higher Education and Training refers to FTENs, returning students and postgraduate students (PGs) as candidates who are enrolled in a program leading to a degree at an institution of higher learning (Phillips and Johnson 2022). Students are generally separated into two categories, postgraduate which refers to a candidate who has obtained their first degree and is enrolled for either a postgraduate diploma/certificate/honours, master's degree, or doctoral degree (IseOlorunkanmi *et al*. 2021; Mavundla 2021). Undergraduate students refers to the candidates enrolled for their first degrees and are generally divided into three categories, finalist, returning and first-time entry (Mavundla 2021; Phillips and Johnson 2022). Students enrolling for a university degree for the first time are regarded as FTENs and students who have previously attended a

university or earned a university degree are not FTENs, even if they are beginning the first year of a new program (Chan (2016; Public Service Commission. 2007).

Frontline administrative staff

Front-line administrative staff refers to subordinates whose responsibilities are to help managers, groups, departments, or the organisation, particularly by managing administrative duties such as filing, data capturing, scheduling appointments, and correspondence (Hunter 2018; Küskü 2003). Frontline administrative staff's tasks include mediating between clients and the organisation. Therefore, front-line administrative staff are servants who deal directly with the customer/stakeholder and are the first servants a customer encounters for service provision (Baumann, Timming, and Gollan 2016; Cheema *et al*. 2015). Similarly, Stock, Jong, and Zacharias (2017) state that front-line administrative staff are the first line in service provision, and they deal directly with the service recipients. Erasmus (2020) adds that they consist of office secretaries, administrative staff, and clerks. Frontline administrative staff must be helpful and personable, pay attention to details, and have excellent customer service skills because they play a vital role in presenting and promoting a positive corporate image (Stock, Jong, and Zacharias 2017; Cheema *et al*. 2015). Front-line administrative staff are denoted as individuals who perform a variety of operations and services that are typically crucial for the uninterrupted continuation of essential functions. (Masuku and Jili 2019; Zinatsa *et al*. 2018).

Public servants

Public servants are also known as civil servants, persons employed in the public sector by the government, and hired on professional merit to serve the public (Masuku and Jili 2019; Frank 2015). Public servants comprise a wide range of employees, including but not limited to teachers, nurses, police officers, clerks, and administrators in public institutions (Willems 2020). In a university context, public servants refer to support employees/frontline staff who are the face and front of an office or department and interact directly with the students (Owusu-Agyemang 2021). One of the most essential university resources is its professional and support staff, who possess much of the systemic knowledge and intellectual capital needed to ensure the university's operation (Bossu, Brown and Warren 2019). In the context of this study, service delivery refers to the provision of a

broad spectrum of services and support aimed at facilitating an effective and enriching educational experience for students, faculty, and staff. These services go beyond traditional teaching and learning activities and encompass various administrative, logistical, and support functions.

Service delivery

There are many different definitions of service delivery from different scholarly sources. In a South African context where this study was conducted, service delivery is the distribution of essential resources, including water, electricity, sanitation facilities, land, and housing (Harris 2020; Choeu 2019; Campbell 2014). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 outlines that citizens are entitled to services from the government, the White Paper 3 of the Batho Pele further states that institutions and organisations under the public sector are obliged to render services where it is due (Mosadi 2004). Campbell (2014) believes that governments are unreliable when it comes to service delivery and maintenance of services and resources, which seriously disrupt and endanger the entire population. As a result, poor service delivery has led the public to resort to violent strikes.

2.3 An overview of trends in frontline service delivery in the puclic sector

In recent years, frontline service delivery in the public sector has undergone significant transformation driven by various trends. One prominent trend is the digital transformation of services, where public sector organizations are increasingly leveraging digital technologies to enhance accessibility and efficiency. This includes the adoption of online platforms for service provision, digital self-service options, and the automation of routine tasks. For example, government agencies are implementing chatbots and virtual assistants to provide instant support to citizens, reducing the need for manual intervention and improving service delivery speed.

Concurrently, there is a growing focus on improving the customer experience in frontline service delivery. Public sector organizations are investing in training frontline staff to enhance communication skills, empathy, and responsiveness to better meet the diverse needs of citizens. This emphasis on customer experience is essential for building trust and satisfaction among citizens, ultimately enhancing their overall perception of government services.

As educational landscapes evolve, so do the methods and trends in which frontline staff engage with students. In this section, we delve into the latest trends in service delivery by frontline staff within HEIs, exploring innovative approaches, technological advancements, and evolving strategies aimed at optimizing student support and satisfaction. From personalized assistance to digital solutions, the contemporary landscape of service delivery in HEIs is undergoing significant transformation, reflecting a commitment to adaptability, accessibility, and excellence in student services. HEIs are increasingly investing in digital technologies to improve service delivery (Black 2021; Perveen and Rehman 2020). This includes the adoption of Learning Management Systems, Customer Relationship Management systems, and other digital platforms that help staff manage interactions with students more efficiently. Furthermore, with regards to personalisation literature state that there is growing expectation for personalized communication and services from students (Hunt and Chalmers 2020). Frontline staff are using data analytics to understand individual students' needs and preferences to tailor their services accordingly. There is also a growing emphasis on prioritizing student needs and preferences in service delivery models. Frontline staff are actively involving students in the co-creation of support services, seeking feedback, and implementing changes based on student input (Hunt and Chalmers 2020). This student-centred approach ensures that services are relevant, responsive, and reflective of evolving student expectations.

2.4 Perceptions of frontline administrative services in the public service

Client perceptions regarding the front-line administrative service in the public service are complex and influenced by various factors. Factors that emerge from the literature include, but are not limited to professionalism, competence, effective communication, empathy, timeliness, and personalization (Walle 2017; Wang, Luo, and Tai 2017). Understanding and addressing these factors can help public service agencies improve client satisfaction, build trust, and provide services that meet the client's diverse needs and expectations of the client (Kearney *et al.* 2017; Hakanen, Gummesson, and Jaakkola 2012).

Numerous studies have investigated the impact of frontline administrative staff's professionalism and competence on client perceptions (Pedersen, Stritch, and Thuesen 2018; Kearney *et al*. 2017; Walle 2017; Wang, Luo, and Tai 2017). These studies outline that clients highly value staff members who exhibit strong professionalism, encompassing deep knowledge about services, clear communication, and efficient handling of administrative tasks (Pedersen, Stritch, and Thuesen 2018; Kearney *et al*.

2017). Positive perceptions of staff competence significantly contribute to heightened trust in the organisation and foster a sense of reliability in service delivery (Walle 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017). Skills such as effective communication and interpersonal play a pivotal role in shaping client perceptions. Clients greatly appreciate staff members who actively listen, provide clear explanations, and engage in respectful and courteous interactions (Walle 2017; Wang, Luo, and Tai 2017). Communicating effectively allows clients to feel understood, valued, and supported, thus enhancing their overall experience and satisfaction (Pedersen, Stritch, and Thuesen 2018; Kearney *et al.* 2017).

Furthermore, the display of empathy and emotional support by frontline administrative staff significantly impacts client perceptions. Clients highly value staff members who genuinely demonstrate concern, understanding, and empathy towards their needs and concerns (Kearney *et al.* 2017; Hakanen, Gummesson and Jaakkola 2012). Positive interactions foster trust, reassurance, and a perception of the organization as caring and customer oriented (Masia 2022; Walle 2017; Wang, Luo and Tai 2017). This approach by frontline staff provides satisfactory services to clients, enhancing the positive affirmation of services by clients. The timeliness and efficiency of frontline administrative staff handling client requests and inquiries are also crucial in shaping perceptions. Clients greatly appreciate prompt and efficient service delivery, including minimal wait times, timely responses, and streamlined processes (Ali *et al.* 2021; YuSheng and Ibrahim, 2019). Conversely, delays or inefficiencies in service provision can lead to frustration, decreased satisfaction, and negative perceptions of the organisation's effectiveness (Masia 2022; Walle 2017; Wang, Luo, and Tai 2017; Matiti 2014). This may contribute adversely to the organisation's performance, resulting from a negative perception that deters clients from soliciting the offerings provided by the organisation.

The literature highlights the importance of personalized and individualized service in shaping client perceptions. Tailoring services to meet specific client needs and preferences enhances satisfaction and fosters a sense of being valued and respected (Walle 2017; Wang, Luo, and Tai 2017; Matiti 2014). Clients appreciate staff members who go beyond standard procedures to address their unique circumstances, thus increasing their confidence and trust in the organisation (Masia 2022; Ali *et al.* 2021; YuSheng and Ibrahim, 2018). Taking this kind of initiative to satisfy clients significantly impacts client perceptions and serves as a means of retaining old clients and attracting new clients. The literature implies that taking the initiative to understand and cater to clients' unique

circumstances goes beyond the realm of mere customer service—it becomes a fundamental strategy for retaining existing clients and attracting new ones. This personalized approach is not only a response to client needs but also a proactive measure that significantly influences client perceptions and, consequently, the success of the organization. The literature resonates with the idea that true client satisfaction goes together with a service delivery model that acknowledges and adapts to the distinctive requirements of each client.

The literature on perceptions of frontline administrative services in the public service provides a comprehensive overview of the complex nature of client perceptions regarding front-line administrative services in the public sector. Key factors such as professionalism, competence, effective communication, empathy, timeliness, and personalization are identified as significant influencers of these perceptions. The discussed studies consistently demonstrate the importance of frontline staff behaviour, particularly professionalism and competence, in fostering trust and reliability in service delivery. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are highlighted as crucial in enhancing overall client experience and satisfaction. Additionally, the display of empathy and emotional support by frontline staff is emphasized as essential for building trust and reassurance among clients. Timeliness and efficiency in service delivery are recognized as factors that significantly impact client satisfaction, with prompt responses and streamlined processes being valued by clients. Finally, the importance of personalized and individualized service in meeting specific client needs and preferences is underscored, emphasizing the importance of organizations adopting a customer-centric approach. Overall, the literature highlights the diverse array of factors that shape client perceptions and underscores the significance of addressing these factors to enhance client satisfaction and service delivery in the public sector.

2.5   Frameworks for service delivery

When benchmarking service delivery, theoretical and conceptual frameworks are a significant component, and their value cannot be overstated in a research study. Applying a theoretical framework for instance is pivotal as it underpins the purpose, the problem description, the study rationale, and the research questions (Kivunja 2018; Imenda 2017). A study's structure and vision are ambiguous without a theoretical framework, much the same as a building without blueprints (Mpungose 2021; Varpio *et al.* 2020). Similarly, Grant and Osanloo (2015) state that a research plan consisting of a theoretical framework enables a solid and structured study with an ordered flow from

one chapter to another. Apart from the adopted Batho Pele Principles, the following are some of the commonly used frameworks for pertinent studies examining experiences with frontline administrative services:

- **SERVQUAL**

Service quality has been a centre of interest in both the private and public sectors, as it determines customer satisfaction on which profits and market shares hinge. To ensure customer satisfaction, one would need to measure the quality of service provided to the customers (Shrestha and Koirala 2012). The service Quality method (SERVQUAL) is one of the commonly used methods to measure the quality of service to better understand the customers' needs and perceptions of their services (Ravichandran *et al*. 2010; Midor and Kučera 2018; Van-Dyke, Prybutok and Kappelman 1999). The method comes down to measuring the difference between the degree of satisfaction of expectations and the perception of services by the customer" (Midor and Kučera 2018). This method was developed by a group of authors in the mid-80s as a tool to assess how well a business meets its customer's needs in terms of service quality (Gregory 2019). The SERVQUAL method is a universal and easy-to-use model, commonly used in the private sector. This model was unfavourable for this study because post studies which adopted it strongly argue that SERVQUAL method has problems with reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity (Ravichandran *et al*. 2010; Van-Dyke, Prybutok and Kappelman 1999). Thus, adopting it within this study context would not respond the appropriately to the research enquiry. Furthermore, utilizing the SERVQUAL framework might not fully capture the unique aspects and objectives of your study. This framework was primarily designed for private sector services and may not be tailored to the unique characteristics of public institutions, particularly those related to higher education.

- **ISO 9001 (International Organisation for Standardization)**

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO 9001) holds a prominent position as a widely recognized authority in service quality standards (Spansel and Ahmed 2020). ISO 9001 has gained substantial acceptance as a benchmark for effective quality management (Sanchez-Lizarraga *et al*. 2020). Extensive research has demonstrated the advantageous impact of ISO 9001 on various organisations, as it addresses essential aspects like cost, time, and quality (Sanchez-Lizarraga *et al*. 2020; Shaikh and Sohu 2020; Noviantoro *et al*. 2020). Its implementation enables companies to continually enhance their operations, as it offers guidelines for improving various aspects of the

organization's systems. Organizations of diverse scales and nature, regardless of whether public or private, and whether operating on a large or small scale, have embraced the adoption of ISO 9001 to bolster their quality management methodologies (Noviantoro et al. 2020). Unfortunately, implementing ISO 9001 can require a significant investment of time, money, and resources (Sanchez-Lizarraga *et al*. 2020; Shaikh and Sohu 2020; Spansel and Ahmed 2020). Organizations must allocate resources for training, documentation, audits, and ongoing compliance activities.

Given the aim of our study, we found that adopting the ISO 9001 method would not be practical due to resource constraints, primarily because of the associated costs, as highlighted by Spansel and Ahmed (2020). Beyond the financial considerations, our choice against ISO 9001 also aligns with our goal of conducting a cost-effective yet impactful study. This decision is rooted not only in the observed challenges but also in our commitment to optimizing resource utilization to achieve meaningful outcomes. It's crucial to acknowledge that our study, with its specific focus on examined the FTENs' experiences with frontline administrative services, requires a methodological approach that not only addresses the research objectives but also takes into account the broader practical and financial considerations unique to our context. In essence, our methodological decisions are guided by a nuanced understanding of the study's goals and the need for a judicious allocation of resources."

- **Six Sigma**

The Six-sigma is a business framework management methodology that was first utilised by Motorola Inc. in the United States of America in the 1980s (Sisman and Orel 2020). It was a concept that was initially developed to eliminate and decrease defects in the manufacturing process (Pereiraa *et al*. 2019; Raval, Kant and Shankar 2018). The concept was further developed to also cater for not only production but also services such as marketing, supply chain, finance, sales, etcetera, (Tampubolon and Purba 2021). The concept of Six Sigma is reported by later research to involve the adoption of techniques to eliminate waste and non-value-added processes to enhance customer satisfaction and minimize customer complaints (Pereiraa *et al*. 2019; Raval, Kant and Shankar 2018). Its objective is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the company (Pereiraa *et al*. 2019). The concept comprises five data-driven stages, namely (DMAIC) define, analyse, improve and control (Tampubolon and Purba 2021; Sisman and Orel 2020). Though the concept has yielded great successes in different organisations, some pundits have opined that the Six-sigma lacks flexibility as it follows a predefined methodology, has limited applicability, narrow focus and requires significant

time, effort, and resources to be implemented which is unfavourable for this study (Davis and Filfolt 2017; Flifel, Zakic and Tornjanski 2017).

2.6 Theoretical framework for first-time entry Students' experiences with front-line administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal

To guide the present examination of the service experiences of the FTEN students with the service of frontline administrative staff, the Batho Pele Principles were employed as a guiding framework. Batho Pele, translated as "People First" in the Sotho language, was introduced as a governmental endeavour in South Africa on November 9, 1997, under the leadership of then-President Nelson Mandela (Choeu 2019; Matiti 2014; Mosadi 2004). This initiative aimed to revitalize and enhance the provision of public services within the nation by highlighting fundamental values such as effectiveness, responsibility, openness, and a dedicated commitment to fulfilling the requirements and aspirations of the populace (Choeu 2019; Matiti 2014; Public Service Commission 2007).

According to Batho Pele has eight principles (Mohatle and Phori 2022; Choeu 2019; Mosadi 2004), namely:
- Consultation- involving stakeholders in decision-making processes and seeking their input.
- Service standards- establishing clear expectations for the quality and efficiency of services provided.
- Courtesy- treating clients and stakeholders with politeness, respect, and professionalism.
- Access - ensuring that services are easily accessible to all, without discrimination or unnecessary barriers.
- Information - providing clear, accurate, and timely information to clients and stakeholders.
- Openness and transparency- conducting operations and decision-making processes in a clear, accountable, and transparent manner.
- Redress - offering mechanisms for addressing complaints, disputes, or concerns from clients.
- Value for money - ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively, providing optimal value for the services delivered.

Batho-Pele Principles are intended to provide a framework that governs the interaction between public servants and the public, who serves as their customer base (Mosadi 2004). These principles, which must be implemented in all public institutions, not only help to institutionalize successful

service delivery but also help to enhance aspects of internal responsibility (Joel 2022). The Batho-Pele Principles affirm stakeholders' fundamental entitlement to be treated with decency and kindness, as well as to receive high-quality, long-term service (Gxothiwe 2022; Noor *et al.* 2017;).

Unlike the other methods discussed above, the most common application of the Batho Pele Principles is in studies conducted by public institutions in South Africa (Gxothiwe 2022; Noor *et al.* 2017). Unlike the SERVIQUAL, ISO 9001 and Six Sigma are frameworks internationally used to benchmark service delivery mostly in private corporations, which renders them unfavourable for public service setups. Furthermore, the unsuitability of SERVQUAL, ISO 9001, and Six Sigma for public institutions is rooted in their potential mismatch with the contextual, qualitative, and socially oriented nature of public services. Public institutions often require frameworks that are more adaptive, inclusive, and capable of addressing the broader goals of public service delivery. Therefore, the Batho Pele Principles were preferred over the other frameworks because this study was conducted in the South African context and a public institution of higher learning. The selected university of technology belongs to a cluster of higher education institutions that are semi-autonomous, hence this theory is pertinent to this research. The Batho Pele Principle, as used by Choeu (2019) in a similar study done at the University of Limpopo, also applies to this study.

While these principles have been well-intentioned and have the potential to enhance government services, they have also faced criticism and challenges. Some of the criticisms of the Batho Pele Principles include complexity and overlapping initiatives, in which critics argue that multiple overlapping initiatives can lead to confusion, duplication of efforts, and fragmented implementation (Mboweni 2013; Moodley 2012; Kaisara and Pather 2011). Another main criticism is that the principles have not been consistently and effectively implemented across all government departments and agencies (Joel 2022; Choue 2019; Kaisara and Pather 2011). As a result, this inconsistency can result in uneven service quality occurs, and undermine the overall effectiveness of the initiative. However, to address these criticisms, the study at hand will, conduct a thorough literature review to explore the various perspectives on the Batho Pele Principles. Examine studies, reports, and academic articles that discuss both the positive aspects and criticisms of these principles. This will help provide a balanced view of the existing discourse.

2.7 The implications of front-line administrative staff's service on the public service experience of FTENs

The service provided by the front-line administrative staff profoundly impacts the public service experience of FTENs. Their quality service plays a crucial role in shaping clients' perceptions, satisfaction levels, and trust in the organisation. The service provided by the front-line administrative staff has far-reaching implications on the overall service experience of the public (Balinado *et al.* 2021; Afthanorhan *et al.* 2019; Oh and Kim, 2017). Studies conducted by Ali *et al.* (2021) and YuSheng and Ibrahim, (2019) have highlighted the significance of their role in shaping perceptions, satisfaction levels, and the effectiveness of public service delivery. The literature identifies several key themes that significantly impact the service experiences; professionalism, customer service skills, efficiency, problem-solving abilities, and commitment to transparency and accessibility contribute to positive interactions and overall satisfaction.

Front-line administrative staff serve as the initial point of contact for service recipients seeking assistance or information. The professionalism and friendliness displayed during these interactions greatly influence the first impressions that individuals form about public service (Ali *et al.* 2021; YuSheng and Ibrahim, 2019). It is important to note that a positive experience at this stage can foster trust, encourage engagement, and ensure smooth access to services (Solimun and Fernandes, 2018; Meesala and Paul 2018). Moreover, the ability of front-line staff to listen attentively, show empathy, and demonstrate a genuine willingness to help can significantly impact the service experience (Uzir *et al.* 2021; Farooq *et al.* 2018). Such positive interactions foster a sense of care and understanding among service recipients, leading to enhanced satisfaction levels and increased trust in the organization (Uzir *et al.* 2021; Farooq *et al.* 2018). Overall, the quality of service provided by the front-line administrative staff has a profound impact on the public service experience. It shapes clients' perceptions, satisfaction levels, and trust in the organization (Balinado *et al.* 2021; Afthanorhan *et al.* 2019; Oh and Kim, 2017). Recognizing the importance of their role and investing in their training and development is crucial to ensuring a positive and effective public service environment for all clients. By applying these findings, institutions can create targeted interventions and strategies to improve the service experience for FTENs, fostering positive perceptions, satisfaction, and trust in the organization. This proactive approach aligns with the identified themes in the literature and contributes to the broader goal of enhancing public service delivery.

The integration of findings from multiple studies adds credibility to the argument and underscores the consensus within the literature regarding the critical role of frontline staff in shaping perceptions, satisfaction levels, and trust in public service organizations. This evidence-based approach enhances the persuasiveness of the analysis and reinforces the importance of investing in the training and development of frontline staff. However, while the literature effectively highlights the importance of frontline administrative staff, it could benefit from a more nuanced discussion of the challenges and barriers they may face in delivering quality service. Factors such as workload, organizational culture, resource constraints, and job-related stressors can significantly impact frontline staff's ability to meet service expectations consistently.

2.8   Related studies and salient issues

Pertinent studies highlight the importance of further research in line with service delivery in HEIs to enhance current services and benchmark them against global standards (Choeu, 2019; Green and Hardman, 2014). Achieving global standards in HEIs' service delivery requires a business-minded and innovative approach from management, as emphasised by Hoque, Razak and Zohora (2013). It is crucial for management to focus on improving teaching and research and to pay equal attention to enhancing the quality of service provided by administrative staff (Emery and Barker 2007). To meet students' expectations and deliver quality service, academic and administrative staff need to be empowered, as they are key stakeholders in the institution (Hoque, Razak and Zohora 2013).

A study worth noting after examination of the literature was conducted at the University of Limpopo by Choeu (2019) and was aimed at investigating factors affecting service delivery at a selected university concerning administrative staff. Choeu (2019) opines that for South African universities to compete on a global scale, they must be able to render quality service to the stakeholders. Significantly, Choeu (2019) further states that administrative staff should render quality service to attract and retain the best students that will help uplift the institution in the academic realm. Therefore, it is essential to recruit the best administrative staff the markets offer. Kochanowski (2011) attests that in any public institution, the most indispensable assets are its employees. Choeu (2019) adjoin that for the university to utilise its resources effectively and render quality service to students, it largely hinges on the calibre of administrative staff the university employs.

The DUT is also susceptible to administrative staff providing poor service (Maseko 2019; Pirthiraj 2017; Shozi and Haffajee 2017; Green and Adekanmbi 2014). This phenomenon leads to poor and stagnant service delivery, resulting in numerous riots and strikes that signify and show students' grievances with the service rendered (Fomunyam 2017; Luescher, Loader and Mugume 2017). The factors motivating such behaviour cannot be overlooked as these unhealthy riots result in vandalism, disruption of teaching and learning, and sometimes deadly shootings (Cini 2019; Iruonagbe, Imhonopi and Egharevba 2015). This notion is justified by the February 2019 DUT fatal protest and countless university's official communiqués temporally closing the campuses due to student protests is all a result of students expressing their grievances with poor service delivery. These expressions and resentment disrupt the swift progression of teaching and learning (Mpofu 2017; Mutekwe 2017).

After examining the diverse literature, miscellaneous studies were found on administrative services and service delivery in a public university context. Prominently, were studies done by Professor Green in the DUT context (Green 2014; Green and Adekanmbi 2014; Green and Ramroop 2014; Green and Hardman 2014). The findings of these studies are as follows.

Green (2014) is of the notion that for DUT to uplift, improve service experiences and gain a competitive advantage, it needs to modernise its facilities for example libraries, laboratories, and lobbies (Green and Adekanmbi 2014). One of the key findings is that students were not satisfied as administrative staff were not adhere to the concept of "commitment to provide quality service" (Green 2014). The findings further state that students were very dissatisfied with the very stagnant services the institution renders through its administrative staff (Green 2014). The participants also indicated dissatisfaction with the lack of interest in solving their queries, and queries and the lack of providing timely and accurate information. These studies by Green, Adekanmbi, Ramroop and Hardman indicate the factors influencing the quality-of-service delivery at DUT which links back to the work ethics of administrative staff as they are the servants, and they interact directly with the students (Green 2014; Green and Adekanmbi 2014; Green and Ramroop 2014; Green and Hardman 2014). Although these studies were done almost a decade ago, the theory posited is still relevant today. It renders ascendance to this study at hand and other future studies to research in this area. Consequently, their discoveries may warrant additional exploration in view of numerous developments and transformations that have transpired, such as shifts in leadership, personnel,

institutional vision, renovations, the construction of new infrastructures, and so on. Thus, this study seeks to address this gap in line with the advances and transformations.

This review of existing literature on related studies and salient issues, including studies from different universities and researchers is the strength of this review. By synthesizing findings from multiple sources, the literature review presents a well-rounded perspective on the challenges and implications of service delivery in HEIs. Additionally, the emphasis on the need for continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances reflects a forward-thinking approach to addressing service quality issues. Furthermore, the literature review on related studies effectively underscores the critical role of administrative staff in shaping the service experience for students. It highlights specific concerns such as the lack of commitment to providing quality service, delays in resolving queries, and dissatisfaction among students. By identifying these issues, the analysis lays the groundwork for potential interventions and improvements in service delivery practices.

2.9   Summary of the chapter

The chapter ending has presented a review of relevant literature on the experiences of FTENs in the service of frontline administrative staff. The chapter commenced by providing definitions for essential terminologies. Subsequently, the discussion encompassed the following topics: the viewpoints regarding the service provided by front-line administrative personnel in the public sector; the structure guiding service provision; the theoretical foundation for the encounters of first-time entry students with front-line administrative services at a specific university in KwaZulu Natal; the implications of front-line administrative staff's service on the overall public service encounter; and finally, an exploration of relevant studies and notable concerns. The following chapter will present the adopted research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed existing literature related to the study. The present chapter presents the research methodology that the study adopted. This chapter begins by conceptualizing and mapping the study's research methodology. Moving on, an elaboration of the research paradigm, research approach and research design adopted is provided. Thereafter, the research study site, targeted population and sampling procedures followed are described. Afterwards, the research instruments employed for the collection of data and how they were administered is explained. The reliability and validity of the research instruments are then discussed after which the ethical considerations are explained. A presentation on how data is analyzed follows before ending with a chapter summary.

3.2   Conceptualizing and mapping the study's research methodology

In pursuing the academic inquiry of this study, conceptualizing, and mapping the study's research methodology was a pivotal cornerstone, and provided the framework through which the essence of this study took shape. Research methodology is the set of procedures or guidelines by which a certain piece of research is carried out as well as the concepts, philosophies, and ideas that drive a particular research approach (Patel and Patel 2019). Similarly, Cho and Lee (2014) refer to research methodology as the systematic processes or set of strategies used to find select, process, and analyse material on a research topic. A robust research methodology enables the researcher to carry out the study smoothly, without any disruptions in the process and empowers the researcher to approach the phenomenon in a logical and distinctive manner. (Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019). Presented below in Table 3.1, is a table of the adopted research methodology concepts in this study.

Table 3.1 Mapping the study research methodology

Research aim	Research objectives	Research Paradigm	Research Approach	Resaeasrch Design	Research study site	Tagert population	Sampling procedure	Sampling size	Research instruments	Data type	Data analysis methods
This study examined the FTENs' experiences with frontline administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal.	To determine the perceptions of FTENs on the frontline administrative services. To assess using the Batho Pele Principles the degree to which front-line administrative services influence the service experience of FTENs. To ascertain the implications of front-line administrative services on the service experience of FTENs.	Post-positivism	Both qualitative and quantitative	Survey design	The Durban University of Technology	288 first-time entry students	Convenience sampling method	160 first time entry students	Questionnaires	Primary data from participans	Thematic content analysis for the qualitative data and descriptive statistics for the quantitative data.

3.3   Research paradigm

Research paradigm is one of those concepts early career researchers and postgraduate students find ambiguous with a veiled meaning. This complexity arises from the multifaceted nature of paradigms, which encompass a comprehensive framework of philosophical assumptions, methodologies, and approaches that shape the entire research process (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Thomas 2010). The research paradigm is the conceptual lens through which researchers view and examine the methodological aspect of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017; Antwi and Hamza 2015). When reviewing the literature, many categories of research paradigms can be identified, and noticeable is the duality between positivism and interpretivism (Berryman 2019; Queirós, Faria and Almeida 2017; Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). To balance the duality between positivism and interpretivism, the middle ground is contested by both post-positivism and pragmatism which afford the adoption of multiple approaches in a single study (Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019; Panhwar, Ansari and Shah 2017; Kivunja and Kuyini 2017).

This study adopted post-positivism as a guiding paradigm because this paradigm afforded the employment of multiple approaches, both qualitative and quantitative which yielded a more rigorous and critical approach that assisted in the attainment of diverse perspectives of participants (Panhwar,

Ansari and Shah 2017; Henderson 2011; Cooper 1997 Wildemuth 1993). Post-positivism implies that the "world" can be reasoned both inductively and deductively (Thomas 2010; Racher and Robinson 2003). In agreement is Biersteker (1989), who attests that employing post-positivism is a healthy development in the research realm which promotes a pluralism of reasoning approaches.

3.4 Research approach

The research approach is one of the main pillars of a study's blueprints, which determines how a study will be carried out, including how data will be gathered, processed, and analysed (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Thomas 2010). Although there are many variations of research approaches, the two that are customarily used by later scholars are qualitative and quantitative (Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019).

The qualitative approach is the best fit when less is known about the subject generally or within a particular context, or when a researcher is unsure of which variables are crucial and these approaches enable the researcher to investigate a phenomenon in greater depth (Dzaga 2018; Hussain 2010). The quantitative research approach was initially used to study natural phenomena and has its roots in natural sciences and this approach involves analysing numerical data and assigning numbers to survey responses, allowing for easier communication of research findings (Haradhan 2020; Thomas 2010). Literature also identifies mixed methods and both qualitative and quantitative as heterogeneous approaches aiming to attune both qualitative and quantitative either sequentially or concurrently in a single study (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Wisdom and Creswell 2013).

There is significant controversy in the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Some scholars refer to this adoption as "mixed methods", aiming to apply the approaches either in triangulation; or sequentially and it is linked with the pragmatism paradigm (Molina-Azorina *et al*. 2018; Kairuz, Crump and O'Brien 2007). Inversely, some scholars also refer to the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative as a standalone approach aiming to apply the two approaches concurrently while it leans on post-positivism as a guiding paradigm (Panhwar, Ansari and Shah 2017; Henderson 2011).

This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative which is referred to as a combined and hybrid, approach that advocates methodological pluralism (Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019; Creswell and

Creswell 2018). This adoption was favourable for this study because it extended the scope of the study and compensated for the shortcomings of each approach (Driscoll *et al*., 2007). The adoption of this approach afforded the study to examine both surface data through the quantitative approach and the in-depth data through the qualitative approach. Furthermore, relying solely on qualitative or quantitative data may provide a limited perspective on the research question, reduced validity. Qualitative methods are particularly adept at exploring context and providing rich descriptions, which might be overlooked in a purely quantitative study. To address these shortcomings, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches allows researchers to gain a comprehensive insight into the research by mitigate the shortcomings associated with using only one approach, offering a more thorough, valid, and nuanced understanding of the phenomena being studied.

By integrating both approaches, this study aimed to overcome the limitations inherent in relying solely on one method. For instance, while quantitative data can provide surface-level insights, they may lack the depth necessary to fully understand complex phenomena. Conversely, qualitative data, though rich in detail, may lack generalizability. Therefore, by triangulating qualitative and quantitative data, this study sought to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions, thereby enhancing the validity and robustness of the findings.

Furthermore, the adoption of a combined approach facilitated concurrent data collection, enabling efficiency in the research process. Unlike mixed methods approaches that involve sequential or iterative data collection phases, the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data simplified logistical challenges and streamlined the research timeline (Davies and Fisher, 2018). Additionally, by incorporating elements of both qualitative and quantitative analysis, such as descriptive and analytical viewpoints, this study aimed to leverage the strengths of each method to their fullest potential. This approach not only allowed for the exploration of numeric patterns but also facilitated in-depth exploration of contextual factors and underlying mechanisms driving observed trends (Molina-Azorin *et al*. 2018).

The adoption of a combined qualitative and quantitative approach was guided by the desire to maximize the strengths of each method while mitigating their respective limitations. By embracing methodological pluralism, this study aimed to achieve a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

3.5   Research design

The research design ensures that the collection and analysis of data address the study's questions and objectives while determining its credibility, usefulness, and practicality (Tobi and Kampen 2018; Torrico and Gonzales 2018; Creswell and Creswell 2017; Bickman, Rog and Hedrick 2009). A good research design minimizes bias and is efficient, cost-effective, flexible, and appropriate (Creswell and Creswell 2018). It establishes upfront the study's setting, timing, and sequence of events, predicts shortcomings, and strikes a balance between redundancy and overdesigning (Apuke 2017; Creswell and Creswell 2017).

There are different research designs linked to different research approaches. The quantitative approach is correlational; quasi-experimental; experimental or analytical and explanatory (Apuke 2017; Akhtar 2016). Furthermore, under the qualitative approach are ethnographic; historical, case study, phenomenological and action research design (Apuke 2017; Akhtar 2016). Creswell and Creswell (2018) put forward that mixed methods approaches are explanatory, sequential transformation, and transformative designs. The adoption of both qualitative and quantitative is linked with concurrent research design which means data is collected at the same time (Davies and Fisher 2018). This adoption is also linked with exploratory design which refers to an investigation of new or under-explored topics and its primary goal of exploratory research is to explore and generate insights, hypotheses, or ideas rather than to test specific hypotheses or make definitive conclusions (Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019; Davies and Fisher 2018).

The study on first-time entry students' experiences with the service of front-line administration necessitated the collection of data from a wide and diverse population of students. In this regard, a survey research design was adopted, which afforded the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Ponto 2015). This design was favourable for the collection of data across the chosen large population quite quickly, dependably, and inexpensively (Bickman, Rog and Hedrick 2009).

3.6   Research study site and target population

Understanding the geographic context or the study site, where the research will be conducted is pivotal to provide the ecological, sociocultural, and economic factors that may influence the

outcomes of the study (Stratton 2021; Berndt 2020; Hu 2014). The study site was the Durban University of Technology, and it has 6 faculties, namely Art and Design; Applied Sciences; Health Science; Management Sciences; Engineering and Built Environment and Accounting and Informatics in which the study at hand focused on. Out of the 7 departments within this faculty, namely Auditing and Taxation; Finance and Information Management (Midlands); Financial Accounting; Information Systems; Information Technology; Management Accounting the study narrowed and only included on the Department of Information and Corporate Management.

Even though the departments and faculties are within the same institution DUT, they operate distinctively from one another, resulting in diverse service experiences among students (Mhlanga 2021; Khumalo 2019). For that reason, other departments, and faculties were excluded because this was not a comparative study. Furthermore, while the issue of student service experience with the frontline administrative staff is not exclusive to ICM, the study only focused on the department where the researcher is enrolled and where the researcher has first-hand experience with the efficacy and inefficacy of frontline administrative service. Logistical constraints regarding costs and time also contributed to the exclusion of other departments and faculties.

A target population is a group of people, things, or events that a researcher wants to study (Sekaran and Bougie 2016). It should include all the factors that the researcher is interested in, and the results of the study should be acquired from this group of participants which may consist of individuals, organizations, human products, and events or the conditions to which they are exposed (Hussain 2010). The target population may be a subset of the general population with comparable traits and serves as the targeted audience for a product, advertisement, or research (Sekaran and Bougie 2016; Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard 2014).

The targeted population was the FTENs, from the ICM under the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at DUT. The chosen FTENs were registered for the BIM program with the ICM department, and their headcount stood at 288 in total as of 2022 (DUT MIS Data 2022). In terms of sampling size, Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggests that out of a population of 288, a sample size of 160 participants suffices to represent the entire population for data.

The reason for focusing on FTENs is that they are more susceptible to being affected by the efficacy and inefficacy of the service of front-line administrative staff than other groups of students (Green and Adekanmbi 2014). Students at other levels of study, including returning students in the first-year class, were excluded from this study.

3.7   Sampling procedures

Sampling is the choosing of which individuals, environments, activities, or behaviours the study will include as sources of data for experimentation or observation in accordance with the aim and objectives of the research (Berndt 2020; Sharma 2017). There are two broad types of sampling methods, namely, probability and non-probability (Berndt 2020). Probability sampling is an objective (random) process of selecting a sample from a population and it entails more complexity, is time-consuming, generally higher costs and low likelihood of biases (Elfil and Negida 2017) whereas, non-probability sampling is a subjective (non-random) way of choosing participants in a quick, simple, inexpensive way with more likelihood of biases (Shorten and Moorley 2014). Probability sampling is comprised of the following sampling methods: simple random; systematic random; stratified random and cluster random, while non-probability sampling is comprised of purposive; convenience; snowball and quota (Elfil and Negida 2017; Shorten and Moorley 2014).

Initially, the study was going to adopt probability sampling due to the existence of a complete sampling frame of the chosen population. However, the study was limited to a convenience sampling frame. This adoption was done to increase the response rate due to the availability of participants during the period of data collection. This rarity prompted the adoption of convenience sampling within the non-probability sampling cluster because the data collection commenced in the later part of the semester with a majority of the students already having finished with their exams and no longer available on campus. Moreover, this sampling method was suitable and yielded a better response rate and because the key advantages of convenience sampling are that it is cheap, efficient, and simple to implement. The key disadvantage of convenience sampling is that the sample lacks clear generalizability (Berndt 2020; Choeo 2019). Among many factors that were considered before choosing the convenience sampling method, the population size, objectives, and the nature of the population were acknowledged (Sharma 2017).

3.8 Research instruments

The devices used for data collection are referred to as research instruments such as questionnaires, checklists, interviews, observations, focus groups, experiments, and secondary data sources and the collected data can be either primary (first-hand data) or secondary data (Moyo 2017; Herrman 2017). Primary data is original and collected directly by researchers from their chosen population while secondary data is pre-existing data collected by others and repurposed for new analyses (Thomas 2010). This study used a questionnaire for data collection because it is one of the most cost-efficient instruments with a wide range of mediums for distribution (Young 2016). The primary data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The direct interaction with participants (self-administered questionnaires) yielded this study benefits, such as lower administration cost, shorter data collection times, the ability to give participants freedom and time to participate (convenience) and the ability to clarify and clear up any doubts immediately (Sekaran and Bougie 2016).

With regards to the design of the questionnaire, they were semi-structured, constituted of open-ended, closed-ended questions and a Likert scale (Moyo 2017). The semi-structured design benefited the study by collecting both qualitative data through open-ended questions and quantitative data through close-ended questions simultaneously. These questionnaires were specifically designed for this study due to the pluralism approach adopted.

3.9 Administration of the instruments

After acquiring the ethical clearance and a gatekeeper's letter from DUT, which granted the study permission to collect data, arrangements were made with the Head of the Department, lecturers who are teaching first-year modules, and class representatives to assist in the administration of the hard copy questionnaires to the first-year students.

The administration of the questionnaires commenced in the later part of the second semester with many of the students having finished with their exams but awaiting results. During this period FTENs were still at student residences but no longer attending lectures, they were only coming to campus for non-academic activities, consultations with their lecturers and other personal matters. This necessitated adjustments in the initially proposed procedures for the administration of the questionnaires to reach the targeted sample size (160 FTENs). The questionnaire was then digitalised

to a Google form which was distributed electronically to students via MS Teams which is linked to their student emails, this was most effective for the students who were no longer coming to campus.

To avoid duplications and to ensure that students only participated once, a class register was used, and students were ticked off upon participation. Additionally, the Google form was also set to only accept one response from each participant. The questionnaire took 10-15 minutes to complete, and all hand-distributed questionnaires were completed and collected at the participant's earliest convenience. The study dedicated one month to the data collection process.

3.10 Reliability and validity

When conducting a study, it is important to consider the reliability and validity of the adopted research instruments. Reliability is the capacity to consistently get the same result when employing an instrument to measure something more than once, while validity is the trustworthiness and accuracy of the instruments, data, and the study's findings (Surucu and Maslak 2020; Roberts and Priest 2006).

To ensure reliability for both qualitative and quantitative aspects, the study adopted applicable instruments for data collection and employed ideal methods for data analysis to ensure that it measured what it aimed to investigate, necessary precautions were also taken to ensure that the instrument used was reliable, such as conducting a pilot test and seeking guidance from the project supervisor (Ahmed and Ishtaiq 2021; Quintão, Andrade and Almeida 2020; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2017). For further accuracy with the quantitative aspect, Cronbach's Alpha was employed to estimate internal consistency in the set of responses (Bolarinwa 2015).

Cronbach's Alpha states that the reliability score should be 0.7 or greater, for the study to be considered reliable (Bolarinwa 2015; Neuman 2014; Leedy and Ormrod 2010). Table 3.2 below presents Cronbach's alpha score for the collected data.

Table 3.2 Reliability statistics

Variables	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Service delivery principles that were met	2	0,879
Overall service experience	5	1,031

Table 3.2 demonstrates that the reliability scores for all sections surpass the recommended 0.70 of Cronbach's alpha for the variables, suggesting a high level of consistency and acceptability in the scoring of these sections in the study.

To ascertain validity for both qualitative and quantitative, the questionnaires were pretested to attain the participants' perspectives on the interpretation of the questionnaire (Bukenya *et al*. 2017; Bolarinwa, 2015). The pretesting of the questionnaire yielded the necessary opportunity to monitor if the students clearly understood and answered the questionnaire accordingly. The questionnaire was pretested on a small group of 5 participants from the targeted population (Bolarinwa, 2015). The size of the adopted population allowed this study to exclude the participants who were involved in the pretesting process (Young 2016; Bolarinwa 2015; Thomas 2010).

According to Thomas (2010), a well-designed research study lays the foundation for reliable and valid qualitative research findings. For the qualitative aspect of the study, it was paramount that further strategies were employed such as a clear research design, as presented in section 3.5, subjecting the qualitative aspect to strict peer review by a knowledgeable supervisory team.

3.11 Ethical consideration

This study followed all relevant ethical considerations outlined in the DUT's research guidelines. According to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011), ethics in research can be defined as the area of philosophy that examines the processes of choosing between what is right and wrong.

As outlined in the literature, this study also adhered to ethical considerations such as the protection of the participants against, injury, ill-treatment, and dignity (Arifin 2018; Bell and Bryman 2007). Data collection did not commence until ethical clearance from DUT and consent from participants were received. Regarding anonymity, the findings of this study are not presented in a way that the reader can pinpoint the participants. The findings of the study are publicly available to all interested parties in the physical and online DUT library. In line with the research data management of DUT, both the soft copies and the hard copies of the raw collected data are securely stored, and access is limited to the researcher and the supervisor, the data will then be securely destroyed after 5 years (Akaranga and Makau 2016; Cacciattolo 2015).

3.12 Data analysis

There are several methods used for data analysis, depending on the adopted research approach. Data analysis is the process of decoding the collected data and drawing conclusions (Grant and Osanloo 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012). To analyse the quantitative data, the study used descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel and was presented with percentages and frequency counts, tables, and graphs. In terms of analysing the qualitative data, the researcher conducted thematic content analysis which afforded the study to search across the data set and analyse, identify and report repeated patterns (Anderson 2007). Thematic content entailed organising the ideas, experiences, knowledge, and opinions that emerge from the data set and narrating them (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019).

3.13 Summary of the chapter

Chapter three intricacies outlined and clarified the research methodology adopted for this study. Beginning with a comprehensive conceptualization and mapping the study's research methodology, highlighting the concepts embraced, the chapter laid the foundation for a meticulous exploration. The research paradigm, approach, and design were meticulously detailed, accompanied by justifications for their selection. Furthermore, the chapter unveiled the chosen research study site and the target population, presented research instruments, and elucidated their method of administration. To ensure the robustness of the study, the chapter delved into the aspects of reliability, validity, and ethical considerations, while also shedding light on the forthcoming data analysis process. As the chapter drew to a close, it provided a concise summary, setting the stage for the subsequent chapter, which is the analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the research methodology that the study adopted. This chapter presents an analyse and discuss the findings. The chapter starts with the procedures followed to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. Then it presents the response rate for the target population and the profiles of the participants. The content data was then analysed and discussed in the following three themes according to the study objectives: determining the perceptions of first-time entry students in frontline administrative services; evaluating using the Batho Pele principles the degree to which frontline administrative services influence the service experience of FTENs; and determining the implications of front-line administrative services on the FTENs experience.

4.2   Procedures followed to analyze quantitative and qualitative data

The presentation of the procedures followed to analyse the content data is an important component of this study, as it will allow replication, evaluation, and comparison of the research while increasing the transparency and trustworthiness of the findings (Aguinis and Solarino 2019). The research used a semi structured questionnaire to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, resulting in the adoption of both descriptive statistical analysis and thematic content analysis.

Regarding the procedures followed to analyse the content data, the initial steps for both descriptive statistical analysis and thematic content analysis involved collecting data from the participants. Since data were collected using both hard copies and Google Forms, the content data was first collated, the descriptive data was captured in Microsoft Word and the quantitative data on Microsoft Excel (Bani Issa *et al*. 2020). This was followed by filtering and organizing, which is a process of systematically selecting, sorting, and removing data from the larger data set based on specific criteria or conditions, this was done to remove irrelevant data, outliers, or any other points that do not meet the requirements of the research question (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019).

In line with the literature, the quantitative data were first coded, which is a step that entails asking analytic questions of the data, labelling segments of data with a brief name (a code), and utilising

38

these codes to sort and establish knowledge of what is going on in the social environment under investigation (Mcleod 2023; Maher *et al*. 2018). The data was then analysed with descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel. Descriptive data analysis refers to a set of statistical set of techniques which are used to summarise the important characteristics of the data set (Kaur, Stoltzfus, and Yellapu 2018). The descriptive statical technique used in this study was percentiles and frequency distributions, which show how often each value or range of values occurs in a data set (Mcleod 2023). The data was presented in tables, graphs and was the narration of the presented tables and graphs (Ong and Puteh 2017; Maher *et al*. 2018).

When it comes to thematic analysis of qualitative data, the academic literature posits that researchers must first familiarise themselves with the data, generate preliminary codes, identify potential themes, evaluate the themes define the themes, and finally write up (Maguire and Delahunt 2017; Hawkins 2017; Terry *et al*. 2017). In the present study, the qualitative data underwent the same process and steps as described in the literature (Xu and Zammit 2020; Maguire and Delahunt 2017; Hawkins 2017).

4.3   Response rate and the profile of the participants

Response rates are a crucial indicator of data quality in research studies, as they reflect the percentage of individuals who participated in the study out of the total targeted population (Blumenberg and Barros 2018; Garner 2017). Accurately calculating response rates is therefore essential for evaluating the representativeness and generalizability of study findings. One commonly used method for calculating response rates involves dividing the number of study participants by the number of individuals in the targeted sample (Garner 2017). This helps to provide a clear and standardized measure of participant engagement. Calculating the response rate is also valuable for ensuring the validity and reliability of research results (Bani Issa *et al*. 2020).

Assessing the characteristics of the participants is crucial in gauging the extent to which the study's participants accurately represent the intended population, moreover, this evaluation ensures that the study's goals can be applied more broadly (Majeed and Lee 2021; Pawar Ahirrao and Churi 2018). This is particularly true for emotive research such as the examination of students' service experiences with front-line administrative staff at institutions of higher learning (Bani Issa *et al*. 2020; Gxothiwe 20202). To protect the privacy and confidentiality, the collection and reporting of demographic

information was limited to race and gender (Bani Issa *et al.* 2020). For the remaining data collection, anonymisation methods were used to ensure that the participants could not be identified by the reader. Despite interacting with the participants, the researcher took care to present the data in a way that did not reveal their identities (Majeed and Lee, 2021; Pawar, Ahirrao and Churi, 2018). Table 4.1 below presents the target population and response rate among the FTENs who took part in the study. By using these measures, the study was able to assess the sample's representativeness and improve the generalizability of their findings.

Table 4.1 Targeted population and response rate

Categories		N Value
Population size		288
Target sample		160
No of the students participated		121
Usable questionnaire		107
Response rate (=107/160*100)		67%
Gender	**Percentage**	**Frequency**
Female	74	79
Male	24	26
Non-Binary	2	2
Race		
African	94	101
Indian	3	3
Coloured	3	3

Table 4.1 above demonstrates the targeted population and the response rate. In terms of gender distribution 79 (74%) were females, 26 (24%) males and 2 (2%) non-binary students. This gender distribution is a normal representation of the population at DUT, as previous studies conducted in this institution show that there are more female students than male students (Mbatha 2021; Mhlanga 2021; Dlamini 2020; Khumalo 2019). This distinct difference between headcounts of female and male students is further justified by that the BIM program is in the administrative cluster, which is

generally associated with females, hence there is a huge enrolment of females (Fernandez and Campero 2016).

Regarding the race of the participants, the results reflect that almost all the entire participants were Africans as there were 101 (94%) of them, and only 3 (3%) each for both Coloureds and Indians. This also means that almost the entire population of students enrolled in the BIM program are Africans, which shows a huge gap of imbalances in racial distribution.

Out of the adopted sample size, 121 students participated in the study using the convenience sampling method and out of the 121 responses, 107 were usable. The acquired 67% response rate is adequate for surveys conducted within an organisation, which generally yield a 30-40% response rate on average (Steinmetz, Thompson and Marshall 2020; Agustini 2018). The response rate of 67% also justifies the effectiveness of using the convenience sampling method and both digitalised and hard-copy questionnaires.

4.4   Determining the perceptions of first-time entry students on the service of frontline administrative staff

Determining students' perceptions of first-time entry students on the service of frontline administrative staff is vital for attaining service feedback that can guide the improvement of the service experience and can empower positive change in the institution especially when it is negative (Gremyr *et al.* 2022; Nsamba and Makoe 2017; Arboleda and Alonso 2017). For the aforementioned reasons, this study sought to determine the perceptions of FTENs on the service of frontline administrative staff, by posing a couple of questions. The findings that addressed this objective are analysed in the subsections that follow below.

4.4.1   Student's need for frontline administrative services

N=107

Upon determining whether the FTENs needed service from the institution's frontline administrative staff in the service department(s), the entire group of participants indicated that they had previously required service. This validates that first-time entry students are more in need of the students' services as they are acclimatising to the new university environment.

4.4.2 University service departments that students require service from

There are several university service departments that students engage with to acclimatise swiftly to the university environment. For this reason, identifying these service department(s) was a crucial initial step, to see which may later yield the benefit of identifying service-orientated and those which need improvement (Naidoo and Ramphal 2019). The findings obtained are presented in Figure 4.1 below.
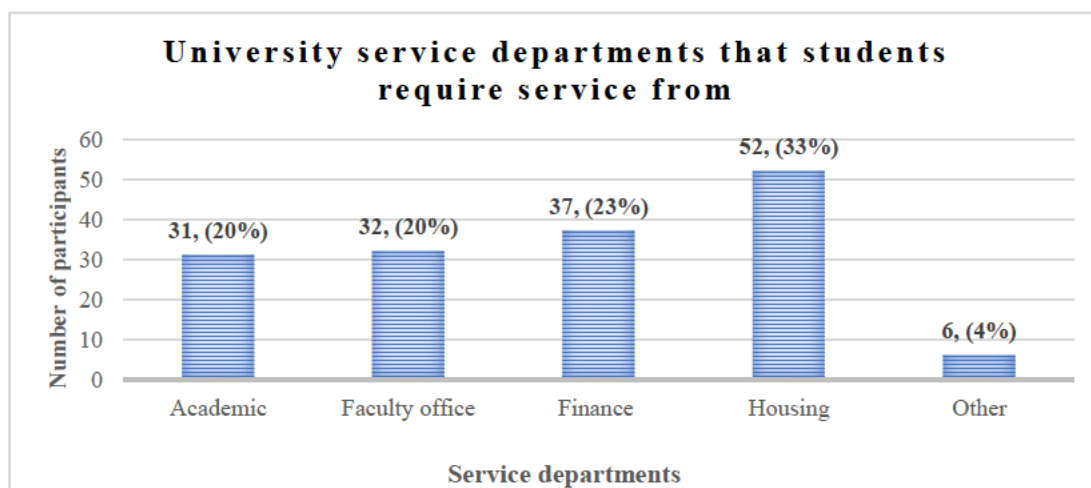
Figure 4.1 University service departments that students require service from

The result in Figure 4.1 above shows that a proportion of 52 (33%) participants required service from the student housing department followed closely by the finance department with 37 (23%) participants and lastly both faculty office and academic departments with 32 (20%) participants for each department. These findings show that FTENs mostly require services from student housing and finance. As a result, these departments should render elevated services in comparison to other departments, because they are the student's first point of encounter after their very first registration. Elevating student services can yield positive learning experiences and improved academic successes, help decrease the dropout rate and help attract diverse students (Baik, Larcombe and Brooker 2019; Ciobanu 2013).

4.4.3 Services that were required from service departments

After acquiring the service departments from which the student requested support in the attempt to understand FTENs' perception of service rendered, the second important issue was to determine the

specific services that were required from the front-line administrative staff. These findings will assist the institution in developing targeted training programs for the staff whose service was rated as unsatisfactory.

The largest proportion of the participants 52 (33%) indicated that they required services related to residence allocation. This adds to the profile of the participants presented in race distribution, that almost the entire population of 101 (94%) students are Africans coming from either inland or outside of urban areas/rural areas. The second largest proportion was 37 (23%) participants who indicated that they went to the finance department, mostly for registration refunds and NSFAS allowances. From this, we can infer more from the participants' profiles that they are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they indicated that they require services related to student residences, registration refunds and NSFAS allowances. For the academic department and the faculty office, a quantity of 32 (20%) participants in each department, indicated that they went to these departments for queries related to registration and timetables. The lowest proportion of the participants (4%) indicated that they required other services such as counselling, clinical services, and sports services.

The data suggests that the participants are predominantly African students from non-urban areas, likely facing financial challenges, and in need of both academic and comprehensive support. The findings emphasize the significance of tailoring services to cater to the specific needs of this diverse group of students.

4.4.4 Platforms used by first-time entry students to log their queries

N=107

To understand the accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness of the service required by students, it was important to identify the platforms students used to log their queries. Presented in Figure 4.2 below are the platforms students used to log their queries and whether they were assisted successfully on that platform or not.
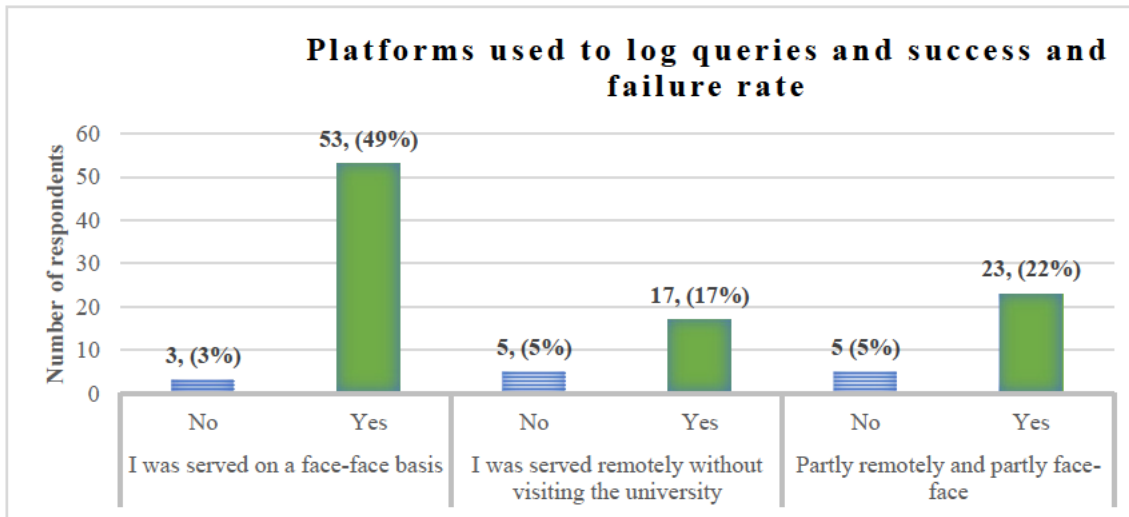
Figure 4.2 Communication platforms used to log queries and success and failure rate

Out of the 3 communication platforms, students used to log their queries, the traditional "face-to-face basis" as shown in Figure 4.2 above was substantially used by the 56 (52%) participants, and "partly remotely and partly face-ace" was the second most used communication platform as indicated by 28 (27) participants and the least used was "remotely without visiting the university" which is shown by 22 (23%). Figure 4.2 above, further shows that the "face-face" platform had the most success rate of 53 (49%) and the least failure rate which stood at 3 (3%). There was not much difference between the success rate of "partly remotely and partly face-to-face" which stood at 23 (22%) and "remotely without visiting the university" which stood at 17 (17%). Similarly, with the failure rate of these two communication platforms they both got 5 (5%).

Out of the participants were successfully assisted through this platform and only 3 (3%) participants were not assisted successfully. The middle ground was contested by the "partly remotely and partly face- to-face" platform, with 23 (22%) participants who received successful services and only 5 (5%) who received unsuccessful services. The least communication platform that was used, was "remote without visiting the university", in which only 17 (17%) were assisted successfully and only 5 (5%) participants never received successful service. Even though the university was operating in a hybrid post-COVID-19, these findings validate that the face-to-face platform is the most effective platform for logging queries. These findings furthermore urge and necessitate the need for improvement in services rendered remotely in line with accelerating the new technologies introduced by automation developments.

These findings in Figure 4.2 are further supported by those of Buultjens and Robinson (2011) who also found that in their study site, students were unhappy with the dispersion of services, availability and the platforms used to access the services. Buultjens and Robinson (2011) findings further indicate that students had limited access to the service due to the communication platforms used and there were inconsistences with the service quality across the communication platforms. Even though both these studies were conducted a decade apart, it is recommended that a there must be further improve the efficacy of the communication platforms used to log student queries.

4.4.5 Determining whether front-line staff were able to assist students

N=107

It was important for this study to determine whether the front-line administrative staff were able to assist the participants. This was important because it sheds light on the effectiveness of the service rendered, and provided valuable insights for the institution, highlighting the need to evaluate and improve service delivery to enhance the participants' experience (Choeu 2019).

The overall number of students that were successfully assisted when they requested service as per the service department set 93 (87%) students and only 14 (12%) received an unsatisfactory service from these service departments. Though 93 (87%) students may be interpreted as success, the 14 (12%) students cannot be overlooked as it can represent about 3 925 students when proportioned to the 30 000 students (14/93*30 000= 3 925) that are enrolled in the institution as per DUT Website. The 14 students, constituting 12% of the total, dissatisfied with the service, underscores the imperative for the institution to enhance its services, surpass local competitors, and compete on a national and global scale.

From these findings, we can infer that the institution's staff understood the importance of rendering successful service to students to improve the service experience. This is consistent with academic literature that highlights the importance of service quality in higher education institutions. For instance, Paraskevas and Arendell (2007) in their study found that students are more likely to choose an institution that offers high-quality services, and that student satisfaction is closely linked to the perceived quality of services. Similarly, studies on service quality, found that students' perceptions of service quality have a significant impact on their overall satisfaction with the institution (Khoo, Ha and McGregor 2017; Kundi *et al.* 2014). Furthermore, studies have shown that addressing service

failures and complaints can lead to greater customer loyalty and satisfaction (Hwang and Choi 2019; Bakrie, Sujanto and Rugaiyah 2019; Gbadamosi and De Jager 2009). On that account, HEIs should prioritize service quality and actively seek feedback from students to continuously improve their services..

4.4.6 Alternatives that the students resorted to due to unsolved queries

N=14

After determining whether the frontline administrative staff were able to assist the students, the second step was to determine the alternatives used by students who were not assisted successfully. This was important to provide insight into the service, identifying gaps in the existing services and the negative impact this had on the service experience of the students (Brodie 2016; Abbate-Vaughn 2005). Out of a total of 107 students who participated, 14 (12%) of them were not able to receive the assistance they needed from the front-line administrative staff. Presented below are the alternatives students resorted to due to failed service.

4.4.6.1 Seeking assistance from members of the Student Representative Council (SRC).

While it is a positive sign that some students (5) were able to get assistance from the SRC members, which raises the question of why the front-line administrative staff were not able to resolve the issue in the first place. Additionally, the availability and knowledge of the SRC members may be limited, and they may not always be able to provide the necessary assistance.

4.4.6.2 Contacting the Head of Departments (HOD).

Some participants (3) stated that they contacted the HOD, this alternative also raises concerns about the capability of the front-line administrative staff. If students had to bypass the staff and contact higher authorities to resolve their queries, it indicates a lack of training or support for the staff to handle student queries. Additionally, contacting the HOD may not always be practical, especially if the issue is minor or time sensitive.

4.4.6.3 Waiting for months before their issues were resolved.

Students (3) also stated that they had to wait for months before their query was resolved. This alternative is highly concerning, as it indicates a significant delay in resolving student queries.

46

Waiting for months can have a severe negative impact on the student's academic progress and experience. It also raises questions about the responsiveness and efficiency of the administrative staff.

4.4.6.4 Discontinuing contact with the staff.

Some participants (3) indicated that they discontinued contacting the staff, and this alternative is highly alarming, as it suggests that some students gave up trying to resolve their queries altogether due to the failure of the administrative staff. This highlights the severe negative impact that poor service experience can have on students and their academic progress. Furthermore, this alternative is highly detrimental to the reputation of the institution, as students may share their negative experiences with other prospective students.

Even though 93 (87%) of the participants received successful service, based on the findings there is a need for the institution to improve the capability and effectiveness of its front-line administrative staff in relation to these 14 (12%) students' alternatives for failed service. Providing adequate training and support to the staff could help the frontline administrative staff to better handle student queries and address issues promptly to avoid resorting to these alternatives (Bakrie, Sujanto and Rugaiyah 2019; Farahmandian, Minavand and Afshardost 2013). Additionally, Masantiah, Pasiphol and Tangdhanakanond (2020) state that for an institution to remedy poor service experience must consider creating more channels for students to voice their concerns and feedback, such as online forums or suggestion boxes. Overall, these alternatives highlight the negative impact a failed administrative service can have on students and suggest that there is a need for institutions to ensure that administrative staff are adequately trained and supported to assist students effectively.

4.4.7 Satisfaction rates with how students' queries were resolved

N=107

The participants who were assisted successfully were asked if their queries were resolved to their satisfaction or not. This was important for service feedback, as outlined in the responsiveness/redress principle of the Batho Pele Principles that all promised standards should be delivered, if not a speedy remedy should be offered (Choeu 2019; Naidoo and Ramphal 2019). From their responses, we can infer a few things discussed below:

With regards to satisfaction rate, 79 (85%) of the students were serviced to their satisfaction indicates that the service provided by the frontline administrative staff was of a good standard and met the expectations of most students. In relation to the quality of service, given that a high proportion of students were satisfied, we can assume that frontline administrative staff provided a high quality of service. This includes things like promptness, efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism, and friendliness of service.

Even though the satisfaction rate is high, the fact that 29 (15%) of the students were unsatisfied with how their queries were resolved suggests that there is room for improvement. This is in harmony with Yousapronpaiboon (2014) findings who found that a faction of his study's population, expectation exceeded the perception resulting in a dissatisfaction gap, hence suggesting improving the service to bridge the gap.

The data suggests that frontline administrative staff rendered satisfactory service to almost the entire population. By taking steps to address the concerns of the 29 (15%) students who rated the service as unsatisfactory front-line administrative staff can continue to improve the quality of service provided to all students. From this data, we can further infer the importance of gathering feedback from students who are service recipients. By listening to their feedback, the institution can identify targeted areas of improvement.

4.4.8   Issues that students were not satisfied with regarding the service they received

N=16

In line with the Batho Pele Principles, it was essential for this study to identify the issues that students (16) were not satisfied with concerning the service they received. This question was also important for service feedback and to gain insights into the specific areas where students experienced problems or challenges with the service that was provided to them (Choeu 2019; Naidoo and Ramphal 2019). This was also important for prioritising the efforts to improve the quality of service.

Apart from the 90 (85%) students who were serviced to their satisfaction, only 16 (15%) rated the service they received as unsatisfactory. The findings below provide highlights of the implications of a failed frontline administrative service. Like previous studies, the dissatisfaction expressed by 16 (15%) students suggests that their academic performance is affected (Ibrahim, Rahman, and Yasin

2012; Palli and Mamilla 2012). This dissatisfaction further escalates the need for elevating the service. Presented below are the issues raised by students, they are thematically grouped into three categories: responsiveness, attention, and treatment/communication.

4.4.8.1 Responsiveness:

Following are students' responses:

> *"They were not responding to my emails; I was even thinking of giving up and looking for another university."*
>
> *"Their line is always busy, or ring without being answered."*
>
> *"The emails sent to get the application form for the registration fee were not answered after I sent one form there was no response."*
>
> *"My registration fee that I paid did not come back and I still need it to cover my debt. I took it as a loan."*
>
> *"Some of them are very rude and they make it seem like the students are at fault."*

The seven (7) students' complaints highlight the lack of responsiveness from the administrative staff to emails and phone calls, which can delay the resolution of academic queries. The inability to access academic support and guidance can negatively impact students' academic performance and overall experience.

4.4.8.2 Attention

Following are students' responses:

> *"I felt like I was not given full attention at first and it takes a lot of time before you are attended."*
>
> *"I was not satisfied with their way of response when addressing students. They normally leave you with unattended questions."*

The five (5) students' complaints suggest that students feel like they are not being given enough attention by the administrative staff and that it takes a long time for them to receive assistance. This can also delay the resolution of academic queries, which may lead to students missing out on crucial academic opportunities, such as registering for courses, submitting assignments on time, and getting feedback.

4.4.8.3 Treatment/communication

Following are students' responses:

> *"I went to the Faculty Office during the first semester, and they said I should write them the proof of payment that I paid for at Finance via an email requesting an academic transcript. Till today they never responded."*
>
> *"I went there early in the morning around 7:30, they open at 8 am. While others and I were standing outside, the Nurse came and said 'Did you all read the instruction by the door? I hope you all booked online.' The Nurse never greeted us.*
>
> *"They gave me non-satisfying accommodation."*

The four (4) participants' complaints suggest that some students are not satisfied with the way they are being treated or communicated with by the administrative staff, which may lead to frustration and disengagement. Disengagement from academic activities and support can lead to lower academic performance and reduced motivation to achieve academic success.

The failure of administrative staff to effectively resolve student queries can have significant academic implications for students, including lower academic performance, frustration, disengagement, and limited opportunities for career development. These findings are in line with previous studies, which indicate that students commonly complain about inadequate facilities, poor communication, lack of responsiveness and lack of student engagement or involvement (Hedengren and Lockerd 2017; Weerasinghe and Fernando 2017). The institution needs to ensure that frontline administrative staff are trained and supported to provide effective academic support and communication to students.

4.4.9 Satisfaction with the quality of service rendered remotely and/or face-to-face

N=107

Maintaining satisfaction of the service rendered both remotely and face-to-face is important, as there are many factors leading organisations to shift from face-to-face to remote working arrangements and lastly to blended work arrangements (Dingel and Neiman 2020). The study's findings on the satisfaction of the quality of service provided by frontline administrative staff when they work remotely versus when they work in the office are presented below.

Out of 107 students who responded to this question, 82 (77%) of them agreed that the quality of service provided by frontline administrative staff is satisfactory whether they work remotely or in the office. On the other hand, 25 (23%) of the participants disagreed with this statement, indicating that they perceive a difference in the quality of service provided by frontline administrative staff when they work remotely against when they work in the office. The following are some of the responses from the students:

> *"If you are visiting them face to face, they are really helpful, I would like them to be active as they are if you are communicating with them via emails."*
>
> *"They should respond to emails especially housing department at the beginning of the year because not all students can come to housing for residence."*
>
> *"Patience, we're not all the same, sometimes they need to clearly explain in a slow manner making sure that the student seeking help understands what is being said."*

The difference in the service satisfaction indicated by the 25 (23%) students is in line with a study conducted by Tratnik, Urh and Jereb (2019), who found that students were more satisfied with face-to-face services compared to other platforms because of inconsistencies with the services on different platforms. Contrary to this study's findings, Markova, Glazkova and Zaborova (2017) found that in their study site, students were more satisfied with remote services over the other platforms. The difference between the findings of these studies may be due to the demographic profiles of these studies' population, which is distinct (Tratnik, Urh and Jereb 2019; Markova, Glazkova and Zaborova 2017). Literature states that the participants' demographic variables between different studies have a great influence on study's findings (Grazhdani and Merollari 2015; Herath 2012).

4.4.9.1 Reasons why the quality of service rendered online and/or face-to-face is different N=25

The aim of this question was to ascertain the reasons why service is not satisfactory when frontline administrative staff are working remotely compared to when they are working in the office. Identifying the reasons is crucial for improving service quality, enhancing employee engagement, and increasing customer satisfaction. Presented below are findings to this question.

The 25 (23%) participants who were of the view that the service is not consistent throughout the different platforms stated the following:

> *"When the admin staff is at the office, you receive immediate feedback, and your issue is solved urgently. I feel like remotely, they are dragging their feet because there are many students who send them emails".*

> *"Remotely not everyone responds on time, your issue can be resolved after a day or 2 or not at all whereas in the office you get clarity on time while you are still inside the office, and everyone is there if maybe your issue cannot be solved by that person you find in the front desk".*

> *"It took long for me to be assisted online via emails and calls".*

The participants further stated that it takes a long time for frontline administrative staff to respond to emails, answer calls or even return a call when working remotely, as compared to when enquiring face-to-face. This also suggests that 25 (23%) participants feel that remote working negatively impacts the quality of service provided by frontline administrative staff, as it may be more difficult to obtain comprehensive and timely assistance to their queries. The students' response further suggests that remote work may be associated with a lack of responsiveness from frontline administrative staff, which affects the corporate image of the institution. One of the participants stated:

> *"DUT staff may better understand students when working in the office, as opposed to remotely or online".*

This results in miscommunication as students may easily misinterpret written text compared to face-face interactions. This suggests that this group of students feel that the quality and effectiveness of service provided may be lower when staff work remotely, as face-to-face communication may be more effective.

Some of the participants (5) suggested that there are several factors that may impact the quality of service provided by frontline administrative staff when working remotely, including connectivity issues, slower response times, reduced responsiveness, decreased effectiveness of communication, and longer waiting times for service. Moreover, these findings are consistent with previous studies, which also state that the lack of consistency is due to lack of technological infrastructure, as institutions may not have fully integrated and robust online systems in place to provide seamless

student services (Al-Shamaileh, Nizamuddin and Atassi 2022; Tamakloe *et al.* 2021; Dean-Heimberg 2014). These studies further state that the mindsets, culture, training, expertise of the staff members and the students' demographic background plays a significant role in the lack of consistency (Al-Shamaileh, Nizamuddin and Atassi 2022; Tamakloe *et al.* 2021).

4.4.10 Ways to improve the service of front-line administrative staff

<div align="right">N=45</div>

Determining ways to improve the service of front-line administrative staff is of utmost importance as the quality of their service can significantly impact customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately the finances of the organization (Al Shobaki 2022; Tanveer, Karim and Mahbub 2018). The following responses consist of a variety of suggestions and criticism that were given by students when asked to suggest what should be done to improve the service of the front-line administrative staff.

4.4.10.1 Professionalism and friendliness

The majority of the 15 (33%) participants suggested that the frontline administrative staff should be more professional, friendly, and helpful towards the students.

4.4.10.2 Hiring more administrative staff

Some 14 (31%) students felt that hiring more administrative staff members would help ensure that everyone receives the necessary assistance, whether online or physically.

4.4.10.3 Staff training and monitoring

 Out of 45 students, 4 (8%) Students suggested that frontline administrative staff members should be better trained and monitored to improve the quality of service they provide.

4.4.10.4 Responsiveness

There are suggestions by 4 (8%) that the staff should be more responsive to emails and calls and that a more relevant way to process student queries should be introduced to ensure that everyone is assisted on time.

4.4.10.5 Fairness and equality

Fairness and equality were mentioned by 4 (8%) students who felt that there should be fairness and equality in the treatment of students, regardless of the nature or size of their queries. They suggest that more sympathetic and competent frontline administrative staff should be hired to assist the students and that professionalism and consistency should be maintained in all interactions with students.

4.4.10.6 Accessibility

Some students 2 (4%) felt that the institution should take steps to make the service more accessible to all students, including those who are not familiar with the technology.

4.4.10.7 Time management

There were suggestions by 2 (4%) participants that the institution should improve its time management and responsiveness to students' queries, particularly in relation to housing allocations. Students suggested that the housing department should start allocations earlier to avoid leaving students without a place to sleep and that the administrative staff should be more patient and friendly when assisting students. It is suggested that the staff should be more motivated and active, and that the institution should hire enough people to ensure that everyone receives the necessary assistance promptly.

A study conducted by Latif *et al.* (2019) found that the administrative staff lacked professionalism, friendliness and compassion when rendering services. Overall, the data given by 45 participants suggests that there is room for improvement in the service provided by the institution's frontline administrative staff to students. This need for improving service is also stated by Panday and Purba (2015). In their study, Panday and Purba (2015) put forward that to yield better improved administrative services in HIEs, the support staff must be subjected to trainings on technologies and skills development programmes. The suggestions provided by the students highlight the areas that the institution needs to work on to better serve its students.

4.5   Assessing using the Batho Pele Principles the degree to which front-line administrative staff service influences the service experience of first-time entry students.

Assessing Using the Batho Pele Principles the degree to which front-line administrative staff service influences the service experience of FTENs was important. This assessment was important as it can assist relevant stakeholders to develop a people-centred approach that can translate into enhanced student satisfaction, improved retention, and a better educational experience (Naidoo and Ramphal 2019; Choeu 2019). Overall, assessing the degree to which front-line administrative staff adhere to Batho Pele principles may assist to empowers the institution to establish robust service standards that prioritize student-centric operations while promoting optimization and driving excellence.

By regularly collecting and analysing students' satisfaction data, educational institutions can ensure the institution is providing the best possible educational experience to students (Choeu 2019). The level of adherence to the principles impacts the service experience of the recipients (Joel 2022). Following is the content data collected and analysed to assess the adherence of frontline administrative staff to Batho Pele principles:

4.5.1   The Batho Pele Principles met by the frontline administrative staff

N = 106

Determining whether the frontline administrative staff in the service departments at DUT met the Batho Pele service delivery principles was essential for promoting effective service delivery, identifying areas that need improvement, ensuring accountability, building a positive image for the organization, and enhancing customer satisfaction (Patricia and Asoba 2021; Ngidi and Dorasamy 2014; Nzimakwe and Mpehle 2012). As the first point of contact for customers seeking services, frontline administrative staff play a crucial role in ensuring that services are delivered with courtesy, efficiency, and professionalism, as per the Batho Pele principles (Al Shobaki 2022; Tanveer, Karim and Mahbub 2018). The participants were asked based on their experience if DUT service departments met the Batho Pele service delivery principles and presented below in Table 4.2 are the findings.

Table 4.2 Batho Pele Principles met by the frontline administrative staff

Batho Pele Principles N = 106				
	Yes		No	
Batho Pele Principles	Freq	%	Freq	%
Consultation	98	92	8	8
Service standard	92	88	14	13
Courtesy	97	92	9	8
Access	96	91	10	9
Information	99	93	7	7
Openness	96	91	10	9
Responsiveness	95	90	11	10
Value for money	84	79	22	21

The dataset presented in Table 4.2 above suggests that the organization has made significant progress in meeting most of the principles. The vast majority of the population surveyed ranging from 84 (79%) to 99 (93%) students expressed that all eight (8) Batho Pele Principle were met by the frontline administrative staff. However, the minority ranged from 7 (7%) to 22 (21%), had an inverse experience and expressed that the administrative staff haven't met the Batho Pele Principles. As much as the figures of the majority were overwhelmingly high, the figures of the minority cannot be overlooked as they represent thousands of students when rationed to the entire student population. As stated by previous studies it is important for an institution to develop directed approaches and remedy the frontline administrative service to be in line with Batho Pele Principles (Naidoo and Ramphal 2019; Choeu 2019).

4.5.2 The students' service experiences with adherence of the institution to the Batho Pele Principles

N=106

Ascertaining the students' service experience with the adherence of the institution to the Batho Pele principles is crucial for improving student satisfaction, adherence to guidelines, reputation management, and compliance (Mohatle and Phori 2022; Hult *et al.* 2017). Furthermore, Institutions that prioritize assessing their student's service experience can gain valuable insights into the quality

of services offered and take corrective action to improve service delivery (Tanveer, Karim and Mahbub 2018). The students were asked to rate their satisfaction levels with different aspects of the service they received.

The ratings were measured on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "Very Unsatisfied" and 5 is "Very Satisfied". The different aspects of the service experience were evaluated based on the Batho Pele Principles, which are a set of principles that emphasize the provision of quality services to the recipients in South African public institutions. Presented below in Table 4.3 are the findings.

Table 4.3 Participant's service experience with front-line administrative staff's adherence to the Batho Pele Principles

N=107

The students' service experience N =106	Very Unsatisfied 1		Unsatisfied 2		Neutral 3		Satisfied 4		Very satisfied 5	
Batho Pele Principles	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Consultation	12	11	4	4	34	32	46	43	11	10
Service standard	11	10	7	7	31	29	43	40	15	14
Courtesy	10	9	9	8	28	26	40	37	20	17
Access	11	10	14	13	28	26	32	30	22	21
Information	8	7	10	9	28	26	38	36	23	22
Openness	9	8	11	10	30	28	43	40	13	12
Responsiveness	9	8	8	7	34	32	41	38	15	14
Value for money	12	11	5	5	36	34	37	35	15	14

The findings presented in Table 4.3 above indicates a mixed bag of experiences when it comes to participants' interactions with front-line administrative staff and their adherence to the Batho Pele Principles. While certain principles like Information received relatively more positive responses of 61 (58%), when combining "satisfied" and "very satisfied". Others such as Value for Money received the least positive responses of 52 (49%) when combining "satisfied" and "very satisfied". From the data we can further infer that all the 8 principles when combined were mostly rated as

neutral by 64 (43%) of the participants. As all 8 principles were mostly rated as neutral, this means that should the efficacy of the service deteriorate, the frontline administrative staff's adherence to the Batho Pele Principles will be rated as negative.

4.6   Ascertaining the implications of front-line administrative staff's service on the service experience of first-time entry students

N=103

It is critical to ascertain the implications of front-line administrative staff service on the service experience of FTENs. Ascertaining the implications of the current service may help in the alleviation of the current service standard, getting service feedback, and can assist the institution to mitigate student attrition and discourage bad publicity (Mojapelo, Modiba and Saurombe 2023; Joel 2022; Arboleda and Alonso 2017). Presented below are the findings of the received from participant regarding the implications of frontline administrative staff's service on the service experience of FTENs.

The responses of the 69 (68%) participants reflect positive implication with the service of the frontline administrative staff. The service experience of students has positive implication on word of mouth about the institution. This group of students stated that they would describe the staff as helpful, patient, and accommodating. Furthermore, this group highlighted that they would describe DUT as a good university that puts the needs of students first and provides excellent educational services. They also mentioned that they would describe DUT with its staff that is professional, kind, and willing to assist students with any issues they may have. Some students felt that the staff was very helpful when they approached them in person and were patient and understanding when responding to their queries. They appreciated the staff's willingness to offer exceptional service and take the time to solve their problems. Following are some of their responses:

> *"They made me feel more positive and excited about being part of the DUT family".*
>
> *"I would confidently encourage them to enrol at DUT because the service provided by frontline administrative staff is perfect".*
>
> *"I am going to encourage my siblings to also apply at DUT next, because it is a great institution".*
>
> *"On the next career guidance in my high school, I am going to speak highly about DUT due to swift service received for the past few months as a first-year student".*

How students describe the institution to other prospective students based on their service experience can significantly impact the institution's reputation and student enrolment (Gxothiwe 2022). These findings are important for improving the service and ensuring a positive service experience, which can be leveraged through testimonials and marketing to attract more students (Rehman 2020; Osman and Saputra 2019; Xulu-Gama 2019).

As much as there is a convincing 69 (68%) of positive experiences with the service rendered by the frontline administrative staff, a significant of 34 (32%) participants voiced a contrary experience towards these services which results to negative implications. The negative service experience, implicated student attrition, student satisfaction, diversity and inclusion Following are some of their responses:

> *"The institution doesn't care about your concerns, for example, due to receiving failed service at the faculty department, I pleaded a transfer from my department to another at ML Sultan, they said they'll answer me within a month about my request but now it's been 4 months without their response".*
>
> *"I was not satisfied with how they handled my query, I felt like they get frustrated about hearing a lot of queries and they end up declining every query".*
>
> *"I am felt like they did not want to assist me because of my ethnicity".*

Overall, these findings highlight the need for DUT to take a critical look at its administrative service delivery, with a focus on improving response times, communication, and staff attitudes. This may involve investing in new technology and systems to support remote service delivery, providing training and support for staff members to better engage with students of all group ethnicities, and developing clear policies and procedures for handling student concerns. By taking these steps, DUT can work towards providing a more consistent, effective, and student-centred service to its students.

4.7 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, a thorough and detailed analysis and discussion of the study's findings are presented. The chapter began by delineating the procedure used for data analysis and presenting essential details, such as the response rate and characteristics of the participants. Following this, the chapter critically evaluates the data in line with the study's objectives, encompassing the assessment of

FTENs' perceptions regarding the service provided by front-line administrative staff, the measurement of the service's impact on the service experiences of FTENs using the Batho Pele Principles, and an exploration of the consequences of front-line administrative staff's service on the overall service experience of FTENs. The next chapter will furnish a comprehensive summary, draw conclusions, and offer recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the study's findings were presented, analyzed, and discussed. This chapter summarizes the findings in line with the study's objectives, conclude the study and subsequently suggest recommendations based on the gaps identified in the study.

5.2 Summary of findings by the study's objectives

Following is the presentation of finding arranged by the study's objectives.

5.2.1 To determine the perceptions of first-time entry students on the service of frontline administrative staff

The findings indicate that all participants required assistance from staff, with student housing being the most in-demand department. Key service areas included residence allocation, registration refunds, and academic queries, with face-to-face interactions being the preferred method for seeking help. While the majority of students were satisfied with the assistance they received, a small minority reported unsatisfactory experiences. Students identified a need for significant improvements in the service provided by frontline administrative staff, suggesting that the institution should invest in staff training, increase staffing levels, promote professionalism, enhance friendliness and responsiveness, ensure fairness and equality in treatment, improve accessibility, and enforce better time management practices among staff. These findings underscore the importance of addressing these issues to enhance overall student satisfaction and service quality.

5.2.2 To assess using the Batho Pele Principles the degree to which front-line administrative staff service influences the service experience of first-time entry students

The findings show that the institution has shown significant progress in adhering to almost all the Batho Pele Principles, but some areas require improvement. The dataset shows that the principle of consultation was mostly met, with almost the entire group of participants indicating that the organization has consulted students, but further improvements are needed. Most participants felt that the principles of courtesy, access, information, openness, and responsiveness were met, but a

significant minority suggested that improvements were still needed. Additionally, some of the participants did not feel that they were receiving value for money on the service and indicated that the organization needs to focus on improving efficiency.

The participants' service experiences were evaluated based on the Batho Pele Principles using a Likert scale. Based on the results, it can be deduced that the majority of students had a satisfactory service experience. The consultation aspect received the highest satisfaction rating, as only a small percentage of students were dissatisfied. Similarly, service standards, responsiveness, and transparency had high satisfaction levels, with over half of the participants expressing gratification with the service. The principle of access, courtesy, information, and value for money were also rated as satisfactory. Overall, this assessment indicates the level of front-line administrative staff's adherence to the Batho Pele Principles as having a positive influence on the service experience of FTENs. A significant minority of the participants expressed certain areas of the service require improvement to better address the needs and expectations of the students.

5.2.3 To ascertain the implications of front-line administrative staff's service on the service experience of first-time entry students

The study's findings indicate a predominantly positive impact of frontline administrative services on over half of the sampled population's service experiences. These participants particularly highlighted the positive influence of staff professionalism, efficiency, responsiveness, and helpfulness. However, a smaller faction expressed negative experiences related to delays in resolving queries and issues, coupled with a perceived lack of courtesy in handling their concerns. These expressed dissatisfactions significantly affect students' service experiences in several ways. Delays led to frustration and dissatisfaction, causing prolonged stress and inconvenience when issues were not promptly addressed, thereby affecting their perception of the institution's commitment to meeting their needs. The findings also revealed inconsistency in service quality, making it challenging to predict the level of service received. This inconsistency erodes trust and confidence in the institution's ability to provide reliable support, ultimately impacting overall student satisfaction and their perception of the institution's dedication to their well-being and success. Regarding the likelihood of recommending DUT to prospective students, the majority expressed a high likelihood of recommending it, while a smaller faction cited negative experiences as a reason for not recommending the institution.

5.3   Conclusion

This study sought to examine FTENs' experiences with front-line administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. The findings show that almost the entire population of students positively perceived the service of the frontline administrative staff as satisfactory due to the successful service they received. A very small faction of the participants received a failed service and viewed the service as unsatisfactory. The finding further indicated that there is still a need to improve the online/remote service given the ever developments of technology into various aspect of the society. With regards to assessing using the Batho Pele Principles, the degree to which the service of frontline influences the service experience, the study indicated that the values of courtesy, access, information, openness, and responsiveness were upheld. However, a minority of the participants believed that additional improvements could be done. The study further indicates that the service of frontline administrative staff has positive implications on the service experience of FTENs, resulting in some participants indicating that they are most likely to recommend the institution to other prospective students.

The study has succeeded in its aim as the examination indicates that the FTENs have had positive experiences with the service of frontline administrative staff. The study further identified areas of improvement in the service rendered by frontline administrative staff.

5.4   Recommendations

Based on the presented findings, the following recommendations can enhance the quality of service provided by frontline administrative staff:

- Findings indicate that when students received failed service, they resorted to contacting the student representative council, head of department and some discontinued their attempt to acquire the service. The SRC or the HOD may not be readily available to assist the students and for them to discontinue to seek the service is not an ideal alternative for the image of the institution. Therefore, it is recommended that that the institution invests in technologies such as chatbots and online self-help portals to provide students with quick and efficient assistance.
- With regards to communication both telephone and emails, participants were concerned about the delayed turnaround time and some never received any response at all. Apart from instilling a culture that values prompt communication and places a high priority on student concerns, it is

recommended that the institution invest in monitoring systems. With these systems, the institution can gather data and analyse it to monitor turnaround time and query resolution rates which can assist to identify areas for improvement.

- Participants also indicated that some staff members lacked courtesy, and some showed incompetency when rendering service. Therefore, even though there are administrative staff training programmes, it is recommended that the institution must make them more mandatory and advance its student feedback mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of these programmes.
- The findings also show that the adherence of the service departments to all 8 Batho Pele Principles when combined were mostly rated as neutral by more than half of the participants. To improve the service from neutral to very satisfied or satisfied, it is therefore recommended that the service departments, develop and publish service charters that clearly outline the services offered, service standards, turnaround times, and avenues for recourse if standards are not met.

Improving the students' service experience, the DUT can leverage positive word of mouth to attract and retain a larger student population.

5.5   Opportunities for future research

The study only focused on the perceptions of first-time entry students (FTENs); further research can focus on other groups of students though they may not be more susceptible to being affected by poor service than FTENs. Further studies can also focus on the perceptions of frontline administrators on the service they render to students.

REFERENCES

Abbate-Vaughn, J. 2005. 'They are just like any of us': improving teaching students' understanding of marginalized urban pupils through the use of contextualized literature. *Improving Schools,* 8(2): 133–151

Afthanorhan, A., Awang, Z., Rashid, N., Foziah, H. and Ghazali, P. L. 2019. Assessing the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction. *Management Science Letters,* 9(1): 13-24.

Aguinis, H. and Solarino, A. M. 2019. Transparency and replicability in qualitative research: the case of interviews with elite informants. *Strategic Management Journal*, 40(8): 1291-1315.

Agustini, M. Y. D. H. 2018. Survey by knocking the door and response rate enhancement technique in international business research. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 16(2): 155-163.

Ahmad, M. A. A. and Jameel, A. S. 2018. Factors affecting on job satisfaction among academic staff. *Polytechnic Journal,* 8(2):119-128.

Ahmed, I. and Ishtiaq, S. 2021. Reliability and validity: importance in medical research methods. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association,* 71(10): 2401-2406.

Akaranga, S. I. and Makau, B. K. 2016. Ethical considerations and their applications to research: a case of the University of Nairobi. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research,* 3(12): 1-9.

Akhtar, D. M. I. 2016. Research design. Research in Social Science: interdisciplinary. Available https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2862445 (Accessed 12 November 2022).

Al Shobaki, M. J. 2022. Administrative communication and its impact on improving the efficiency of decision support systems in Palestinian higher education institutions. *International Journal of Academic Information Systems Research,* 6(4): 1-18.

Ali, B. J., Baban G., Othman, B. J., Ahmed, S. A., Ismael, N. B., Hamza, P. A., Aziz, H. M., Sabir, B. Y., Sorguli, S. and Anwar, G. 2021. Hotel service quality: the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in hospitality. *International Journal of Engineering, Business and Management*, 5(3): 14-28.

Al-Shamaileh, O., Nizamuddin, N. and Atassi, R. 2022. Determinants of students' satisfaction with higher education institutions in face-to-face and online learning environments. *Springer International Publishing*, 3: 661-673.

Anderson, R. 2007. Thematic content analysis (TCA). Descriptive presentation of qualitative data, 3:1-4.
Available:
 http://rosemarieanderson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ThematicContentAnalysis.pdf
(Accessed 23 August 2022).

Antwi, S. K. and Hamza, K. 2015. Qualitative and quantitative research paradigms in business research: a philosophical reflection. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 7(3): 217-225.

Apuke, O. D. 2017. Quantitative research methods: a synopsis approach Kuwait chapter of Arabian. *Journal of Business and Management Review*, 33(5471): 1-8.

Arboleda, A. M. and Alonso, J. C. 2017. Students' emotional experience at the university: an alternative approach to understanding students as consumers. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 38(3): 129-141.

Arifin, S. R. M. 2018. Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2): 30-33.

Baik, C., Larcombe, W. and Brooker, A. 2019. How universities can enhance student mental wellbeing: the student perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development,* 38(4): 674-687.

Bakrie, M., Sujanto, B. and Rugaiyah, R. 2019. The influence of service quality, institutional reputation, students' satisfaction on students' loyalty in higher education institution. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Studies*, 1(5): 379-391.

Balinado, J. R., Prasetyo, Y. T., Young, M. N., Persada, S. F., Miraja, B. A. and Perwira Redi, A. A. N. 2021. The effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in an automotive after-sales service. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity,* 7(2): 1-12.

Baloyi, R. 2008. The impact of public servants' conduct on service delivery: service delivery review. *A Learning Journal for The Public Service*, 6(3): 9-11.

Bani Issa, W., Al Akour, I., Ibrahim, A., Almarzouqi, A., Abbas, S., Hisham, F. and Griffiths, J. 2020. Privacy, confidentiality, security and patient safety concerns about electronic health records. *International Nursing Review*, 67(2): 218-230.

Barbier L. and Tengeh K. R. 2022. Enhancing public service delivery in a VUCA environment in South Africa: a literature review. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*, 9(4): 418–437.

Baumann, C. Timming, A. R. and Gollan, P. J. 2016. Taboo tattoos? A study of the gendered effects of body art on consumers' attitudes toward visibly tattooed front-line staff. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 29: 31-39.

Bell, E. and Bryman, A. 2007. The ethics of management research: an exploratory content analysis. *British Journal of Management*, 18(1): 63-77.

Berndt, A. E. 2020. Sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(2): 224-226.

Berryman, D. R. 2019. Ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods: information for librarian researchers. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 38(3): 271-279.

Biersteker, T. J. 1989. Critical reflections on post-positivism in international relations. *International Studies Quarterly*, 33(3): 263-267.

Bickman, L., Rog, D. J. and Hedrick, T. E. 2009. Applied research design: a practical approach. *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, 2: 3-43.

Blumenberg, C. and Barros, A. J. 2018. Response rate differences between web and alternative data collection methods for public health research: a systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Public Health,* 63: 765-773.

Bolarinwa, O. A. 2015. Principles and methods of validity and reliability testing of questionnaires used in social and health science research. *Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 22(4): 195-208.

Bossu, C., Brown, N. and Warren, V. 2019. Professional and support staff in higher education: an introduction in professional and support staff in higher education. Available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328535003_Professional_and_Support_Staff_in_Higher_ Education_An_Introduction (Accessed 23 January 2023).

Brauns, M. and Mdlazi, D. 2015. Ethics, codes of conduct, morals and professionalism as a bulwark against corruption and unethical conduct in the public sector: a case of South Africa. Risk Governance and Control. *Financial Markets and Institutions,* 5(4): 207-212.

Brodie, J. 2016. Synergistic effects of climate change and agricultural land use on mammals. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 14(1): 20-26.

Brynard D. J., Hanekom S. X. and Brynard P. 2014. *Introduction to research*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Bukenya, R., Ahmed, A., Andrade, J. M., Grigsby-Toussaint, D. S., Muyonga, J. and Andrade, J. E., 2017. Validity and reliability of general nutrition knowledge questionnaire for adults in Uganda. *Nutrients*, 9(2): 172.

Buultjens, M. and Robinson, P. 2011. Enhancing aspects of the higher education student experience. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 33(4) 337-346.

Cacciattolo, M. 2015. Ethical considerations in research. In: Vicars, M, Steinberg, S. R., Mckenna, T. J. and Cacciattolo, M. 1st ed. *The praxis of English language teaching and learning (PELT): beyond the binaries: researching critically in EFL classrooms*. Melbourne: Sense Publishers Rotterdam, 55-73.

Campbell, J. 2014. South Africa: what does "service delivery" really mean? council on foreign relations (blog). Available: https://www.cfr.org/blog/south-africa-what-does-service-delivery-really-mean (Accessed 22 April 2023).

Carvalho, T. and Videira, P. 2019. Losing autonomy? Restructuring higher education institutions governance and relations between teaching and non-teaching staff. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(4): 762-773.

Chan, R. Y. 2016. Understanding the purpose of higher education: an analysis of the economic and social benefits for completing a college degree. *Journal of Education Policy, Planning and Administration*, 6(5): 1-40.

Cheema, D. F. E., Shah, A. A., Phanwar, A., Aftab, D. F. and Zia, S. 2015. Do HR practices affect service quality of front-line staff. *IBT Journal of Business Studies (JBS),* 11(1): 40-39.

Cho, J. Y. and Lee, E. H. 2014. Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*(32): 1-20.

Choeu, M. M. 2019. Factors affecting service delivery at the University of Limpopo with a special reference to administrative and secretariat challenges. Master of Public Administration, University of Limpopo.

Cini, L. 2019. Disrupting the neoliberal university in South Africa: the# FeesMustFall movement in 2015. *Current Sociology*, 67(7): 942-959.

Ciobanu, A. 2013. The role of student services in the improving of student experience in higher education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 92: 169-173.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2017. *Validity and reliability: research methods in education*. 8th ed. London: Routledge.

Cooke, D. K., Brant, K. K. and Woods, J.M., 2019. The role of public service motivation in employee work engagement: A test of the job demands-resources model. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 42(9): 765-775.

Cooper, M. M. 1997. Distinguishing critical and post-positivist research. *College Composition and Communication,* 48(4): 556-561.

Creswell, J. W. and Creswell, J. D. 2018. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approache*s. Los Angeles: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. and Creswell, J. 2017. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Davies, C. and Fisher, M. 2018. Understanding research paradigms. *Journal of the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses Association*, 21(3): 21-32.

Davis, M. and Fifolt, M. 2017. Exploring employee perceptions of Six Sigma as a change management program in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 40(1): 81-93.

Dean-Heimberg, T. 2014. Examining fully online degree students' perceptions of online student support services: a mixed method study using grounded theory and Rasch analysis. Doctor of Education. California State University.

Dlamini, S. P. 2020. Factors influencing the throughput of postgraduates in a South African University of Technology. Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management, Durban University of Technology.

Dingel, J. I. and Neiman, B. 2020. How many jobs can be done at home? *Journal of Public Economics*, 189: 104235. Available: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0047272720300992 (Accessed 17 October 2023).

Driscoll, D. L., Appiah-Yeboah, A., Salib, P. and Rupert, D. J. 2007. Merging qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods research: how to and why not. *Ecological and Environmental Anthropology,* 3(1): e52. Available: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5325924/ (Accessed 17 October 2023).

Dzaga, T. V. 2018. Communication tools for the enhancement of effective management and governance at institutions of higher learning: a case of the University of Venda. The 3rd annual international conference on public administration and development alternatives. Saldahna Bay, 04 - 06 July 2018. Western Cape: 333-338. Available: http://ulspace.ul.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10386/2431/dzaga_communication_2018.pdf?sequence=1 &isAllowed=y (Accessed 12 December 2022).

Elfil, M. and Negida, A. 2017. Sampling methods in clinical research; an educational review. *Emergency Medicine,* 5(1): 1-3.

Emery, C. R. and Barker, K. J. 2007. The effect of transactional and transformational leadership styles on the organizational commitment and job satisfaction of customer contact personnel. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 11(1): 77-90.

Erasmus, B. J. 2020. Perceptions of administrative staff on career advancement realities at a South African university. *Management-Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 25(1): 69-88.

Farahmandian, S. Minavand, H. and Afshardost, M. 2013. Perceived service quality and student satisfaction in higher education. *Journal of Business and Management*, 12(4): 65-74.

Farooq, M. S., Salam, M., Fayolle, A., Jaafar, N. and Ayupp, K. 2018. Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Malaysia Airlines: A PLS-SEM approach. *Journal of Air Transport Management,* 67: 169-180.

Fernandez, R. M. and Campero, S. 2016. Gender sorting and the glass ceiling in high-tech firms. *ILR Review,* 70(1): 73-104.

Flifel, A., Zakic, N. and Tornjanski, A. 2017. Identification and selection of Six Sigma projects. *Journal of Process Management New Technologies*, 5(2): 10-17.

Fomunyam, K. G. 2017. Student protest and the culture of violence at African universities: an inherited ideological trait. *Yesterday and Today*, 3(17): 38-63.

Fouka, G. and Mantzorou, M. 2011. What are the major ethical issues in conducting research? Is there a conflict between the research ethics and the nature of nursing. *Health Science Journal*, 5(1): 3-14.

Garner, J. 2017. Survey response rates. In: Allen, M. ed. The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods. London: Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 1729-1730.

Gbadamosi, G. and De Jager, J. 2009. 'What you see is what you get': service quality, students' perceptions and satisfaction at South African universities. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 23(5): 877-893.

Glette, M. K., Røise, O., Kringeland, T., Churruca, K., Braithwaite, J. and Wiig, S. 2018. Nursing home leaders' and nurses' experiences of resources, staffing and competence levels and the relation to hospital readmissions–a case study. *BMC Health Services Research,* 18(1): 1-15.

Grant, C. and Osanloo, A. 2015. Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: creating the blueprint for your "house". *Administrative Issues Journal Education Practice and Research*, 4(2): 12-26.

Grazhdani, S. and Merollari, K. 2015. The influence of demographic factor on customer service quality perception. *European Journal of Economics and Business Studies*, 1(2): 155-167.

Green, P. 2014. Measuring service quality in higher education: A South African case study. *Journal of International Education Research (JIER),* 10(2): 131-142.

Green, P. and Adekanmbi, O. 2014. Factors affecting the improvement of service quality at Universities of Technology: the case of South Africa. *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies,* 6(12): 947-957.

Green, P. and Hardman, S. 2014. Service quality evaluation: a system thinking approach. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 39(2): 169-177.

Green, P. and Ramroop, S. 2014. Prioritising factors influencing service quality at Durban University of Technology: AHP approach. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 40 (2): 243-250.

Gregory, J. L. 2019. Applying SERVQUAL: Using service quality perceptions to improve student satisfaction and program image. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 11 (4): 788-799.

Gremyr, I., Birch-Jensen, A., Kumar, M. and Löfberg, N. 2022. Quality functions' use of customer feedback as activation triggers for absorptive capacity and value co-creation. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 42(13): 218-242.

Gxothiwe, P.N., 2022. Students' perception of financial aid service quality at a selected University of Technology. Master of Business Administration, Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Hakanen, T., Gummesson, E. and Jaakkola, E. 2012. Co-creating customer-focused solutions within business networks: a service perspective. *Journal of Service Management,* 23(4): 593-611.

Haradhan, K. M. 2020. Quantitative research: a successful investigation in natural and social sciences. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 9(4): 52-79.

Harris, L. M. 2020. Assessing states: water service delivery and evolving state–society relations in Accra, Ghana and Cape Town, South Africa. Environment and planning C: *Politics and Space*, 38(2): 290-311.

Hawkins, J. 2017. Thematic analysis. In: Allen, M. ed. The SAGE encyclopedia of communication research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1757-1760. Available: https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i14662.xml (Accessed 13 December 2022).

Hedengren, M. and Lockerd, M., 2017. Tell me what you really think: lessons from negative student feedback. *The Writing Centre Journal*, 36(1): 131-145.

Henderson, K. A. 2011. Post-positivism and the pragmatics of leisure research. *Leisure Sciences,* 33(4): 341-346.

Herath, H. M. 2012. Consumer demographics and expected service quality. *International Journal of Marketing and Management Research,* 3(5): 73-89.

Herrman, A. 2017. Focus groups. In: Allen, M. ed. *The sage encyclopaedia of communication research methods*. London: SAGE Publications, 579-581. Available https://dokumen.pub/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods-1nbsped-9781483381435.html (Accessed 22 November 2022).

Hoque, K. E., Razak, A. Z. A. and Zohora, M. F. 2013. Service delivery in higher education (HE): a comparative study between public and private universities. *Life Science Journal,* 10(3): 108-117.

Hu, S, 2014. Study population. *Encyclopaedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*, 6412–6414. Available: https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2893 (Accessed 12 July 2023).

Hult, G. T. M., Morgeson, F. V., Morgan, N. A., Mithas, S. and Fornell, C. 2017. Do managers know what their customers think and why? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(1): 37-54.

Hunter, F. 2018. Training administrative staff to become key players in the internationalization of higher education. *International Higher Education*, 92: 16-17.

Hussain, S. B. 2010. Crisis communication planning and management at higher education institutions in KwaZulu-Natal. Master's in technology: Public Relations Management, Durban University of Technology.

Hwang, Y. S. and Choi, Y. K. 2019. Higher education service quality and student satisfaction, institutional image, and behavioural intention. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal,* 47(2): 1-12.

Ibrahim, M. Z., Ab Rahman, M. N. and Yasin, R. M. 2012. Assessing students' perceptions of service quality in technical educational and vocational training (TEVT) institution in Malaysia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 56: 272-283.

Imenda, S. 2017. Is there a conceptual difference between theoretical and conceptual frameworks? *Journal of Social Sciences*, 38(2): 185-195.

Iruonagbe, C.T., Imhonopi, D. and Egharevba, M. E. 2015. Higher education in Nigeria and the emergence of private universities. *International journal of Education and Research*, *3*(2): 49-64.

IseOlorunkanmi, J. O., Rotimi, M. E., Adebola, O. G., Lawal, A. I., Henry, N. L. C. and Adebisi, T. 2021. Challenges in Nigeria's education sector and the migration of Nigerian postgraduate students to South African universities. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1): 1-19.

Joel, C. 2022. Batho Pele Principles in the 21ˢᵗ century: the case of the Department of Home Affairs, South Africa. *African Journal of Development Studies*, *Formerly AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society*, (2): 207-222. Available: https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.31920/26343649/2022/SIv2a12#:~:text=https%3A//hdl.handle.net/ 10520/ejc%2Daa_affrika1_v2022_nsi1_a12 (Accessed 22 November 2022).

Kabadayi, S., Ali, F., Choi, H., Joosten, H. and Lu, C. 2019. Smart service experience in hospitality and tourism services: a conceptualization and future research agenda. *Journal of Service Management,* 30(3): 326-348.

Kairuz, T., Crump, K. and O'Brien, A. 2007. Tools for data collection and analysis. *The Pharmaceutical Journal,* 278: 371-373.

Kaisara, G. and Pather, S. 2011. The e-Government evaluation challenge: a South African Batho Pele-aligned service quality approach. *Government Information Quarterly*, 28(2): 211-221.

Kaur, P. Stoltzfus, J. and Yellapu, V. 2018. Descriptive statistics. *International Journal of Academic Medicine*, 4(1): 60-63.

Kearney, T., Walsh, G., Barnett, W., Gong, T., Schwabe, M. and Ifie, K. 2017. Emotional intelligence in front-line/back-office employee relationships. *Journal of Services Marketing,* 31(2): 185-199.

Khoo, S., Ha, H. and McGregor, S. L. 2017. Service quality and student/customer satisfaction in the private tertiary education sector in Singapore. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 31(4): 430-444.

Khumalo, M. 2019. Determining the effectiveness of e-learning for higher education students a case of the Durban University of Technology. Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management, Durban University of Technology.

Kirchner, J. E., Parker, L. E., Bonner, L. M., Fickel, J. J., Yano, E. M. and Ritchie, M. J. 2012. Roles of managers, frontline staff and local champions, in implementing quality improvement: stakeholders' perspectives. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 18(1): 63-69.

Kivunja, C. 2018. Distinguishing between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework: a systematic review of lessons from the field. *International Journal of Higher Education,* 7(6): 26-41.

Kivunja, C. and Kuyini, A. B. 2017. Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5): 26-41.

Kundi, G. M. Khan, M. S. Qureshi, Q. Khan, Y. and Akhtar, R. 2014. Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in higher education institutions. *Industrial Engineering Letters*, 4(3): 23-28.

Küskü, F. 2003. Employee satisfaction in higher education: the case of academic and administrative staff in Turkey. *Career Development International*, 8(7): 347-356.

Kochanowski, Y. J. 2011. Human capital management in government: replacing government retirees. *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration*, 34(1):85-108.

Langrafe, T. F. and Barakat, S. R. 2020. A stakeholder theory approach to creating value in higher education institutions. *The Bottom Line,* 33(4) 297-313.

Latif, K. F., Latif, I., Farooq Sahibzada, U. and Ullah, M. 2019. In search of quality: measuring higher education service quality (HiEduQual). *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence,* 30(7-8): 768-791.

Leedy, P. D. and Ormrod, J. E. 2010. *Practical research: planning and design*. 9th ed, Pearson education. New Jersey, J Merrill publishing, Inc.

Luescher, T., Loader, L. and Mugume, T. 2017. # FeesMustFall: An internet-age student movement in South Africa and the case of the University of the Free State. *Politikon*, 44(2): 231-245.

Maguire, M. and Delahunt, B. 2017. Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3) 3351- 3364.

Maher, C., Hadfield, M., Hutchings, M. and De Eyto, A. 2018. Ensuring rigor in qualitative data analysis: a design research approach to coding combining NVivo with traditional material methods. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 17(1): 1-13.

Majeed, A. and Lee, S. 2021. Anonymization techniques for privacy preserving data publishing: a comprehensive survey. *IEEE Access*, 9: 8512-8545.

Mamokhere, J., Musitha, M. E. and Netshidzivhani, V. M. 2021. The implementation of the basic values and principles governing public administration and service delivery in South Africa. *Journal of Public Affairs,* 22(4): 26-27.

Managa, A. 2012. *Unfulfilled promises and their consequences*: A reflection on local government performance and the critical issue of poor service delivery in South Africa. (Policy Brief) Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria.

Maphumulo, W. T. and Bhengu, B. R. 2019, Challenges of quality improvement in the healthcare of South Africa post-apartheid: a critical review'. *Curations,* 42(1): 1-9.

Markova, T. Glazkova, I. and Zaborova, E. 2017. Quality issues of online distance learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 237: 685-691.

Masantiah, C., Pasiphol, S. and Tangdhanakanond, K. 2020. Student and feedback: which type of feedback is preferable? *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences,* 41(2): 269-274.

Maseko, N. 2019. An analytical study of xenophobic attacks in South African universities/tertiary institutions with specific reference to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and Durban University of Technology (DUT). Master of Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Masia, M. 2022. Investigation on the implementation of Batho Pele principles on service delivery: a case study at Thulamela Local Municipality. Master of Public Management, University of Venda.

Masiya, T., Davids, Y. D. and Mangai, M. S. 2019. Assessing service delivery: public perception of municipal service delivery in South Africa. Theoretical and empirical researches in urban management. *Research Centre in Public Administration and Public Services,* 14(2), 20–40.

Masuku, M. M. and Jili, N. N. 2019. Public service delivery in South Africa: the political influence at local government level. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(4): 19-35.

Matiti. S. 2014. An evaluation on the implementation of Batho Pele service delivery policy: a case of South African social security agency in Amathole district municipality. Master of public administration, University of Fort Hare.

Mavundla, N. P. 2021. The motives behind students pursuing postgraduate studies in the Humanities: a case study of the postgraduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Master's in Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Mayorga, L. K. 2019. HEIs and workforce development: helping undergraduates acquire career-readiness attributes. *Industry and Higher Education*, 33(6): 370-380.

Mbatha, N. P. 2021. The provision of academic literacies for the enhancement of teaching and learning in a selected programme at a university in KwaZulu-Natal. Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management, Durban University of Technology.

Mboweni, P. C. 2013. Implementation of Batho Pele Principles in the greater Tzaneen Local Muncipality. Master of Public Administration, University of Limpopo.

Mcleod, S. 2023. Qualitative vs quantitative research: methods & data analysis. Simply psychology (blog). Available: https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html (Accessed 23 June2023).

Meesala, A. and Paul, J. 2018. Service quality, consumer satisfaction and loyalty in hospitals: thinking for the future. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 40: 261-269.

Mhlanga, J. S. 2021. Measuring the perceptions of physical environment comfort on office employees' performance: a case study at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa. Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management, Durban University of Technology.

Midor, K. and Kučera, M. 2018. Improving the service with the service quality method. *Management Systems in Production Engineering*, 26(1): 60-65.

Mikheev, A., Serkina, Y. and Vasyaev, A. 2021. Retracted article: current trends in the digital transformation of higher education institutions in Russia. *Education and Information Technologies,* 26(4): 4537-4551.

Mohatle, S. A. and Phori, J. R. 2022. Enhancing Batho Pele principles in the context of school administration clerks: the quest for public service excellence. *Education and New Developments*, 414-417. Available http://end-educationconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022v1end094.pdf (Accessed 13 August 2022).

Mojapelo, M., Modiba, M. and Saurombe, N. 2023. Applying Batho Pele Principles in South African public archives–do public programming initiatives count? *Information Development*, 39(2): 357-375.

Molina-Azorin, J. F., Tari, J. J., Lopez-Gamero, M. D., Pereira-Moliner, J. and Pertusa-Ortega, E. M. 2018. The implementation and advantages of mixed methods in competitive strategy and management systems. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 10(1): 412-421.

Moodley, P. 2012. A communication perspective on the challenges faced by key government sectors in the application and adoption of Batho Pele Principles: a case study of Addington and RK Khan hospitals". Doctor of Communication Science, University of Zululand.

Mosadi, P. M. 2004. The implementation of the Batho-Pele principles in the Northwest provincial department of social services, arts, culture, and sport. Master of Development and Management, North-West University.

Moyo, T. 2017. Data collection instruments in research: an ontological and epistemological reflection. *Journal of Public Administration*, 52(1): 285-295.

Mpofu, S. 2017. Disruption as a communicative strategy: The case of# FeesMustFall and# RhodesMustFall students' protests in South Africa. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 9(2): 351-373.

Mpungose, B. P. 2021. Transformation of the commercial property sector for the realisation of its economic benefits: an exploratory study of key stakeholders' perspectives in South Africa. Master of Management Sciences Degree in Administration and Information Management, Durban University of Technology.

Msiza, M. L. and Mthembu, N. 2020. A review of leadership moral ethics in the 21st century: a South African perspective. *The 5th Annual International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives*, virtual conference, 07-09 October 2020. Available: http://hdl.handle.net/10386/3196 (Accessed 20 June 2022).

Mutekwe, E. 2017. Unmasking the ramifications of the fees-must-fall-conundrum in higher education institutions in South Africa: a critical perspective. *Perspectives in Education*, 35(2): 142-154.

Naidoo, C. and Ramphal, R. R. 2019. From Batho Pele principles to public participation in basic services delivery at municipal level in South Africa: using Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality as a case, 13th International Business Conference, 22-25 September 2019, Cape Town, 248-274. Available http://hdl.handle.net/10500/26345 (Accessed 22 November 2022).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. 2017. Why are South African Universities sites of struggle today? *The Thinker*, 70: 52-71.

Neuman, W. L. 2014. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 7th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Ngidi, T. L. and Dorasamy, N. 2014. Imperatives for good governance: a case study of the implementation Batho Pele Principles at Durban home affairs regional level. *Journal of Social Sciences,* 38(1): 9-21.

Ngulube, P. and Ukwoma, S. C. 2019. Cartographies of research designs in library information science research in Nigeria and South Africa, 2009–2015. *Library and Information Science Research*, 41(3): 100-121.

Noor, N. M., Idris, A. K. M., Tarmazi, S. A. A., Hashim, N. and Ghazali, N. 2017. Factors that influence frontline employee behaviour towards guest satisfaction in hotel. *Journal of Academia,* 5(1): 147-157.

Noviantoro, R., Maskuroh, N., Santoso, B., Fahlevi, M., Pramono, R., Purwanto, A., Purba, J. T. and Munthe, A. P. 2020. Did quality management system ISO 9001 version 2015 influence business performance? Evidence from Indonesian hospitals. Systematic reviews in pharmacy. *A Multifaceted review Journal in the Field of Pharmacy,* 11(8): 499-507.

Nsamba, A. and Makoe, M. 2017. Evaluating quality of students' support services in open distance learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education,* 18(4): 91-103.

Nzimakwe, T. I. and Mpehle, Z. 2012. Key factors in the successful implementation of Batho Pele Principles. *Journal of Public Administration*, 47(1): 279-290.

Oh, H. and Kim, K. 2017. Customer satisfaction, service quality, and customer value: years 2000-2015. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(1): 2-29.

Okinyi, T. O. and Muturi, W. 2016. Factors affecting efficiency of procurement in public institutions: a case of public entities in Homabay county. *International Journal of Social Science and Information. Technology*, 2(2): 1-14.

Ong, M. H. A. and Puteh, F. 2017. Quantitative data analysis: Choosing between SPSS, PLS, and AMOS in social science research. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Scientific Research*, 3(1): 14-25.

Osman, A. R. and Saputra, R. S. 2019. A pragmatic model of student satisfaction: a viewpoint of private higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 27(2): 142-165.

Owusu-Aygyeman, Y. 2021. Student transition experiences and the agency of supportive campus environment in higher education. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 4(1): 128-155.

Palli, J.G. and Mamilla, R., 2012. Students' opinions of service quality in the field of higher education. *Creative Education*, 3(4): 430.

Panday, R. and Purba, J. T. 2015. Lecturers and students' technology readiness in implementing services delivery of academic information system in higher education institution: a case study. In: Intan, R., Palit, H, N. and Santoso, L. W. eds. *Intelligence in the Era of Big Data: 4th International Conference on Soft Computing*, *Intelligent Systems, and Information Technology.* Bali, Indonesia, 11-14 March 2015. Berlin: Springer, 539-550.

Panhwar, A. H., Ansari, S. and Shah, A. A. 2017. Post-positivism: an effective paradigm for social and educational research. *International Research Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 45(45): 253-259.

Paraskevas, A. and Arendell, B. 2007. A strategic framework for terrorism prevention and mitigation in tourism destinations. *Tourism Management*, 28(6): 1560-1573.

Patel, M. and Patel, N. 2019. Exploring research methodology. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 6(3): 48-55.

Patricia, N. M. and Asoba, S. N. 2021. Theories of job satisfaction in the higher education context. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal,* 27(2): 1-16.

Pawar, A., Ahirrao, S. and Churi, P. P. 2018. Anonymization techniques for protecting privacy: a survey. *IEEE Punecon,* 1-6. Available: https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/8745425/ (Accessed 20 August 2022).

Pereiraa, M. T., Bento, M. I., Ferreira, L. P., Sá, J. C., Silva, F. J. G. and Baptista, A. 2019. Using Six Sigma to analyse customer satisfaction at the product design and development stage. *Procedia Manufacturing,* 38: 1608-1614.

Pedersen, M. J., Stritch, J. M. and Thuesen, F. 2018. Punishment on the frontlines of public service delivery: client ethnicity and caseworker sanctioning decisions in a Scandinavian Welfare State. *Journal of Public Administration and Theory*, 28(3): 339-354.

Phillips, E. and Johnson, C, 2022. *How to get a PhD: a handbook for students and their supervisors.* 7th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Pirthiraj, A. 2017. Factors affecting the motivation of first-year students in the Department of Construction Management and Quantity Surveying at the Durban University of Technology. Master of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology.

Pitzer, J. and Dupuis, J. P. 2006. The general government and public sectors. The fifth meeting of the task force on harmonization of public sector accounting (TFHPSA). Available: https://www.imf.org/external/np/sta/tfhpsa/2006/03/pdf/govern.pdf (Accessed 22 June 2022).

Ponto, J. 2015. Understanding and evaluating survey research. *Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology,* 6(2): 168-171.

Public Service Commission. 2007. Report on the evaluation of the implementation of the Batho Pele Principle of Consultation. Available: http://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/evalimplementconsult0.p df (Accessed 22 June 2022)

Queirós, A., Faria, D. and Almeida, F. 2017. Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(9): 369-387.

Quintão, C., Andrade, P. and Almeida, F. 2020. How to improve the validity and reliability of a case study approach? *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education,* 9(2): 264-275.

Racher, F. E. and Robinson, S. 2003. Are phenomenology and post positivism strange bedfellows? *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 25(5): 464-481.

Raval, S. J., Kant, R. and Shankar, R. 2018. Benchmarking the Lean Six Sigma performance measures: a balanced score card approach. Benchmarking. *An International Journal*, 26(6): 1921-1947.

Ravichandran, K., Mani, B. T., Kumar, S.A. and Prabhakaran, S. 2010. Influence of service quality on customer satisfaction application of SERVQUAL model. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(4): 117-124.

Rehman, A. U. 2020. Innovation in education management: impact of emotional intelligence and demographic variables on occupation stress. *Marketing and Management of Innovations,* 3: 170-180.

Roberts, P. and Priest, H., 2006. Reliability and validity in research. *Nursing Standard*, 20(44): 41-46.

Sanchez-Lizarraga, M. A., Limon Romero, J., Tlapa Mendoza, D. and Baez Lopez, Y. 2020. ISO 9001 Standard: exploratory analysis in the manufacturing sector in Mexico. *Dyna,* 87 (213): 202-211.

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. 2012. *Research methods for business students.* 6th ed. Harlow. England: Pearson Education.

Saurombe, M., Barkhuizen, E. N. and Schutte, N. E. 2017. Management perceptions of a higher educational brand for the attraction of talented academic staff. *SA Journal of Human Resource,* 15(1): 1-10.

Savga, L., Krykliy, O. and Kyrychenko, K. 2018. The role of internal and external stakeholders in higher education system in Ukraine. *Business Ethics and Leadership*, 3(2): 1-7.

Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2016. *Research methods for business: a skill building approach.* 7th ed. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons.

Sewdass, N. 2009. The implementation of competitive intelligence tools and techniques in public service departments in South Africa to improve service delivery: a case study of the Department of Home Affairs. DPhil in Information Science, University of Pretoria.

Shaikh, F. A. and Sohu, S. 2020. Implementation, advantages and management of ISO 9001 in the construction industry. *Civil Engineering Journal*, 6(6): 1136-1142.

Sharma, G. 2017. Pros and cons of different sampling techniques. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 3(7): 749-752.

Shorten, A. and Moorley, C. 2014. Selecting the sample. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 17(2): 32-33.

Shozi, T. and Haffajee, F. 2017. Examining first-year student experiences: what informs their contraceptive choices? A case study of the Durban University of Technology. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 57(1-2): 11-19.

Shrestha, S. and Koirala, K. D. 2012. Measuring service quality and customer satisfaction: Empirical evidence from Nepalese commercial banking sector undertakings. M*anagement Dynamics*, 16(1): 10-20.

Sishi, N. 2021. Police involvement during student protests: stakeholders and Police Deputy Minister: Higher Education, Science and Innovation. Available: https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/34014/ (Accessed 15 February 2023).

Sisman, G. and Orel F. D. 2020. Application of Six Sigma methodology to improve customer complaint. *The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences (EPESS)*, 19: 1-10.

Sok, S., Un, L. and Bunry, R. 2019. Governance in "public administrative institution" universities: towards public autonomous universities in Cambodia? In: Wan, D. C., Lee, N. N. M. and Loke, Y. H. ed. *The Governance and management of universities in Asia: global influences and local responses*. New York: Routledge, 5-20.

Solimun, S. and Fernandes, A. A. R. 2018. The mediation effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between service quality, service orientation, and marketing mix strategy to customer loyalty. *Journal of Management Development,* 37(1): 76-87.

South African Government Website, 2022. What are the government clusters, and which are they? Available https://www.gov.za/faq/guide-government/what-are-government-clusters-and-which-are-they (Accessed 17 June 2022).

Spansel, C. and Ahmed, A. S. 2020. ISO 9001 quality management system certification: is it worth it? *International Journal of Computer Engineering and Sciences Research*, 2(1): 1-9.

Stratton, S. J. 2021. Population research: convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4): 373-374.

Steinmetz, C., Thompson, S. and Marshall, N. 2020. Surveying international university students: the case of the 5% response rate. *Issues in Educational Research,* 30(3), 1105-1125.

Stock, R., M., Jong, A. D. and Zacharias, N. A. 2017. Frontline employees' innovative service behaviour as key to customer loyalty: insights into FLEs' resource gain spiral. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 34(2): 223-245.

Surucu, L. and Maslak, A. 2020. Validity and reliability in quantitative research. Business and management studies. *An International Journal*, 8(3): 2694-2726.

Szromek, A. R. and Wolniak, R. 2020. Job satisfaction and problems among academic staff in higher education. *Sustainability,* 12(12): 48-65.

Tamakloe, D., Mbindyo, M., Ibrahim, A. and Agbenyega, J. 2021. Transitioning from face-face to online learning: creating safe spaces for academic advisement in the face of a global pandemic. *Journal of Learning Spaces*, 10(3): 60-71.

Tampubolon, S. and Purba, H. H. 2021. Lean six sigma implementations, a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Production Management and Engineering*, 9(2): 125-139.

Tanveer, M., Karim, D. and Mahbub, A. 2018. Higher education institutions and the performance management. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 2183. Available https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/2183/ (22 November 2022).

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V. and Braun, V. 2017. Thematic analysis. In: Wilig, C. and Stanton-Rogers, W. ed. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2: 17-37.

Thomas, P. Y. 2010. Towards developing a web-based blended learning environment at the University of Botswana. Doctor of Education, University of South Africa.

Torrico, B. C. and Gonzales, E. A. 2018. Scientific methodology for conducting marketing research and quantitative social research. *Revista Perspectivas,* 42: 123-160.

Tobi, H. and Kampen, J. K. 2018. Research design: the methodology for interdisciplinary research framework. *Quality & Quantity*, 52: 1209-1225.

Tratnik, A., Urh, M. and Jereb, E. 2019. Student satisfaction with an online and a face-to-face business English course in a higher education context. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International,* 56(1): 36-45.

Trong-Tuan, L. 2017. Knowledge sharing in public organizations: the roles of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 40(4): 361-373.

Tuurnas, S. 2015. Learning to co-produce? The perspective of public service professionals. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *28*(7): 583-598.

Uzir, M. U. H., Al Halbusi, H., Thurasamy, R., Thiam Hock, R. L., Aljaberi, M. A., Hasan, N. and Hamid, M. 2021. The effects of service quality, perceived value and trust in home delivery service personnel on customer satisfaction: evidence from a developing country. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63: 1-15.

Vaismoradi, M. and Snelgrove, S. 2019. Theme in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Foru: Qualitative Social Research,* 20(3): 1-14.

Van-Dyke, T. P., Prybutok, V. R. and Kappelman, L. A. 1999. Cautions on the use of the SERVQUAL measure to assess the quality of information systems services. *Decision Sciences*, 30(3), 877-891.

Varpio, L., Paradis, E., Uijtdehaage, S. and Young, M. 2020. The distinctions between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework. *Academic Medicine,* 95(7): 989-994.

Walle, S. V. 2017. Explaining citizen satisfaction and dissatisfaction with public services. *The Palgrave Handbook of Public Administration and Management in Europe*, 1: 227-241.

Wang, Y. C., Luo, C. C. and Tai, Y. F. 2017. Implementation of delightful services: from the perspective of frontline service employees. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 31: 90-104.

Weerasinghe, I. S. and Fernando, R. L. 2017. Students' satisfaction in higher education. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 5(5): 533-539.

Wildemuth, B. M. 1993. Post-positivist research: two examples of methodological pluralism. *The Library Quarterly,* 63(4): 450-468.

Willems, J. 2020. Public servant stereotypes: it is not (at) all about being lazy, greedy and corrupt. *Public Administration*, 98(4): 807-823.

Wisdom, J. and Creswell, J. W. 2013. Mixed methods: integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis while studying patient-cantered medical home models. PCMH research methods series Rockville. *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*, 13: 1-5.

Xu, W. and Zammit, K. 2020. Applying thematic analysis to education: a hybrid approach to interpreting data in practitioner research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 19: 1-9.

Xulu-Gama, N. 2019. The role of student housing in student success: an ethnographic account. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 7(2): 15-25.

Young, T. J. 2016. Questionnaires and surveys. In: Zhu Hua, ed. *Research methods in intercultural communication: a practical guide*. Oxford: Wiley, 165-180.

Yousapronpaiboon, K. 2014. SERVQUAL: Measuring higher education service quality in Thailand. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116: 1088-1095.

YuSheng, K. and Ibrahim, M. 2019. Service innovation, service delivery and customer satisfaction and loyalty in the banking sector of Ghana. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 37(5): 1215-1233.

Zainun, N. F. H., Johari, J. and Adnan, Z. 2018. Stressor factors, internal communication, and commitment to change among administrative staff in Malaysian public higher education institutions. *On the Horizon,* 26 (4): 291-306.

Zinatsa, F., Engelbrecht, M., van Rensburg, A. J. and Kigozi, G. 2018. Voices from the frontline: barriers and strategies to improve tuberculosis infection control in primary health care facilities in South Africa. *BMC Health Services Research*, 18(1): 1-12.

Zvavahera, P. 2013. The effect of leadership on service delivery in universities: Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Management. *Research in Higher Education Journal*. Available: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1064695.pdf (Accessed 21 October 2022).

APPENDIX A:

Letter of information

Good day

Hope this letter finds you well

My name is Mthokozisi Luthuli (Student Number 21607585) a registered student in the Department of Information and Corporate Management for Masters Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management at the Durban University of Technology.

I am conducting research that seeks to examine the first-time entry student's experiences with front-line administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal. I kindly request your participation in this study. Be assured that by taking part in this study, your responses will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity.

Details of the study at hand are provided below:

Title of the Research Study: First-time entry student's experiences with front-line administrative services in a selected university in KwaZulu Natal.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management.

Supervisor: Dr. SP Moyane: PhD in LIS.

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the study: For a very long-time, public sector service delivery has been a centre of interest for many scholars, particularly in developing countries (Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019; Okinyi and Muturi 2016; Sewdass 2009). Existing literature affirms that poor work ethics constitutes an inefficient front-line administrative staff that renders poor service and this inefficiency have become the centre of interest for scholars because it not only damages and ruins the institution's image in the academic realm but has persisted for decades (Gxothiwe 2022; Masiya, Davids, Mangai 2019; Katamei and Kiprop 2015; Joshi and Moore 2004).

The public institutions of higher learning are also not immune to poor service among front-line administrative staff hence this study intends to focus on front-line administration staff because they are the face of service provision (Buultjens and Robinson 2011). Front-line administrative staff uphold the responsibilities of promoting a good business image. When a client receives delayed and poor service from the front-line administrative staff, the institution can be rated and reviewed as substandard, and the institution can lose current and potential students due to negative word of mouth.

Most importantly this poor service can jeopardise the service experience of FTENs to the university. First-time entry students need more support from the institution's support structures i.e., the academic department and faculty office from which the program they are enrolling is offered; student admissions; housing department; financial aid; finance; etc. Adequate support from these university departments is pivotal for FTENs to smoothly transit and acclimatize to the university environment. For a smooth transition, the front-line administrative staff in these supporting departments must render satisfactory and adequate service affluent with adherence to excellent work ethics (Msiza and Mthembu 2020). Thus, this study aims to examine the service of administrative staff with special reference to a selected university of technology in KwaZulu Natal.

Outline of the procedures: The study will adopt a survey research design and self-administered questionnaires will be distributed to the selected population of this study, which is constituted of FTENs, in the departments of Information and Corporate Management under the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. The questionnaires will be hand distributed to students and arrangements will be made with lecturers who are teaching first-year classes and class representatives to distribute them after lectures. All questionnaires will be completed and collected at the student's earliest convenience, though they will be asked to complete and submit them on the spot. First-time entry students were purposefully and deliberately chosen because they are more susceptible to being affected by the efficacy and inefficacy of front-line administrative staff. Since this study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, a numerical description will be used to analyse the quantitative data in tables and graphs. Thematic content analysis will be used to analyse the qualitative data.

Risks or discomforts to the participant: There will be no risks or discomfort to participants, and they may withdraw at any time without penalty or giving reason should they encounter any discomfort related to the study.

Benefits: This study will result in a Master's dissertation which will outline the first-time entry students' experiences on service delivery and which may help the management improve the service of frontline administrative staff. Most importantly this study aims to add to the body of knowledge and reduce the knowledge gap in the field of public administration apropos to service rendered by by front-line administrative staff. The findings, theories and recommendations may also be employed in future studies.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: Participants may withdraw at any given point should they feel uncomfortable continuing with the research and there will not be any adverse consequences to their actions.

Remuneration: There are no monetary or other kinds of rewards for taking part in this study.

Costs of the Study: Participants will not be expected to cover any cost of the study.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality of participants is guaranteed as the participants will not be requested to fill in their names or contact details or any pinpointing information that will be presented in this study.

Research-related Injury: All possible harm has been considered, from physical, legal, psychological, and social and the participants will sustain no harm.

Persons to conduct in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Student: Mr. M Luthuli

cell: 0313735660

Email: 21607585@dut4life.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr. S P Moyane

Tel: 031-373 6879

Email: SmangeleM1@dut.ac.za

Please contact the researcher (tel no. +27 31 373 5660), my supervisor (tel no. +27 31 373 6879) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on +27 31 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za

APPENDIX B:

Consent form

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Student

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, (Mr M Luthuli), about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: __,

- I have also received, read and understood the above-written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.

- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.

- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

- I understand that significant new findings developed during this research that may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____   _____   _____   _____

Full Name of Participant   Date   Time   Signature/Right
Thumbprint

I, Mr M Luthuli herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Full Name of Researcher   **Date**   **Signature**

_____   _____   _____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)   **Date**   **Signature**

_____   _____   _____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date Signature

APPENDIX C:

Questionnaire for collecting data on the first-time entry students' experiences with the service of front-line administrative staff in a selected university of technology in KwaZulu Natal

The service of front-line administrative staff affects the experience of students at public institutions of higher learning. First-time entry students are more susceptible to being affected by the efficacy and inefficacy of service delivery. Therefore, the service of front-line administrative staff determines the service experience and the smoothness of transitioning and acclimatising to the university environment.

For the purpose of this study;

- **Batho Pele principles** refer to a framework that governs the interaction between public servants and the public and allows the public to hold public servants responsible for the services they render (Mosadi 2004).
- **First-time entry students** refer to first-year students doing their first undergraduate qualification (Crisp *et al.* 2009).
- **Front-line administrative staff** refers to support employees who are the face and front of an office or department and who interact directly with the students (Martic 2015).
- **Service** refers to the transaction that involves the transfer of intangible products from vendor to service recipient (Okinyi and Muturi 2016).

Instructions for filling out the questionnaire:

- Tick/cross the applicable answer/s (✓/✗).
- Use the spaces provided to write your answer/s.

1. Race		2. Gender	
African		Male	
Coloured		Female	
Indian		Other ………….	
White			
Other ………			

4. Have you ever required service from the front-line administrative staff of the Durban University of Technology?

Yes	No

5. Which university service department(s) did you require service from?

Please mark/tick all that apply (✓/✗).

University service departments	(✓/✗)
Academic department	
Faculty office	
Finance department	
Housing department	
Other, please specify ……………….....	

6. What service(s) did you require from the above-indicated service department(s)?

………

………

………

7. Please describe how did you log your query(s) with the service department(s)?

	(✓/✗)
I was served remotely without visiting the university	
I was served on a face-face basis	
Partly remotely and partly face-face	
other please specify ……….……………………………………………………………	

8. Were the front-line administrative staff able to assist you with your query?

Yes	No

9. If your answer to question 8 is *No,* how did you resolve your query(s)?

....

....

....

10. Was your query(s) resolved to your satisfaction?

Yes	No

11. If your answer to number 10 is *No*, please indicate the issues you were not satisfied with.

....

....

....

12. Is the quality of service consistent when front-line administrative staff are working remotely and when they are working in the office?

Yes	No

13. If your answer to question 12 is *No*, what makes you arrive at your conclusion?

....

....

....

14. In the service department(s) you required service from, were the following Batho Pele service delivery principles met?

Service delivery principles to be met.	Yes	No
Consultation - stakeholders are consulted on the quantity and quality of services they receive, and they are provided with options wherever practicable.		
Service standards - The stakeholders are informed about the degree and quality of service they may receive so that they know what to expect.		
Courtesy – The stakeholders are handled with professionalism, respect, and friendliness always, regardless of their race, gender, age, or other characteristics.		
Access – The department keeps up to guarantee that all people receive equal access to the services to which they are entitled to receive.		
Information – The stakeholders are entitled and receive full and precise information		
Openness and Transparency - The institution reports back to the stakeholders i.e., how the institution is run, financial reports, etc.		
Responsiveness - Complaints should be addressed immediately with a complete explanation and a prompt/effective remedy to the problem, and a positive reaction to the complaint.		
Value for money - The stakeholders are not paying more than necessary (i.e., admin levy) and they are receiving value for money.		

15. Please rate your overall service experience on the service delivery principles the institutions must adhere to.

Batho Pele service delivery principles	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Consultation – The stakeholders are consulted on the quantity and quality of services they receive, and they are provided with options wherever practicable.					
Service standards - The stakeholders are informed about the degree and quality of service they may receive so that they know what to expect.					
Courtesy – The stakeholders are handled with professionalism, respect, and friendliness always, regardless of their race, gender, age, or other characteristics.					
Access – The department keeps up to guarantee that all people receive equal access to the services to which they are entitled to receive.					
Information – The stakeholders are entitled to and receive full and precise information.					
Openness and Transparency - The institution reports back to the stakeholders i.e., how the institution is run, financial reports, etc.					
Responsiveness - Complaints should be addressed immediately with a complete explanation and a prompt/effective remedy to the problem, and a positive reaction to the complaint.					
Value for money - The stakeholders are not paying more than necessary (i.e., admin levy) and they are receiving value for money.					

16. Please describe how the service you received from the front-line administrative staff of the Durban University of Technology made you feel about the institution?

……

……

……

………………

17. How would you describe the Durban University of Technology to other prospective students based on the service you received from the front-line administrative staff?

……

……

……

………………

18. Based on the service you received, would you advise other prospective students to come and enroll at Durban University of Technology?

……

……

……

……………

19. Please suggest what should be done to improve the service of front-line administrative staff?

……

……

……

………………

20. Please indicate any other views you may have concerned the service of front-line administrative staff at the Durban University of Technology? ………

………

………

Thank you for your participation and your time in completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX D:

Ethical clearance

Faculty Research Office
Durban University of Technology
Ritson Campus
P O Box 1334, Durban, 4000,
South Africa
Tel: +27 31 373 6767
10 February 2023

Student Name: M. Luthuli

Student Number: 21607585

Degree: Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information

Management Email: 21607585@dut4life.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr S. Moyane

Supervisor email: SmangeleM1@dut.ac.za

Dear Mr. M. Luthuli,

ETHICAL APPROVAL: LEVEL 2

I am pleased to inform you that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), following feedback from two reviewers, has granted preliminary permission for you to conduct your research *"FIRST-TIME ENTRY STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES WITH FRONT-LINE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES IN A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU NATAL".*

When ethics approval is granted:

You are required to present the letter at your research site(s) for permission to gather data. Please also note that your research instruments must be accompanied by the letter of information and the letter of consent for each participant, as per your research proposal.

This ethics clearance is valid from the date of provisional approval on this letter for one year. A student must apply for recertification 3 months before the date of this expiry.

Recertification is required every year until after corrections are made, after examination, and the thesis is submitted to the Faculty Registrar.

A summary of your key research findings must be submitted to the FRC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.

Yours sincerely

Dr. C.J. Nyide

Faculty Research Ethics Committee Chairperson

Faculty of Accounting and Informatics

Durban University of Technology

Email: nyidec@dut.ac.za

ENVISION 2030   transparency · honesty · integrity · respect · accountability
fairness · professionalism · commitment · compassion · excellence

CREATIVE. DISTINCTIVE. IMPACTFUL.

APPENDIX E:

Gate keepers' letter

Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Open House
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946

7 March 2023

Mr Mthokozisi Luthuli c/o Department of Information and
Corporate Management
Faculty of Accounting and Informatics
Durban University of Technology

Dear Mr Luthuli

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Gatekeeper Permission** for you to conduct your research "First-time entry student's experiences with the service of front-line administrative staff in a selected university of technology in KwaZulu Natal." at the Durban University of Technology. **Kindly note that this letter must be issued to the IREC for approval before you commence data collection**.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having

regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

Upon completion of your research project, you are requested to share the summary of your key research findings.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

DR V GOVENDER

ACTING-DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE