SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT SERVICES STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: A RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES PERSPECTIVE

by

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'Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities: A Resources and Capabilities Perspective'

I declare that the abovementioned topic and this whole thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I also declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past sixty years, organizational strategy evolved from mainly product-centric to service and solution-centric. Servitization as a strategy alternative, was a catalyst in the paradigm shift to organizational performance difference that adds service value. In the changing paradigm, service dominant logic expanded the horizons to fully incorporate the service sector, and the service users. Researchers have thus argued that organisations can only make value propositions to customers, because value is experientially and contextually determined. Central to the service dominant logic stream is the concept of resources (operant and operand). This study sought to identify critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy, in order to make a contribution to service strategy research and propose a strategy formulation framework for support service managers.

Service dominant logic has been investigated in the context of higher education service strategy, and literature shows that the higher education sector is grappling with various strategic challenges including; competition, dwindling financial resources, and instabilities (student dissatisfaction-induced protests). In a competitive landscape of higher education, what differentiates one institution from another? How would university campuses, plagued by dire resource shortages and instabilities, find strategies to attract students as well as public capital and social investment support? Investigating the misuse of resources, Jansen (2023) has gone further to ask, "What explains the persistent instability of a sub-set of universities in South Africa?"(p.2). These are complex and intractable strategic questions for higher education managers, and this made the latter context attractive for service strategy research.

Epistemologically, this study followed a qualitatively-driven mixed methods research approach, with an exploratory sequential design. Research was conducted at four South African universities, and the study's research question was; what are the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy in the context of Student Affairs? The main findings revealed a typology of critical support service resources and capabilities, namely; 'Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour', 'leadership, change agency and empowered engagement',

'financial and internet connectivity biopower', and 'strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation'. A model was developed showing the type of value that each of these bundled resources and capabilities possess. The value attributes of these bundled resources and capabilities were measured through a new scale, named, 'HedSUSERV', and the results showed a pattern that supports four of the five value constructs identified and linked to the support service resources typology. Other associated findings of this study included the definition of support services resources and capabilities, and identified a 'common mission for Student Affairs' as well as 'principles for support service strategy formulation'. The integrated results produced a framework for support service strategy.

The significance of the study is the contribution to the research stream of service strategy (e.g. servitization and service dominant logic), through the proposition of the framework of support service variable as a contributor to the macro-level strategy differentiator.   The resources typology model provides a practical heuristics for practitioners or support service managers.

Keywords: Support service; service strategy; resources; capabilities; value; middle managers; competition; Student Affairs; higher education.

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ACRONYMS AND ABREVIATIONS

ACUHO-I SAC	Association of Colleges and Universities Housing Officers – International – Southern African Chapter
CAMPROSA	Campus Protection Society of Southern Africa
CEB	Customer engagement behaviour
CELT	Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CSRC	Campus Student Representative Council
CUT	Central University of Technology
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training (South Africa)
DSA	Department of the Student Affairs
DUT	Durban University of Technology
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FAPSA	Financial Aid Practitioners of South Africa
HE	Higher Education
HEdPERF	Higher Education Performance scale
HEDSA	Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association
HedSUSERV	Higher Education Support Service Value scale
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HiEduQual	Higher Education Service Quality Scale
HPCSA	Health Professionals Council of South Africa
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
HSS	Holistic Student Support
IASAS	International Association of Student Affairs and Services
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ISAS	International Association of Student Affairs and Services
ISRC	Institutional Student Representative Council
IT	Information Technology

KPA	Key performance area
MUT	Mangosuthu University of Technology
NASPA	National Association of Personnel Administrators
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NWU	North West University
OSS	Optimising Student Services
PERVAL	Perceived Value scale
PESBITE	Political/government, Economy, Society/Social, Business, International, Technology, and the (physical) environment
PG	Postgraduate
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PSS	Product-service system
QUAL-quan	Qualitative-quantitative
RBV	Resource-based view
RDT	Resource dependence theory
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RSQ	Research Sub-question
SAACDHE	South African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education
SAACHS	South African Association of Campus Health Services
SAASSAP	South African Association of senior Student Affairs Practitioners
SADAG	South African Depression and Anxiety Group
SAUS	South African Union of Students
SDL	Service-dominant logic
SERVQUAL	Service Quality Scale
SMU	Sefako Makgatho University
SPHEF	Strategic Planning for Higher Education Framework
SPU	Sol Plaatjies University
SRC	Student Representative Councils

StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
The Act	Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (South Africa)
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UFS	University of the Free State
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UL	University of Limpopo
UMP	University of Mpumalanga
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNIVEN	University of Venda
UNIZULU	University of Zululand
UP	University of Pretoria
SU	Stellenbosch University
USAF	Universities South Africa
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VUT	Vaal University of Technology
VRIO	Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, Organised
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
WSU	Walter Sisulu Univesity

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Recognised as a field in the 1960s, strategic management proliferated in the manufacturing industry, with a product-centred focus. Due to continuing competition in the various sectors, strategic management introduced servitisation (Vandermerwe and Rada, 1988; Matthyssens and Vandenbempt, 2010; Rabetino, Kohtamaki, Kowalkowski, Baines and Sousa, 2021) which propounded the importance of service in developing a differentiating strategy and added value. The service sector then became another area of interest for strategic management research. Scholars investigated how various sectors adopted service strategy to resolve the quagmire of strategy stagnation. In the higher education sector, Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando, Zorilla and Forcada (2018) observed that competition has reached international levels. Since there is a general homogeneity in terms of education service offerings (qualifications), the servitization paradigm remains a research stream with good prospects in higher education. Constraints on financial resources have increased competition for students among universities (Dziewanowska, 2017). Campus instabilities, including student protests, are among the challenges that have been widely reported, especially in the South African context. In a competitive higher education landscape, what differentiates one institution from another? How would campuses that are plagued by dire resource shortages and instabilities find strategies to attract students, social and capital investment support?

Strategy stagnation is arguably prevalent in the higher education sector. However, higher education leadership and strategic management researchers have not considered support services as a source of competitive value. "Increasing competitive pressure requires the management of the HEIs [Higher Education Institutions] to develop strategies as a unique way to achieve competitive advantage", (Soewarno and Tjahjadi, 2020:1745). Many universities develop student recruitment strategies (Frolich and Stensacker, 2010) and often, due to competition, they have to offer prospective students, recruitment-enrolment packages that include support services (i.e., student accommodation, sports bursaries, etc.). Related to servitization, service dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016) was also introduced as another stragic competitive

approach, with special focus on service value co-creation. Lusch & Wu (2012) proposed that service-dominant logic could be applied in higher education service context. Competition and contestations in the higher education sector often emanate from resource constraints. Value and resources are central concepts in strategy research. Also central to service dominant logic are resources (operant and operand) and value. The main research question of this study focuses on the resources and capabilities necessary for sustainable support service strategies, and the value (importance/benefit) of such resources and capabilities to managers and service users within the context of Student Affairs in higher education.

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

One of the key disciplines of the management field is strategic management. Ehlers and Lazenby (2019:4) define strategic management as a "process whereby all organisational functions and *resources* are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies…" (Emphasis added). But what is strategy? In his seminal work on strategy, Chandler (1962:13) defined strategy as "the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of *resources* necessary to carry out these goals" (Emphasis added). Other strategy researchers (e.g. Heracleous, 2003) have echoed Chandler's definition. However, Ronda-Pupo and Guerras-Matrin (2012:182) found that there is weak consensus on the definition of strategy, and building on a longitudinal meta-analysis study, they defined strategy as "[t]he dynamics of the firm's relation with its environment for which the necessary actions are taken to achieve its goals and/or to increase performance by means of the rational use of resources".

As can be noted from the aforementioned definitions, what has been one of the central hallmarks in strategy development has been the importance of resources, which is a concept that consistently appeared in 387 articles over a 20-year period from the 1980s to early 2000, according to Nag, Hambrick and Chen (2007). These scholars admitted that the prominence of the concepts of resources and capabilities in strategy is due to highly influential works of Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991) who, after Penrose's (1959) seminal work, further developed the resource-based view (RBV). Hax and Majluf

(1988) observed that strategy defines the nature of economic and non-economic contributions for stakeholders. The non-economic focus of strategy is generally on non-profit organisations such as higher education institutions. For non-profit sector including higher education, resource-dependence theory (RDT) (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) seems more appropriate than other strategic management theories. The *weltaschang* in higher education leadership has been more aligned to the resource-dependence views (see Jansen, 2017). Some argue that higher education is a public resource, and such a position indicates element of agency theory in the management of higher education institutions (HEIs). Jansen (2023) has chronicled the phenomena of resources, contestations, and inherent disruptions in higher education. This unenviable leadership matrix also brings to light the element of stakeholder theory. Stakeholders are a source of resources for higher education institutions. In their study, Campbell and Park (2017) combined what they term the instrumental stakeholder approach with the resource-based view (RBV) investigating the importance of these two theories to the overall performance of the firm. Barney (2018) illuminated the significance of stakeholder theory within the realm of the RBV. He further noted that it is difficult to measure competitive advantage as a dependent variable because of the appropriation of profits by stakeholders.

The centrality of resources in strategy also spawned studies such as that done by Crook, Ketchen, Combs and Todd (2008), focusing on the link between strategic resources and firm performance. Crook et al. (2008:1150) found that "…significant benefits can result from possessing more strategic resources than competitors", and this observation is in line with the resources paradigm. The agency theory can be used to point out self-serving actions of agents in higher education contexts, but external stakeholders (e.g. government) do not appropriate income surpluses from higher education institutions.

Vuorinen, Hakala, Kohtamaki and Uusitalo (2018) conducted a review of strategy planning tools that were promoted in 88 articles appearing in top journals between 1990 and 2015. These scholars found that 44 of those strategy tools related to resources, capabilities, processes and culture, with a focus on the internal strengths of the firm. A

study by Sirmon, Hitt, Ireland and Gilbert (2011) emphasised the centrality of resources in organisational performance from the view of resource orchestration (structuring a portfolio of resources and bundling them into capabilities). Resource orchestration was a critical heuristics in the analysis of data and development of themes in the present study. A different study by Carnes, Chirico, Hitt, Huh and Pisano (2017) in 500 United States and Italian firms concluded that the orchestration of resources in organisational life cycles can be used for innovation and regeneration of a firm, thus emphasising the importance of resources. This is a view strongly promoted in the discussion section of the findings (resources typology model) in the present study. Carnes, et al, (2017), recommended that further studies could be done within the emerging economies context. Nason and Wiklund (2018) also continued to assess the proliferation of research work within the resource perspective, through a meta-analysis of 113 studies published over a period of 25 years since 1993.

Literature therefore indicates that in strategic planning processes, resources feature prominently as indispensable pillars in terms of organisations' SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses (Dess, et al. 2016; Ehlers and Lazenby, 2010). As the field of strategy grows into a new paradigm of what scholars call 'open strategy' (Hautz, Seidl & Whittington, 2017; Heracleous, GoBwein & Beaudette, 2017), resources and capabilities continue to play a prominent role. To this end, the research questions for this study flow from this systematic observation of strategic management research trajectory.

Employing the lens of resources and capabilities perspective as key concepts of strategic management research, the present study investigated an underexplored area of support service strategy in higher education. In one of a very few studies on this research stream, Kuk and Banning (2009) evaluated how Student Affairs organisational structures in higher education are designed. Student Affairs' remit is student development and student support services in the higher education sector. As shown by the classic and seminal work of Chandler (1962), organisational structure is one of the key pillars of strategy development and implementation. So, Kuk and Banning's (2009) rare study contributed the element of Student Affairs to strategic management, by at

least identifying that many Student Affairs structures tend to be designed around the mission and vision of their universities. After their analysis, Kuk and Banning's pertinent conclusion was that "the Student Affairs organisations of the future are more likely going to be asked to restructure existing resources to serve changing needs and new student demands than receive additional [resources] allocations" (2009:111).

The present study intends to produce a support service strategy formulation framework, predicated on the resources and capabilities perspective. This is in response to Kuk and Banning's call "for a Student Affairs division to have a strategic plan that is aligned with the institutional strategic plan, and is used as the guiding vision for its organisational design and resource allocation process" (2009:111). Albeit making novel contributions, studies have not holistically addressed the out-of-classroom challenges of campus life (Kuh, Schuh, and Whitt, (1991) from an overall support service strategy point of view. Other challenges in Student Affairs as noted by de Klerk, Spark, Jones and Maleswena (2017) include financial resources that have a ripple effect on student commuting, student accommodation, lack of food and other necessities. Other campus life issues include; mental health, as highlighted by de Klerk et al. (2017); conflicts and diversity as studied by Bazezew and Nika (2017); and psychosocial issues as highlighted by Jama (2016). Even recent studies on Student Affairs by Graham, Hurtado and Gonyea (2018), Dunn and Dunkeld (2013), Afful-Broni and Hogrey (2013) and Pansiri and Sinkamba (2017) have not delivered findings that relate to strategic management as a field and have also not produced holistic models or a framework for support service delivery strategies.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is strategically untenable for HEIs to only focus on their core educational services if they hope to pursue differentiation strategy in the competitive and dynamic sector. Kayombo and Carter (2016) suggested that support services have an impact on university branding and also influence student choice of a university. Roberts (2018) noted that support services such as student development (i.e., mentorship, leadership, student engagement) and support (i.e., counselling, health and residence life), contribute to student retention and success. See also Brown, Vlok and Spratto's (2019)

study on the contribution of residential services to new students' success. Other studies report that "success means being outstanding academically, socially, and in extracurricular activities" (Nyström, Jackson & Karlsson, 2019:466). On the other hand, the works of Habib (2019); Gaston-Gayes, Wolf-Wendel, Tutte, Twombly and Ward (2005), and Long (2012) demonstrate the mediating and strategic role of Student Affairs at HEIs. Leusher-Mamashela's (2013), work also show-cases the role of Student Affairs on student engagement at strategic levels of a university. Others (Haber-Curran & Owen, 2013; Dunn, Moore, Odom, Bailey & Briers, 2021; Kroll & Guvendiren, 2021) investigated the Student Affairs' role on student leadership training. Msosa's (2019) research also demonstrated the impact of support services, focusing on service failure and service recovery in higher education context. Testing the Strategic Planning for Higher Education Framework (SPHEF), Murji (2019) examined the process of strategic planning for Student Affairs division, and found that the SPHEF was a misfit. So, Student Affairs remained with no framework. The present study therefore investigated the strategic influence that support service resources have on HEIs, with the aim of developing a strategy formulation framework for support services. The study advances the servitisation and service-dominant logic to higher education support service strategy.

According to the 2020-2021 annual report of the Department of Higher Education and Training, the twenty six South African public universities enrolled 1 074 912 students during the 2019 academic year. The twenty six public universities consist of, eleven traditional universities, nine comprehensive universities, and six universities of technology. Most, if not all of these 1 074 912 students receive a form of support service in their respective institutions, ranging from security services, information technology services, financial services, counselling services, to health services and development services. Furthermore, tens of thousands of these students receive other services such as transport services, residential services, food services, and extracurricular services such as sports services, and governance and leadership development support services.

Student affairs and support services practitioners have to contend with huge numbers of students. The student protests (in South Africa) in 2015–2017, followed by the 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic, took a toll on the Student Affairs leaders and officers (Mutambisi, Murasi & Mazodze, 2021; Schreiber, Luescher, Perozzi & Moscaritolo, 2021) who are often expected to provide in loco parentis support to students. It is an irony that with the myriad of services that the Student Affairs and support service sector in higher education, and the complex issues facing such practitioners, there is a lack of studies anchored on sustainable support service strategy, to produce management models and strategy formulation framework. The focus of strategic management research on servitisation and service-dominant logic has also not incorporated support service. The strategic role played by middle managers/student affairs who are more often than not, the first ones to handle any student-related crises have been under-researched. A few scholars such as Lusch and Wu (2012) introduced the service-dominant logic in higher education, but their focus remained at the core (academic) service and not at the support service where close contact value co-creation also happens.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to fill the research gap in service strategy (servitisation and service-dominant logic), student affairs research streams, and practice, the following research aims and objectives were proposed:

- Identify the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategies.
- Identify the value attributes of resources and capabilities for sustainable support services strategies.
- Consolidate the identified resources and capabilities for support service strategy and develop a strategy formulation framework.
- Contribute to the strategic management body of knowledge by incorporating the concept of sustainable support service strategy.
- Develop a data collection instrument that can be adapted for future studies in student support services strategy.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main and primary research question for this study is:

What are the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy in the context of student affairs in higher education?

This question 'sets the boundary for this study' (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2010). The research questions emanate from a variety of literature, including strategic management, student affairs, service management, and general management. The sub-questions focus on the value attributes (importance or usefulness) of resources and capabilities.

The research sub-questions are as follows (RSQ = Research Sub-Question):

RSQ1 How do student affairs leaders define resources and capabilities?
RSQ2 How do student affairs leaders create value in resources and capabilities?
RSQ3 Which resources and capabilities' attributes create value and sustainability for student affairs?
RSQ4 What do students understand to be the student affairs activities that create value for them?
RSQ5 What are the support service value attributes as perceived by students?

The sub-questions support and are interlinked to the main question, but they have a specific role, in that, critical resources and capabilities may be identified but there is always a need to probe further to illuminate their value attributes.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, the empirical research methodology is a qualitatively-driven mixed methods approach (Morse & Cheek, 2014; Mason, 2006, Tashakkori & Teddie, 2010). Morse and Cheek (2014:3) define mixed methods research as an approach "employing a quantitative method and a qualitative method linked in the same study". In the present study, the data collection methods and data analysis were both qualitative (core) and

quantitative (supplemental). The design was an exploratory sequential approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018:86) also promote the use of an exploratory sequential design (QUAL-quan) in order to (also a rationale for this study) "explore a phenomenon in depth and measure the prevalence of its dimension". The research sites were four South African universities, and the units of analysis included both management staff and students. Results of the main research strand (qualitative) produced a resources and capabilities typology, and thereafter merged with the supplemental strand (quantitative) to produce a framework for sustainable support services strategy.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The primary data collection process was only conducted after the research ethical clearance certificate from the University of South Africa (Unisa) had been granted. Permission was also sought by the researcher, and granted by the research hosting universities. A prior informed written consent was sought from participants for each interview session. The questionnaire also provided the respondents an opportunity to consent prior to completing it. Identities of all research participants are be kept strictly confidential. The research report does not publicise the names of research participants.

1.8 SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In response to Kuk and Banning's (2009) research questions on why they designed organisational structures in a certain way, senior Student Affairs leaders listed the following reasons: "(a) to address financial concerns, (b) to meet strategic priorities, (c) to enhance efficiencies and effectiveness, (d) to promote teamwork and collaboration, and (e) to reduce hierarchical approaches to decision-making" (p.105). These are management and strategic issues that Student Affairs research has neglected. Echoing Lovell and Kosten's (2000) observation, Nkonoane, (2015), notes that the challenges of working toward the learning and development of college students are so demanding that integration of Student Affairs management and leadership issues is underrated in research. Nkonoane, (2015) emphasised that 'managing is a core component of the job of Student Affairs leaders'. The preceding passage of this section sought to clarify the scope and focus of the present study, in terms of balancing the scales between student

development and strategic management issues. The latter being the nexus of this study.

The study integrated theoretical concepts from empirical material (Charmaz, 2004) and thus contributed a different contextual aspect of strategic management with the influence of higher education/student affairs native language (Kuhn, 1996). The study developed a resources typology model that described and grouped the critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. This resources typology model is a bridge that contributes towards filling the research gap between service strategy and support services.

Murji (2019) found Tromp and Ruben's (2010) SPHEF not properly suited to the Student Affairs strategic planning process. Therefore, as a practical utility of the present study, the Student Affairs fraternity will gain a specific framework in terms of developing and implementing sustainable support service strategy within higher education. Literature indicates certain similarities in student support challenges and opportunities globally, so, the current framework can be adapted and applied in different contexts. Challenges such as resource shortages, instabilities and competition in higher education seem to be global phenomena, so the framework of the present study has a far-reaching potential. South Africa grapples with resources of various kinds, and this study takes Barney's (1991) inward view of strategy to advocate for internal creation or building of valuable resources and capabilities – as opposed to only expecting external stakeholders (i.e., government) to provide resources. To this end, the study further advocates for semi-self-sufficiency of Student Affairs divisions with the aim of becoming a valuable asset as opposed to being a financial liability for the higher education sector.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

This thesis report is arranged in six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

This chapter provided a background, giving a rationale for the study through pointing out a research gap in strategic management field (service strategy). Servitisation and service-dominant logic are the focus of research on service strategy. In Chapter 1, it was argued that these two streams of research have neglected sectors such as higher education whose core business is service (or education service). Few studies on service strategy in higher education have focused on support service in terms of issues of campus instabilities, resource shortages and competition even though South African HEIs host over a million students whose needs include support services. This formed the basis for the research context of support service. Chapter 1 also provided a brief outline of the research methodology, which is a mixed methods research approach.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is the theoretical foundation of the study. As a nascent research stream, the study applies a multi-disciplinary approach, which synthesises literature from various disciplines. A conceptual framework was developed and discussed, scaffolded by concepts from four strategic management theories, namely, the RDT, stakeholder theory, the RBV and agency theory. The central theoretical concepts included resources, capability, sustainability, and value. From the higher education literature, the central concepts included; support service, student engagement, and holistic student development. The chapter traces how Taylor's scientific management approach was infused in Penrose's seminal paper focusing on the efficiency of resources. The chapter presents strategic management literature and debates on the pendulum swings between the Porterian industry organisation theory and Barney's inward swing of valuable resources model (VRIO), with critiques of the latter theory from Priem and Butler (2001), Sanchez (2008), Newbert (2007), Gibbert (2006), Kraaijenbrink (2010) and Kaufman (2015). Servitisation and service-dominant logic as service strategy research streams are incorporated in the review. Service-dominant logic introduces the

notion of value co-creation which is dominant in the present study's findings as well as the resource typology model. Sheth, Newman and Gross's (1991) consumer value model is presented in the literature as well. Service-dominant logic also keeps the resource perspective (operant and operand resources) as central. This dovetails with the theoretical perspective of the present study, and the resultant findings.

Davis, Jansen van Rensburg and Venter (2016:1481) posited that "all layers of management in a higher education institution are responsible for the productivity, efficiency, competitiveness, and sustainability". To this end, the work of Davis, et al (2016) indicates the link between micro level and macro level strategy, which is the analytical position of the present study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Since the study ventures into an underexplored angle on strategic management research, the methodological approach follows an exploratory qualitative orientation in order to also fit with the complex research context. The design was a sequential qualitatively-dominant approach (QUAL-quan) (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The research questions were displayed in order to link them to the higher education support service dynamics. The research strategy is a multi-case study, involving four South African universities. The sample units included management staff of Student Affairs divisions, departments and units, as well as students. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the interview protocol developed from the concepts discussed in Chapter 2. The interview protocol was developed using a priori concepts from the conceptual framework. The supplemental data collection was done through a questionnaire developed from the qualitative findings. Chapter 3 also reports on the actual samples obtained for both research strands. This includes the characteristics of the samples. The considerations and theoretical influences in the development of the questionnaire, as well as the dynamics of the data collection processes that are reported for the purpose of providing rich descriptions of the research context.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section tables the actual findings, which are divided into; a) common mission; b) support service strategy formulation principles; c) definition of resources and capabilities; and d) four themes that constitute valuable resources and capabilities for support service strategy. The second section of the chapter presents the results of the support service value attributes as empirically tested through the new instrument.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the findings, juxtaposed with literature, research questions as well as the research objectives. The conceptual framework plays a theoretical lens role in the interpretation of the findings. The final product of this chapter is a model that is developed and presented, describing a typology of support services resources and capabilities. The second part of the chapter discussed the value attributes in terms of how they answered the study's sub-questions.

Chapter 6: Research Findings Integration, Study's Framework, and Conclusion

In this chapter, results from the qualitative and the quantitative strands are further discussed and integrated to show how they complement each other. Results from other studies are included to show corroboration. The final product is a framework that aims to meet the objective of the study. A theoretical conclusion is presented. A section on the study's theoretical and practical contributions is also tabled. Limitations and recommendations are also discussed.

1.10 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study, with the background which framed the study within strategic management as a broad field and service strategy as an area of the research focus. The problem statement indicated the research gap and located the research context. Research objectives and research questions were tabled. The methodology, which is a mixed methods research approach was also introduced. The next chapter is the literature review which sets the theoretical underpinning the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The search for literature followed an inductive, multi-disciplinary, and integrative process. An integrating literature review "seeks to synthesize and build linkages and relationships across previously disconnected studies or schools of thought, such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Kunisch, Denyer, Bartunek, Menz, and Cardina, 2023: 16). The conceptual framework section of this chapter provides a broader picture of the research concepts and theories, and the intended final outcome. Literature findings are consolidated in various tables that provided a theoretical foundation for how the empirical themes were sculptured to provide theoretical meaning. The study is driven by the resources and capabilities perspective.

Conventionally, literature on strategic management emphasises profitability (Rumelt, 2011) as the main purpose of strategy. However, a military strategy case study is a classic but important example that Mintzberg and Waters (1985) used, which demonstrated that strategy is not always about profits per se. Higher education is one (non-profit driven) sector that pursues strategy for the long term 'prosperity and survival' (Jansen, 2017; de Haan, 2014; Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016). Growth, prosperity and survival is attributable to a constellation of strategic decisions at various levels of an organisation. Assessing the strategic role of middle managers in higher education, Davis, et al, (2016) posit that 'all layers of management in a higher education institution are responsible for the productivity, efficiency, competitiveness, and sustainability'. So, there are different dependent variables in the strategy theoretical explanations and predictions. The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 of South Africa requires all public universities to conduct strategic planning. Even when HEIs sometimes make profit, such surplus revenue cannot be extracted in a form of profit or dividends for shareholders (government). Surplus revenue is used for further sustainability (Fowles, 2014), and this is the case in higher education. In pursuing sustainable support service strategy framework agenda, the present study investigates a niche in the strategic management field, in that while HEIs have a need to create revenue (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016), the

main goals are to 'survive and prosper' (de Haan, 2014). The key theoretical influences of this study emanate from the resource dependence theory, the stakeholder theory, the resource-based theory and the agency theory. Furthermore, the study brings together middle-range theories including the service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), and servitization (Vandermerwe and Rada, 1988) under the nexus of strategic management as a conceptual framework focus. Servitization was developed in the manufacturing contexts, while service dominant logic originates from the marketing management field. Ahamed, Kamoshida and Inohana (2013) describe servitisation as 'one of the key strategic choices, for an organisation to gain differentiation from other organisations by offering value-added services'. Another stream related to servitization is service integration. Kwak and Kim (2016) describe service integration as a phenomenon where manufacturing firms develop service businesses and integrate them into the existing business model to address customer needs and compete more effectively. Service integration help firms differentiate their offerings (Kwak & Kim, 2016). Researchers such as Murji (2019) who investigated the Student Affairs strategic planning process, have recommended that Student Affairs ought to show their unique role (or value) in higher education. Citing Ludeman (2009), Murji (2019) postulates that strategic planning is vital for Student Affairs not only for ensuring high-quality services, but also for the proper management of resources. In summary, the outline of this chapter is depicted below;

Introduction: • Presenting the overall theoretical foundation and focus of the study.	
Management and leadership as a foundation of strategy	• Management classical influence on strategy • Human relations contribution • Leadership contribution • Strategic management • Service strategy • Support service strategy
Theoretical underpinning	• Theories • Conceptual framework • Study concepts
Chapter Conclusion: • How the literature findings compare to the research questions. • Synthesis of the salient features of the chapter.	

2.2 MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP AS THE FOUNDATION OF STRATEGY

This section discusses the extant literature studied for the purpose of showing the research gap, the creating a theoretical base and reference for the empirical work, as well as for the analysis and integration of empirical data for the building of the sustainable support service strategy framework. The units of analysis for the impirical work included the managers and senior leaders in the research context, so, the topics of management and leadership are central in a strategy research endevour. There is no strategy without leaders and managers to conceptualise it and have it implemented and evaluated. A review of 'what others have done' (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019), in the area of management and strategy serves to provide constructs and concepts for this study's inductive empirical work.

2.2.1 Classic Management

Taylor's (1911) work on scientific management serves as one of the key management theories that links classical management thought of the early twentieth century to strategic management principles, concepts, and constructs of the twenty-first century research and practice.

Taylor's work received critique from other classic management pioneers such as Henri Fayol, who felt that "management was more than devising systems and methods for increasing outputs" (Wren, 2001:213). Fayol's focus was the overall management functions in organisations, including; authority, discipline, order, centralisation, organisational chart, chain of command, unity of command, accounting, meetings and reports, as well as planning (Wren, Bedeian and Breeze, 2002).

Wren (2001) viewed Fayol as a management strategist who once turned around one of France's largest steel manufacturing firm (Commentry-Fourchambault or Comambault) that was on the brink of collapse, in the late 1880s. Taylor's and Fayol's work is complementary and offer a foundation for tracing strategic management research trajectory. Work efficiency, is a scientific management central concept, which is enacted

and facilitated through management functions. Most managers, leaders and scholars of Taylor's time, such as Henry L. Gantt, C. Bertrand Thompson, Frank Gilbreth, advocated for the 'hard science' (Wieman, 2014) in the management of productivity, while Fayol and Weber focused on broader management principles and structures. The hard science reductionist approach became the weakness of the scientific management theory, and it attracted criticism. Stewart (2015), for example, posited that Taylorism required workers' maximum physical capacity. As a result, Taylorism received fierce resistance from workers, unions and progressive socialists for "dehumanising work" (Savino, 2016). This is because Taylor (1911) heavily promoted "the development of each man to his state of maximum efficiency" (p.9). He lamented the phenomenon of workers loafing or "soldiering" (ibid: 19). He saw laziness as a natural behaviour in workmen, but he found group-tardiness worse, and he claimed that "the greatest evil from which both workmen and employers are suffering was the systematic soldiering which is (sic) almost universal…" (ibid: 21). As noted by Greenwood et al. (2015), socialists found scientific management to be disempowering for workers, who were no longer expected to apply their own thinking in carrying out their duties, and this motivated research on human behaviour or what is now known as organisation behaviour.

Follett (1927) and Gilbreth (1953) were amongst a few who agitated for a human action theory or human relationship approach (Sethi, 1962). Others also pursued the human dimension (Gibson & Deem, 2016), including group synergy and leadership (Caldwell & Crippen, 2015). Follett rejected the hard and mechanistic management approaches of her contemporaries and promoted soft and humanistic leadership thoughts. The binary discourse of mechanistic management and humanistic leadership still persists in the twenty-first century. It is a conundrum that is also ubiquitous in the socially-intensive contexts such as higher education, with nuanced service ecosystems.

Taylor's management approach however persisited, and may have spawned the competitive strategic thinking in organisations. It propounded "maximum efficiency" (Taylor, 1911:9) as a critical foundation for improved productivity. As a result, the efficiency craze (Blake & Mosley, 2011) took the United States by storm, after the initial

publication of Taylor's 'Gospel of Efficiency' (Blake & Mosley, 2011) in *The American Magazine* early in 1911. Several decades later, the principle of efficiency was central in Penrose's (1959) theory of the growth of a firm, which became the seminal work for the resource-based strategy approach. Probably influenced by Porter's work on competitive forces, Lippman and Rumelt (1980), investigated how efficiency in firms added value to competitive advantage. The subsequent works of Wernerfelt (1984, 1995), Grant (1991), Peteraf (1993), and Barney (1986, 1991, 1995) respectively were premised on Penrose's initial work, albeit, with other influences such as that of Porter (1985). Possibly influenced by the scientific management worldview, in his work on the 'scale and scope' view of strategy, Chandler (1992:81) called for "economies of speed". However, efficient use of resources is only one component of a strategic management theory such as the resource-based view. If the focus was only on efficiency, such an approach would simply result in temporary profitability, and a depletion of resources in the medium to long term, which is a situation universities are facing in many parts of the world (Coupet & Barnum, 2010; Hodes, 2016; Kuah & Wong, 2010). Efficiency alone may just lead to what Barney calls "competitive parity" (1995:52), except when bundled and orchestrated towards value creation. Efficiency and value are closely related, because the former can be an ex ante for the latter. Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo (2009) identified the relationship between efficiency and value, with the former being a key dimension of the latter. Together with environmental factors, managerial paradigm usually determines the type of strategies being pursued by organisations in various sectors at a certain period in time.

2.2.2 Management Paradigms Ever Since Frederick W. Taylor

Management as a field has evolved philosophically from the early twentieth century of the autocratic and command approaches (Minaar, 2010) which were interrupted by systematic and behavioural worldviews to innovation and digitisation of the twenty-first century (Chambers, 2018; Hellriegel, Slocum, Jackson, Louw, Staude, Amos, Klopper, Louw, Oosthuizen, Perks & Zindiye, 2017). Classic management principles such as Taylor's scientific management approach, transcended various schools of thought, and remain applicable to strategic and service management disciplines, including the area of

leadership in the higher education sector. In his ground-breaking book published in 1911, Taylor (1911:7) posited that "fundamentals of scientific management are applicable to all kinds of human activities, from our simplest individual acts to the work of our great corporations". Savino (2016), and Morgan (2006) conceded that scientific management has had profound implications for societal, political and ideological perspectives.

Ever since Taylor's scientific management paradigm of logically and analytically breaking things (work) down (Blake & Moseley, 2011), and cutting out waste, management scholars and practitioners have developed a myriad of management disciplines. These disciplines include marketing management, human resources management, financial management, operations management, knowledge management, quality management, strategic management, service management, and the like. The foundation of Taylorism (Blake & Moseley, 2011; Huang, Tung, Lo & Chou, 2013; Savino, 2016; Greenwood, Wren, Teahen & Badeian, 2015) was hinged on cost-cutting and efficiency focus, with the ultimate goal of profitability for firms. Scientific management thinking has also spawned concepts such as restructuring, right-sizing, downsizing, and even the twenty-first century robotisation and digitisation movement follows the efficiency principle in developing and delivery of products and services (Peters, 2017, 2019; Yang, Full, Jacobstein, Fischer, Bellingham, Christensen, Dario, & Taylor, 2019), thus enhancing competitive strategies for firms. However, well-known service management scholars such as Wirtz and Zeithaml (2018) have cautioned against too much focus on cost-cutting drives, arguing that this can lead to customer dissatisfaction.

Some scholars have argued that scientific management is relevant to multiple types of businesses in the twenty-first century (Gionnantonio & Hurley-Hanson, 2011), and higher education is one of the sectors that has implemented the principles of efficiency. Coupet (2017) investigated efficiency in historically black colleges and universities in the United States. Mikusova (2015) measured efficiency in the Czech Republic universities. Gralka (2016) analysed inefficiency in the Germany higher education sector. In terms of strategy, these studies follow the Porterian approach to industry analysis. The

weakness of this approach is that it identifies the challenges mainly in the external environment and overlooks the internal weaknesses and strengths. Recent scholars such as Miller (2019) have started to harmonise the rift between those of the Porter's (external view) school of thought, and those of the internal firm-level (i.e., resource-based) school of thought. Higher education management practitioners still have not adopted a specific approach to strategy development. Higher education leaders and student activists mainly focus on outside-in, leaving the actual institutions highly inefficient in working on their capabilities, through alternative ways of resources accumulation as recommended by Winston (1999), and value creating strategies as recommended by Barney (2018), Bungay (2019), Gans and Ryall (2017) and Prim, Wentzel and Koch (2018). Rumelt (2011:3) penned an article titled "*The Perils of Bad Strategy*", in which he gave examples of US companies such as International Harvester, whose strategy planning process failed to identify "grossly inefficient production facilities… worst labour relations… and inefficient work organisation", resulting in the company collapse. The purpose of the latter point was to demonstrate the possible consequences when organisations neglect internal strategic assessment, which often brings a sharper focus on the human side of the organisation.

2.2.3 The Human Side and Other Management Theories

Teece (2008), citing Chandler (1962), paints a vivid picture of strictly centralised management style of the late nineteenth century which was evident in the command approaches of the early 1900s. Centralisation came with the view that workers were lazy and they needed to be controlled closely, (Stewart, 2015). When analysing the validity and relevance of scientific management philosophy, Teneja, Pryor and Toombs (2011) reported that even Taylor believed that workers were lazy. Unlike McGregor's classification of workers in Theory X (lazy) and Theory Y (hardworking), Taylor (1911:19) argued that the hardworking ones were "men of unusual energy, vitality, and ambition". But there was a clear interest in understanding human behaviour, in the context of organisations. At the end of a nine year-long experimental study at the Hawthorne electrical factory in Illinois, Mayo (1933) admitted that it was time to recognise the human effect in organisations. This called for further studies on the

complexity of business management systems and human behaviour in organisations. As noted by Robbins and Barnwell (2006), the Hawthorne studies opened a door for an era of organisational humanism. Greenwood, Bolton and Greenwood (1983) interviewed three of the Hawthorne studies' participants, and quoted one Duncan Chipman, who was a supervisor during the experiments at the Hawthorne plant. Duncan Chipman reportedly, concluded that the experiment changed management attitudes about individual workers, and that supervisors gained an insight into workers' emotions and feelings. Thus, the classical management and leadership theories, principles and concepts are still championed by contemporary researchers.

2.2.4 Contemporary Management

What do managers do today? Management literature points to the convergence of thoughts around the fundamental responsibilities of a manager. Planning, organising, leading, and control constitute the four most commonly identified contemporary management responsibilities (Christensen, Andrews, Bower, Hamermesh & Porter, 1982; Hellriegel et al., 2017; Powers, 2014). Others scholars added; directing, coordinating, motivation, and staffing (Klikauer, 2016; Koontz, 1969), as constituting functions of management. Powers (2014) traced the works of various authors from 1963 through to 2014, and reported salient concepts to include; planning, leading, organising, coordinating and control.

The debate on the relationship and or differences between leadership and management continues. Alvesson and Blom (2019), hold the view that management and leadership have different taxonomies of concepts. However, Mintzberg (2003:6) rejected the distinct separation of roles, and argued that "managers have to lead, and leaders have to manage".

Management is defined generally as a "process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people" (Hellriegel, et al. 2017:9). Borrowing from Hellriegel, et al's (2017) general definition of management, in this study, managers' functions or roles are assumed to have two streams of responsibilities, namely; resources and people/employees. 'Getting things done' has to do with employing

resources, including managers' intellectual resources. Planning involves the application of managerial intangible resources (knowledge and experience), and organising and coordinating generally fall within the tangible resources canon. While there are overlaps between the two streams, leading, control, staffing, directing and motivating, fall largely within the people/employees' stream. Alvesson and Blom, (2019) unpacked the leadership role of managers, as that of strategic, visionary, charismatic, transformational, post-heroic, authentic and that of a servant. This analysis therefore takes an inductive view of the functions of management, as encompassing all concepts mentioned above, consolidated under the two streams of resources and people. Therefore, the response to the question "what do managers do today?" is: they manage resources and lead people, for the success and sustainability of organisations, (Alvesson & Blom, 2019). This is how management is viewed generally, and the subject (management) is replete with various concepts that applicable to various organizations as shown in table 2.1 below.

2.2.5 Management Concepts

In addition to briefly highlighting existing management theories, namely, Taylor's scientific management theory, Fayol's management principles, this study has identified a number of concepts. The concepts relate to the study's phenomena, and were used epistemologically in a model-building process. Table 2.1 synthesises some of the concepts explored in the literature for this study.

Table 2.1: Synthesis of concepts from literature

Construct and concept	Influence on empirical questions	Potential (antecedent) use for new variables	Theoretical applicability	Use of the theory (concept) by other studies
Human effect: (Mayo, 1933)	• Performance • Capabilities	• Human capital crucial in higher education – student affairs	• Can be adapted from profit to non-profit context • Service efficiency and value improvement	• Greenwood, Bolton, and Greenwood (1983) • Paradis and Satkin (2017) • Zoller and Muldoon (2018)
Management view of workers: (Taylor, 1911; McGregor,1966)	• Performance and Capabilities • Potential of employees (Theory Y) • Resource bundling	• Human capital crucial in higher education – student affairs • Leadership styles • Employee motivation	• Human resources • Employee relations • Employee participation • Management training. All applicable in higher education	• Addison and Teixeira (2018) • Tweedie, Wild, Rhodes, Martinov-Bennie (2019)
Employee behaviour: (Mayo, 1933; McGregor, 1966)	• Employee incentives • Group factor • Culture • Performance	• Employee training • Employee motivation • Unionism	• Can have positive and negative outcome • Dominant factor in social systems	• Borghi, Lohmann, Meheus, Goudge, Oboirien, Kuwawenaruwa (2018). • Millar, Chen, Wang, Fand, Liu, Xuan, and Li (2017).
Efficiency: (Taylor, 1911; Penrose, 1959)	• Resource use, performance • Management	• Performance • Cost savings • Customer satisfaction • Quality • Speed	• Mostly used in higher education – support services • Need to be coupled with quality focus and user engagement	• Coupet (2017) • Huang and Chen (2015)
Value: (Porter,1989; Zeithaml,1988: Barney, 1991; Bowman & Ambrosini, 2000)	• Valuable resources • Customer value • Value co-creation • Customer engagement	• Sustainability crucial in higher education – student affairs • Value for service users • Service-dominant logic	• Can be adapted from profit to non-profit context • Service efficiency and value improvement • Important for scarce resources, and	• Ambrosini and Bowman, (2011) • Bowman and Ambrosini (2007) • Heinonen, Ferguson Campbell (2019) • Kuzgun and Asugman (2015) • Sweeney and Soutar (2001)

Construct and concept	Influence on empirical questions	Potential (antecedent) use for new variables	Theoretical applicability	Use of the theory (concept) by other studies
			active service users like students	• Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2016) • Woodall, Hiller and Resnick (2014)
Planning: (Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962)	• Competency • Resource accumulation • Resource allocation decisions • Strategic management • Objectives and performance	• Strategy • Service delivery • Customer needs	• Applicable to all sectors. Part of key managerial functions	• Mintzberg, (1981) • Zechlin, (2010). • Spee & Jarzabkowski, (2011). • Tull & Wallce, (2015) • Murji (2019)
Division of labour : (Fayol, 1949) (Smith, 2012)	• Employee performance • Supervision	• Specialisation and structures	• Applicable to higher education – structures, divisions, departments, faculties	• Selznick, (1948) • Meek and Skinner, (1973) • Roth, Sales, & Kaivo-oja, (2017).

Source: Own compilation, using Makadok et al, (2018).

Table 2.1 also shows the development of classical management thought to research and practice in the twent-first century. The next discussion takes a two-pronged analysis approach, integrating leadership and resources in higher education.

2.3 LEADERSHIP

"Management without leadership is sterile, and leadership without management is disconnected" (Mintzberg, 2003:6).

Leadership is a concept that is very difficult to separate from management. The two terms often overlap (Mahmood, Basharat & Bashir, 2012), and they are often used interchangeably (Mintzberg, 2003), even with regard to the roles of a manager. Some scholars have even noted that leadership has been puzzling thinkers for centuries (Sergi, 2016). From what is called a new public leadership perspective, Morgan, Ingle and Shinn (2019) have noted that management and leadership are interdependent concepts, with the former focusing on order and control, while the latter focusing on values and meaning-making responsibilities.

This thesis adopts an integrated view that management and leadership fall within the roles of managers. Holmsberg and Tystrup (2010) resorts to using the construct 'managerial leadership' to demonstrate the integratedness of the two concepts. To this end, leadership is associated with relations between managers and employees, which connects to the construct antecedent (human capital) identified in Table 2.1, as well as to the human behavioural theories discussed in the previous section. Since managers are expected to be strategic (Alvesson & Blom, 2019), they inherently play a critical role in developing strategic plans and are therefore central to a strategy framework.

The works of Jansen (2017) and Habib (2019) both present a higher education leadership crisis context akin to the leadership view of Holmsbert and Tyrstrup (2010) who posit that leadership can be considered as an everyday activity driven by daily events which includes improvisation and sense-making. Researchers indicate a need for a more integrated, 'strategic, charismatic, visionary, and authentic' role of higher education leaders (Alvesson & Blom, 2019). An integrated approach to leadership styles

could assist leaders in striking a balance between management and academic demands in higher education (Kulati, 2003).

Blimling (2001), who was once the Vice-Chancellor of Student Development at Apalachian State University, United States, made an observation that management and leadership approaches had filtered their way into higher education to make universities function more like businesses. Blimling's community of practice framework, adapted from Brown (2000:392), positioning Student Affairs leadership 'as among managers of institutional resources'. However, studies have rarely focused on the criticality of resources and capabilities for support service strategy formulation. Lynch and Baines's (2004) study did identify the intangible and managerial capital resources of a university which included; reputation, architecture, innovative capability, core competencies, and knowledge-based advantages. There is a close relationship between for example, a university reputation and the work of Student Affairs managers on conflict management in terms of co-governance. Some scholars, especially those researching microfoundations of strategy (Abell, Felin, and Foss, 2008) have argued that macro-level outcomes (i.e. reputation) are influenced by micro-level activities.

Golden (2015), echoing Kalargyrou, Pescolosido and Kalargilos (2012), noted that higher education leaders also needed business skills. Golden's (2015) study showed that even in higher education, there are differing views on what leadership is and what management is. Furthermore, Golden (2015) notes that scholars such as Kuiper (2005) posited that higher education has two cultures – that is, management and academic, so, the challenge is in balancing administrative and academic demands (Turnbull & Edwards, 2005). Of critical relevance, noted in Golden (2015) is Kuiper's observation that management culture in higher education is centred on management of resources and generation of revenue. It follows that Kulati (2003), cited by Turnbull and Edwards (2005:400), recommended that 'a collegial framework needs to coexist with managerialism'. Likewise, Santiago and Carvalho (2012) noted that in Portuguese higher education sector, managerialism has been firmly entrenched. Therefore, for Student Affairs leaders, a framework for strategy formulation ought to be produced to assist in this balancing act of higher education management dichotomy.

As discussed above, this study does not make a strict distinction between leaders and managers. However, there is recognition that the two concepts have been studied extensively by scholars and practitioners from lexically independent and interdependent angles. As a construct associated with leadership for example, 'sense-making' is vital in contemporary leadership research where crises are precipitated and amplified by social media (Gruber, Smerek, Thomas-Hunk & James, 2015).

Castillo and Hallinger's (2018) conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) of leadership and management in a school management context, serves to delineate the complimentarity of leadership and management. Furthermore, the depiction illustrates the conceptual two-pronged streams of resources and people, discussed earlier.
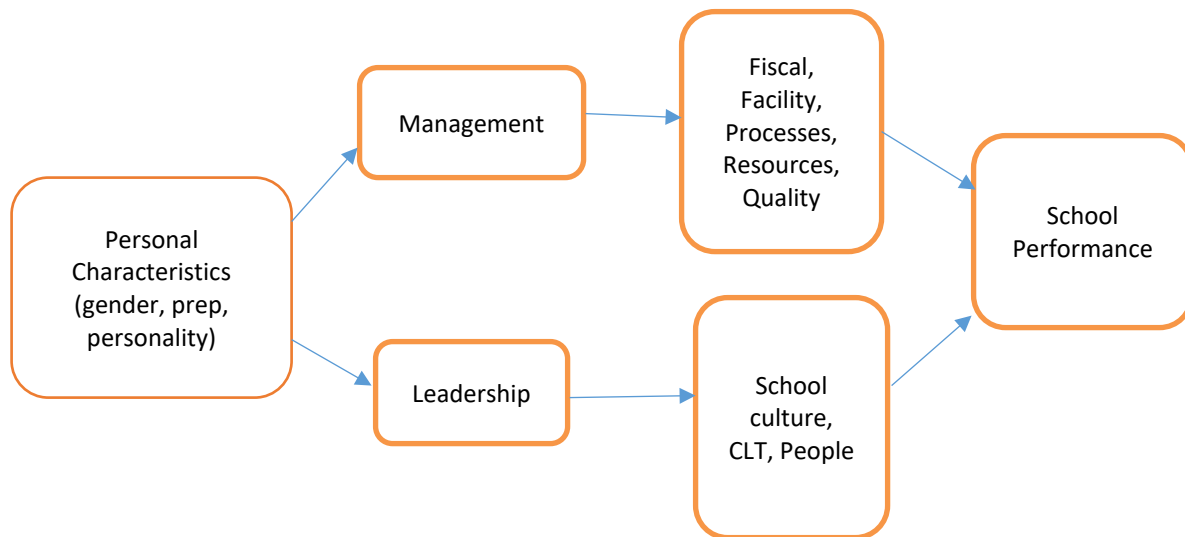
Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for education leadership and management

Source: Castillo & Hallinger (2018:209)

Figure 2.1 is based on education leadership and management thought but it is quintessential to the businesslike approach applied in non-profit organisations such as those in the education sector. The model provides some relevant managerial and leadership constructs for this study, which are analysed as follows:

a) Personal characteristics or traits of managers/leaders which has been a classical feature of leadership research (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden & Hu, 2014; Van Seters & Field, 1990).

b) Management has also been discussed in detail above. The relevant attributes and functions of managers are planning, coordinating, leading, control, and staffing.

c) Leadership, in addition to the traditional attribute of leaders, includes influencing, creating/harnessing culture, motivating, empowering, sense-making, and integrating.

d) Fiscal, facility, resources, quality, processes; the first three represent the well-established intangible and tangible resources, and the last two relate to the Penrosean efficiency view.

e) Culture and people; the former have been identified as critical in generating unique and inimitable resources (Barney, 2005), and the latter is a well-established feature of strategic management capabilities (Collins, 2021).

Castillo and Hallinger's (2018) leadership and management model is a microcosm of the higher education management system and is useful for analytical identification of sources of capabilities, value and sustainability. The epilogue by Mintzberg (2003) cited at the beginning of this section, means that a manager who cannot motivate and lead people will have a challenge in achieving results with and through people, but will also have a challenge in strategically delivering on the objectives. Likewise, a leader who cannot manage resources, risks collapsing organisations, especially financially. The following brief section unpacks the subject of leadership, with table 2.2 consolidating pertinent concepts.

2.3.1 Leadership Worldviews, Theories and Concepts

One research stream of leadership studies has been that of women leadership, which initially focused on levelling the playing field between women and men. Dobbins and Platz (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of experimental and field work studies between 1970s to the 1980s looking at the different effects of men and women leadership, but found too many inconsistencies in the studies, with no clear and consistent difference in gender-based performances. Ribeiro, Bosch and Becker (2016) posited that male-

dominant industries contribute to women leaving certain industries and are thus not represented equally. Scholars have recently exposed the scourge of workplace gender prejudices and promoted what they call the 'business case', or what Perriton (2009) called 'economic rationale', which postulates correlation between women leadership and improved company financial outcomes (Eagly & Heilmann, 2016). Perriton (2009) rejected the 'business case' equity strategy, arguing that it constrains the conversations of social justice in the workplace. Echoing the work of Collins and Dickens (1998), Perriton further argued that the business case' equity strategy in the workplace, gives the market its own device to perpetuate inequity.

Citing Acker's concept of an 'ideal worker', Nkomo and Rodriguez (2018), argued that the concept favoured a pro-masculine capitalist context, and disfavoured women, due to 'the visibility, mobility, and availability of the so-called ideal worker, especially for mothers'. However, the economic rationale or business case theory has been defended by other scholars, regardless of Perriton's rejection. Lagerberg (2015) for example, argued that companies with women and diverse board of directors have better financial performance. Booysen and Nkomo (2010) used the business case theory and produced results that support the idea that the theory has utility to identify issues of leadership gender prejudices in the workplace. These scholars conducted an empirical study in South Africa on perceptions of men and women (including a racial split) on the business case theory and found stereotypical responses against female managers. In another study, Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo and Michel (2019:2474) tested the "business case" (i.e., women leadership influence on financial outcomes). The findings were a mix of general financial effects but specifically positive financial outcomes in specific industries and positive financial outcomes in "gender egalitarian cultures". Indeed, different societal cultures have yielded inconsistent results on the issue of gender leadership imbalances and stereotypes. For example, Arnania-Kepuladze (2010) found no differences in workplace stereotypes between genders, while her study showed differences in gender stereotypes within each sex group in the Czech Republic. These gender leadership debates and dynamics serve as a valuable contribution to the leadership literature and development of a support service strategy framework. This is particularly the case in the South African context, as a nascent democracy, where

transformation and women leadership issues have taken centre stage in higher education. Kotze's, (2018) work on transformation, and Malose's (2017) on young women leadership both paint a vivid picture of the phenomena in higher education. Other research streams have proliferated on salient leadership concepts and or variables that contribute to organizational performance.

Recent scholars view leaders as organisational architects who achieve goals through influencing inputs and influencing others (Dinh et al., 2014). Other scholars echo the importance of influence and motivation between leaders and teams (Rahbi, Khalid & Khan, 2017). Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1979) embraced the idea of 'influence' as a central concept of leadership, but also added the concept of power. Those focusing on leadership and the new generations (millennials), or leadership generation gap, also consider the concept of 'influence' as central to leadership (Anderson, Bauer, Griffith & Buckley, 2017). Tourish (2019) injected the complexity theory into leadership and criticised the "the tendency to over-attribute responsibility of organisational outcomes to the actions of individual leaders" (p.220). Instead, he emphasised the importance of mutual influence between leader and follower because followers do not follow all the time and they withhold their support for bad leaders (Kellerman, 2007). The leader-follower dyad is akin to Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer's (1979) work on situational leadership. Looking beyond the leader-follower dyad, Alvesson and Blom (2019) viewed leadership to be about "influencing meanings, values and beliefs…" (p.28). The latter perspective of leadership provides a new focus on concepts (meaning, values and beliefs) that are contemporary and critical in generating unique resources and value. Leadership concepts and variables from previous studies culminated in theories that are discussed below.

Seters and Field (1990) conducted a diachronic analysis of leadership scholarship over decades and enumerated classical theories including; personality, trait, influence, situation, contingency, transactional, culture, transformational, and culture. Recent leadership approaches, as enumerated by Northouse (2019) include authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, ubuntu, and followership.

Table 2.2: Leadership concepts and theories

Theory	Authors	Brief description	Recent studies
Personality (Great man, and Trait)	• Bingham (1927) • Bowden (1926) • Stogdill (1975)	Individual adjustment to social environment. Iconic personality	• Sun and Shang (2019), investigating how personal traits affect a servant leader
Influence (power relations and persuasion)	• French (1956) • Schenk (1928)	Relations between leaders and the followers	• Jungbauer et al. (2018), on Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory and influence of member behaviour • Tse, To, and Chiu (2018), influence of leadership on employee creativity
Behavioural	• Argyris (1957) • Bass (1966) • Likert (1961) • McGregor (1966)	Relationship between leaders and employees behaviour and performance	• Johnson et al. (2018), motivational theories • Lawter, Kopelman and Prottas (2015), Theory X/Y and job performance
Situation	• Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1979)	Styles of leadership, relationship with workers, and readiness of workers to take responsibilities	• Thompson and Vecchio (2009), on retesting the prediction of leadership dynamics and follower performance
Contingency	• Fiedler (1978)	The performance of interacting groups is contingent upon the interaction of leadership styles and the situation	• Howell (2018) on choosing leaders • Yadav and Kala (2018), on school leadership and person-oriented approach
Transactional	• Bass (1985)	Refers to exchanges between the leader and followers, focusing on achievements, contracts, objectives, tasks, efficiency, and goals	• Jensen et al. (2019), retesting the revised measures of transactional and transformational leadership. • McCleskey (2014). Pairing transactional leadership with other styles
Transformational	• Tichy and Ulrich (1984)	Capacity to introduce change, develop a vision and ability to get followers to implement and achieve results	• Bernard & Bass (1999) two-decade review • Spector (2014), investigating the over-attribution and romanticisation of transformational leadership
Authentic	• Cashman (1998)	Refers to genuine, self-understanding, open and value-based leadership	• Alvesson and Einola (2019), studying the excessive positivity of leadership styles • Arda et al. (2016), review of practical implications of authentic leadership
Servant	• Greenleaf (1977)	Leaders who put other people's	• Carn (2019). Development integral leadership framework.

Theory	Authors	Brief description	Recent studies
		needs, aspirations, and interests above their own	• Sun and Shang (2019), investigating how personal traits affect a servant leader
Adaptive	• Glover, Rainwater, Jones and Friedman (2002)	Contextual environment within which leaders and their organisations operate	• Raei (2018) Development and testing of adaptive leadership with authority scale • Khan (2017). A review of adaptive leadership and transactional theories
Followership	• Meindl, Ehrlich, and Dukerich (1985)	Follower-centric view of leadership. Co-creation of leadership	• Braun, et al (2017), gender dynamic and bias on followership theories. • Kong et al. (2019), employee creativity. • Uhl-Bien (2014), Followership theory. A review
Ubuntu	• African traditional philosophy	Leadership that embraces a spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness, compassion, reciprocity, and dignity	• Brubaker (2013) ubuntu leadership effectiveness against servant leadership • Mangaliso et al. (2021). Ubuntu as a source of organisation harmonious management

Source: Own compilation

The repertoire of theories and concepts should provide options for the best combinations of leadership approaches for support services leaders in order to balance academic divisions' demands and student support service demands. Leadership and management is central to strategic management, so the concepts tabled in this section should help leaders to conceptualise relevant strategies, because strategy is not only about results, but about comparatively better results.

2.4 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THEORIES

There are many theories that have been applied and or relate to the practice of strategic management. Some of these theories include; the resource-based theory, stakeholder theory, network theory, game theory, garbage-can model, institutional theory, resource dependence theory, and agency theory. This section discusses four of these theories as they pertain to the resources and capabilities theoretical perspective of the present study.

2.4.1 Theoretical Influence for This Study

Theories generally help to describe, simplify, predict and explain an observed phenomenon or landscape (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Kessler, 2013; Meredith, 1993, Strayhorn, 2016). Sociologically, theories provide explanations for a multitude of things and social complexities (Stewart, 2015). For Bacharach (1989:496) who wrote from an organisational theory perspective, a theory is constituted of "statements of relationships among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints…used to organise complex empirical world". Most theory contributions in strategic management extend, clarify, or apply existing theories in new and novel ways (Makadok, Burton & Barney, 2018). Cited by Treiblamer, Putz and Lowry (2018:8), Gregor (2006) views theories as "statements of relationship among constructs that can be tested". The testability of theories has a positivistic orientation, with hallmarks of Popper's falsification thesis, which he propounded as a criterion for all theories if they are to maintain their scientific status. Popper, Kuhn, Lakatos, Earp, Trafimow, among others, contributed immensely to the development of scientific theory research as we know it today. Like in any scholarship debate, there were sharp differences and sometimes agreements amongst these scholars, especially Popper and Kuhn. Indeed, debates are a lynchpin for the development of new paradigms and new knowledge. For Popper

(1962:37), "the criterion of the scientific status of the theory is its falsifiability or refutability or testability". Popper conjectured the thesis of falsification in 1919, and further reintroduced and defended it in 1962 with vigour, positing that a theory that is not refutable is non-scientific. Popper championed a view that irrefutability, regardless of further defence, reduces the theory's scientific status. Strategic management theories, for example, the resource-based view (RBV), have been put under the Popperian lens. Predicated on Popper's conjecture, the RBV's scientific status was challenged several times by scholars (see Gibbert, 2006; Godfrey & Hill, 1995; Kaufman, 2015; Kraaijenbrink, 2010; Lado, Boyd, Wright & Kroll, 2006; Lockett & Thompson, 2010; Newbert, 2007; Priem & Butler, 2001; Sanchez, 2008).

Popper further argues that getting the theory to escape refutation is done at the peril of "destroying or at least lowering its scientific status" (1962: 37). Positivists have also argued that 'because a theory must be falsifiable to be a good theory, and if it's not falsifiable, then it is not a good theory, regardless of how many scholars see it to be useful' (Trafimow, 2009). Kuhnian supporters would challenge this position and agitate for an alternative candidate (new theory) if the existing theory as Kuhn (1962) argued, no longer solves the existing problems since theories are meant to simplify and explain complex realities.

Echoing Popper, Bacharach (1989:501) argues that researchers "must try to construct theories that are coherent enough to be refuted". Bacharach, however, allows for theories to survive some scrutiny by others, perhaps for their temporary utility (usefulness), but cautions that "no theory ought to be constructed in such a way that it is forever exempt from empirical refutation", (ibid: 501). Kuhn (1996:10) explicated what he termed "normal science" as embedded with "achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice". The Kuhnian view moderates the Popperian falsificationism. Kuhn's view was that "no theory ever solves all the puzzles with which it is confronted at a given time" (Kuhn, 1996:146). Popper categorically posited that a theory that fails falsification is non-scientific, and conversely, Kuhn's (1996:146) rejoinder was that "if any and every failure to fit were grounds for theory rejection, all theories ought to be rejected at all times". Lakatos (1970) is one of the scholars who identified the middle ground through the notion of fallibilism (i.e., proposition that theories are fallible).

While criticising what he called naïve falsificationism and dogmatic falsificationism, Lakatos (1970:182) promoted "sophisticated falsificationism and methodological falsificationism". Earp and Trafimow (2015:6) also accepted the falsification thesis but posit that following the criteria of falsification alone is an oversimplification of a scientific endeavour. They argue that "scientists do not derive predictions only from a given theory, but rather from a combination of the theory and auxiliary assumptions".

In the strategic management field, theories have traditionally focused on explaining the growth of the firms (Penrose, 1959), the competitive advantage (Porter, 1985), firm resources and firm performance (Barney, 1991; Makadok, Burton & Barney, 2018). The contemporary theories also comprise profit appropriation (Barney, 2018), organisational capabilities and dynamic capabilities (Grant 1991; Teece, 2018; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997), and value (Ambrosini, Bowman & Shoenberg, 2011; Bowman & Ambrosini 2000; Priem, Wentzel & Koch, 2018). Despite strategic management research moving towards service (e.g., servitisation, service-dominant logic, service-scapes, service blueprinting, service innovation, service integration, and advanced services), there is a dearth of research that focuses on theoretical explanations or interpretation of support services as a competitive differentiator. The following theories are collectively used in the present study to conceptually and empirically interpret and describe the support service strategy phenomenon.

2.4.1.1 The resource-based view:

The resource-based view (RBV) is a theory that explains performance difference as well as sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The theory is premised on resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and organisable. This theory provides a foundation for the present study due to its focus on resources and capabilities and value. The RBV assumes immobile and heterogeneous resources. Emanating from the era of strategic outward-looking in terms of competition appraisal under the industry organisation theory of Porter's time, the RBV emphasises inward-looking in building sustainable competitive strategy. The present study also promotes the inward looking in building a sustainable support service strategy, in this era of finite resources in higher education (Jansen, 2023). One of the original champions of RBV, Wernerfelt (2020) has recently recommended further development and refinement of the RBV as a theory based on the micro-foundational analysis

approach. Felin, Kauffman and Zenger, (2020), have also called for more research on micro-foundations for dormant resources, in order to create value. This call should offer inspiration for higher education researchers, since higher education remains heavily dependent on external resources. When Penrose (1959) developed the RBV approach, she premised her ideas on efficiency and or efficient use of resources, and higher education support service research can pursue such an angle. While the present study does not test the RBV, it does contribute to the development of a sustainable service strategy, using RBV concepts such as resources, capabilities and value.

2.4.1.2 Agency theory

The agency theory is concerned with the complex relationships and or contractual arrangements between the principal (owner or shareholder of an organisation) and the 'agent' (representative or manager of an organisation who does not necessarily own it). The theory identifies the complex relationship between the principal's expectations, interest and vision, as opposed to the agent's decisions, interest and inertia, which may create conflicts and uncertainties (Durand & Vargas, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Kostova, Nell, Hoenen & Kristin, 2018; Pepper, 2019). University principals are agents at the macro-level, while middle managers (van Niekerk, 2018) are agents at the meso-level of higher education structures. Student leaders are also agents for their constituents. This is an indication of how complex the support service ecosystem of higher education is, because managers at this level have to interact with all these stakeholders. Kostova et al. (2018) looks at the agency theory from the headquarters level of an organisation and the subsidiary level of an organisation, while Pepper (2019) looks at the agency theory from the perspective of a public corporation and public goods. Governments (principals) all over the world traditionally provide resources (physical and monetary) for higher education leaders (agents) to manage. However, the challenge is the continuous and globally ubiquitous reduction in resources supplied by governments; hence, this study motivates for a focus on resources, capabilities and value as a way of building sustainable support service strategy framework.

2.4.1.3 The resource dependence theory

Organisations depend, in one way or another, on external stakeholders or the external environment. The explanatory power of the resource dependence theory is in identifying the level of (inter) dependence. On this score, Ulrich & Barney, (1984:472), noted that "[a]cquiring external resources needed for an entity comes by decreasing the entity's dependence on others and/or by increasing others' dependence on it, that is, modifying an entity's power relations with other actors" Profit-making entities depend on their customers for revenue as well as shareholders for capital investment. Non-profit entities such as universities depend on government and external donors, while also collecting revenue in a form of student fees and third-stream income. The early development of the resource dependence theory (RDT) is attributed to Salancik and Pfeffer (1978). The theory is said to also provide a lens to explain the behaviours of public institutions of higher education (Fowles, 2014). Student Affairs as a sub-sector of higher education directly depends on the external provision of resources: i.e., portions of government grants that are provided to universities get channeled to fund Student Affairs programmes and services (Kuk & Ash, 2015). Some departments within Student Affairs also receive student fees directly, for student accommodation, food services, sports facilities use, and health facilities use, among others (Kuk & Ash, 2015). In the South African context, government sometimes provides capital financial resources for infrastructure (i.e. student accommodation) as reported in the DHET strategic plan 2020–2025). Kuk and Ash, (2015), reported that in the United States context, Student Affairs has gone to the extent of doing external fundraising. Using the RDT, Nehls's (2020) study investigated the use of external advisory boards for Student Affairs fundraising. So the phenomenon of RDT does play out in the Student Affairs context, as leaders manage the resource dependence and influence they can make to stakeholders – as also shown by the study's findings (on middle managers' divergent strategic behaviour).

2.4.1.4 The stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory generally provides a lens for understanding the nuances in relationships between an organisation and stakeholders (Friedman and Miles, 2002). Propounded by Freeman (1984), stakeholder theory has been intimately connected

to strategic management since its early days (Freeman, Phillips & Sisodia, 2020). It illuminates the role and obligations of managers to run organisations ethically and also meet stakeholders' interests. Stakeholders are categorised as internal and external (Laplume, Sopna & Litz, 2008), and are defined by Freeman (1984) as cited in Laplume et al. (2008:1160), as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives". Recently, scholars have viewed stakeholder theory as "about knowing how to engage stakeholders and create value for them" (Freeman, et al. 2020:217). This recent view points out that stakeholders have to be legitimate and there must be a clear demarcation of who is and who is not a stakeholder. The higher education instabilities as reported by Jansen (2017) showed that situations of mammoth conflicts and turbulences such as the 2015/2016 student protests, can reveal stakeholders that would otherwise have remained less prominent (i.e., society). Jansen (2023: 3) recently pointed out that the "never-ending stakeholder conflicts…" are visible signs of dysfunctioning universities. Fowles (2014:274) also adds that "increasing tuition fees are a source of contention between institutions, external stakeholders, including legislatures, students, and parents, due to concerns over issues of equality on access to higher education". This theory provides insights for the present study, in that it highlights the systemic environment within which higher education finds itself. On the positive side, the theory offers a lens for potential sources of resources and capabilities, as well as the obligation to engage and create value for stakeholders.

The concepts that transcend as a thread through these four theories, include; resources, relationships, dependence, interests, and value. These concepts are central in strategic management, and also critical for a service strategy, which is a focus of the next discussion.

2.4.2 Strategy and Service Value

In their work on competition and strategy in higher education, Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016) identified core strategic challenges. Among the challenges, is the "need to expand interactions and value co-creation with stakeholders" (p.311). The principle of value co-creation has gained strong resonance in the service strategy research. Pucciarelli and Kaplan note that "business ethos and practices are becoming acceptable in HE [Higher Education" (p.312). The emerging change of paradigm has

been followed by a subsequent push that "higher education institutions need to develop competitive strategies" (ibid). The mining of literature led to the identification of servitization and service-dominant logic, whose major premises are added value and service value co-creation. The key concepts discussed in this section are strategy, service and value.

Service strategy research stream is the branch of strategic management discipline, which focuses more on performance differentiation, and value is at the centre of competitive difference. Since service strategy is predicated on the overall strategic management discipline, the first part of this section will discuss the definition and the broad strategic management principles. In a nutshell, strategy as a discipline evolved through various schools of thought including; the planning mode, design mode, and emergent view, to growth, differentiation, competitiveness, resource-based, value, service, and an open strategy approaches. The following definition refers to the management of any of the aforementioned strategy streams. Ehlers and Lazenby (2019:4) define strategic management as,

> "the process whereby all organisational functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies, which are aligned with the environment, in order to achieve the long-term objectives of the organisation and therefore gain a competitive advantage through adding value for the stakeholders".

The integration and coordination of all organisational functions and resources means that strategic management is an approach cutting across all functions of a firm. As a tool for strategic performance assessment, Kaplan and Norton's (2001) balanced scorecard model demonstrated the transcendent approach to strategy. The balanced scorecard incorporated financial and non-financial performance indicators as part of the assessment (Akkermans & Oorschot, 2005). The balanced scorecard has four broad dynamics, including financial, customer, innovation and learning, and internal business (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). The other important and relevant part of Ehlers and Lazenby's (2019) definition of strategic management is the adding of value for the stakeholders.

The seminal debates on strategy centred on structure and strategy, the Harvard design school of thought, championed by Chandler and Ansoff, as well as

Mintzberg's emergent strategy. In the 1980's strategy focused more on business rivalry, with Porter's industry organisation theoretical approach, and Wernerfelt and Barney's firm-level approach, dominating for two decades from early 1980s to early 2000. Many classic elements of strategy have remained in the evolution of strategy, including the concepts such as; goals, long-term view, coordination, and resources. These concepts and constructs consistently appear in the definition of strategy as it evolves.

Strategic management is an overarching management process, while strategy, as Chandler (1962) defined it, is the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary to carry out these goals. Chandler's classic definition of strategy was echoed by many scholars such Mintzberg (1978), Robbins and Barnwell (2006).

Amongst other definitions of strategy, one of the relevant definitions for this study is the one developed by scholars of strategy as practice, such as Johnson, Sholes, and Whittington (2008:3), who viewed strategy as "…the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder expectations".

Scholars continue to define strategy. A short definition of strategy by Teece acts as a call to the higher education sector that is grappling with exogenous environmental challenges. Teece (2022) postulated that "strategy is about perceiving changes in the environment and positioning one's enterprise appropriately" (p.2). Building on the works of Nag, Hambrick and Chen (2007), as well as that of Crook et al, (2008), Ronda-Pupo and Guerras-Matrin (2012) developed a definition of strategy with similar elements that appeared in Chandler, which include goals and resources, However, Ronda-Puo and Guerras-Martin also added the element of 'environment'. They define strategy as "[t]he dynamics of the firm's relation with its environment for which the necessary actions are taken to achieve its goals and/or to increase performance by means of the rational use of resources" (p.182).

Definitions are helpful in giving an understanding of the concepts and theories, and for researchers and practitioners to see how different elements of concepts and

theories fit in various processes, be it for problem-solving, execution of functions, or analysis, planning, conceptualisation, and further research. The definitions of strategic management and strategy discussed above are aimed at demonstrating how the strategy discipline and the relevant theoreticl perspective fit into this study, in order to further conceptualise the framework for support service. Based on this study's conceptual framework, the proposition of sustainable support service strategy promotes the following considerations in strategy formation:

a) Flexibility for adopting various types of strategic options (planned and emergent), with an ambidextrous outlook to embrace service users' dynamics and input.

b) Orchestration of resources and capabilities, as well as the coordination of organisational functions, should aim at realising new value, with less dependence on external resources.

c) The chosen strategy must transcend various functions of the business and operational contexts. This broad approach ties in with the balanced scorecard model for a comprehensive performance assessment.

d) The internal and external environment factors must always be considered in the planning, implementation and evaluation of strategy.

The abovementioned considerations have been developed as a conceptual architecture for the present study's proposition of the support service strategy formulation framework. Chapter 6 presents the proposed framework with various strands of the study's findings linking to the above-listed factors.

Due to high dependence on external environments and often coupled with internal turbulences, universities may need to adopt 'agile and ambidextrous' strategic planning and management approaches (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Sollosy, Guidice and Parboteeah's (2019) recent study found that organisations that have the best mix of strategy approaches are more successful.

Strategy research scholars often publish a broad frame of strategic management such as the one in figure 2.2, which represents a typical strategy process.

Figure 2.2 below, provides an overall outline of strategic management.
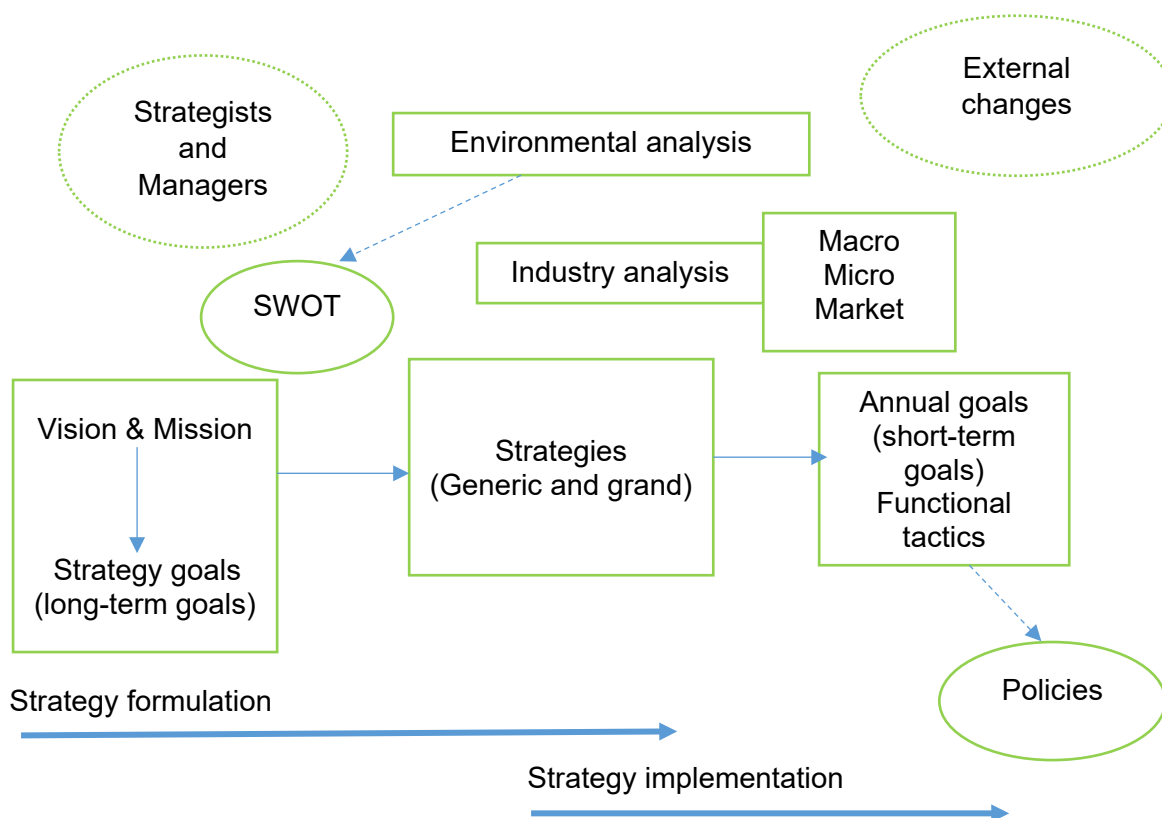
Figure 2.2: Strategic management process

Source: Ehlers and Lazenby (2019:168).

Organisationally, there are three common levels of strategy, namely; corporate level, business level and functional level (Louw & Venter, 2013). Strategy levels are sometimes conflated or viewed in conjunction with strategy approaches, i.e., grand strategies and functional strategies (Elhers & Lazenby, 2019).

The corporate level is located at the top of a firm or organisation and is concerned with 'defining the nature of the business in which the firm seeks to operate' (Robbins & Barnwell, 2006) or the overall scale and scope of the organisation (Louw & Venter, 2013). The latter corporate strategy view is based on Chandler's (1962) work on scale and scope, briefly referring to the size and strategic focus of an organisation. From a systems thinking point of view, corporate strategy is "what makes the corporate whole add up to more than the sum of its business units" (Porter, 1989:1). Johnson et al. (2008:7) defined corporate strategy as "the overall scope of an organisation and how value will be added to the different parts (business units) of the organisation". Current researchers such as Li and Chen (2019) also align their view

of corporate strategy to these contemporary definitions. The corporate level of the organisation is responsible for the overall organisational strategy, and this is the level of management that is likely to be concerned with the expectations of the business owners and shareholders (Johnson et al. 2008).

The second level of organisational strategy is the business level strategy, which is the leadership level of the organisation that is concerned with the competitive mission of the organisation (Johnson et al. 2008; Louw & Venter, 2013; Robbins & Barnwell, 2006). Porter (1989), in agreement with Hambrick (1980), and Beard and Dess (1981), termed this level, the competitive strategy level. This was echoed by Seifzadeh and Rowe (2019). Strategy at this level, is traditionally concerned with competition, performance and profit-making (Hambrick, 1980; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Johnson et al. (2008) have already pointed out that in the public service sector, the business level of strategy is concerned with providing best value services, including differentiation. Recently, researchers who investigated the application of support service strategy have reported that, "little is known about the type of strategy used by the service sector" (Gorondutse & Hilman, 2019:1142), so, the proposed framework is a contribution to filling this gap in strategy literature. Labib, Read, Glastone-Millar, Tonge and Smith (2014) are among a few who have pursued studies investigating the formulation of higher education institutional strategy. Murji's (2019) study brought the strategy research scope closer to home by investigating the strategy planning process of Student Affairs in a Canadian higher education sector.

The higher education sector has not explicitly adopted the private industry organisational concepts in terms of structures and the sector may not easily adopt these structures fully because there is always a strong ideological binary between academicians and those charged with managing the institutions. However, there are parallels with the private industry. The equivalent of the strategic corporate level in HEIs is termed 'institutional level', and the business level equivalence is the 'Faculty/school and support service level'. Jansen's (2023) work provides a reference point to higher education governance structures. Higher education has governing councils (equivalent to a board of directors in the industry). University governing councils are typically composed of internally appointed members, government-appointed members and student representatives. There is an executive

management or senior executive team (equivalent to top management teams) and management (comprised of directors such as marketing directors, service directors, human resources directors and finance directors). Van Niekerk (2018) has done work on identifying and or describing some of these management portfolios in higher education context. Student Affairs is typically led from university executive level (see table 2.3), with directors of departments forming the management structure that develops support service strategies and policies for a myriad of student support services and programmes. The Student Affairs and Services executive leaders collaborate and engage the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Deans of Faculties, while at a lower levels, directors of departments in Student Affairs and Services engage and collaborate with Deans of Faculties and Heads of Schools. One of the unique strategic advantages (for student interface) that Student Affairs has in higher education landscape is the closeness with the student representative councils (SRCs). Many universities have SRCs partly reporting to the leader of the Student Affairs/Services division. In addition to leading departments, the leadership of Student Affairs/Services plays a role and assists the SRCs with mentorship, training and development, strategy planning, elections, budgeting, policy development, and student engagement.

How does a support service strategy level analysis relate to a higher education setting? This is an under-researched area, so examples narrated by higher education leaders are a necessity to demonstrate the stratetic role of support service in higher education. Therefore, in answering this question, the following narrative by Professor Habib would demonstrate. As stated in the problem statement, South African higher education faced a national student protest crisis in 2015/16. The then Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University), Habib (2019:4) narrated a brief scene during a crisis, and wrote, "…by 08h00 we were collectively ready to engage with the protesting students but waited for Pamela Dube [the former Dean of Students at Wits University] to give us the signal that they were ready to receive us". Another former Vice-Chancellor (of the University of the Free State), Professor Jansen was frank that, "no university principal… runs a complex institution alone" (2017:19). These short narratives suggest that the running of a university needs a collective, but specifically, that student engagement is central to Student Affairs – as the support service strategy in a university context. Rajmaira

(2018) conjectured that 'at the heart of Student Affairs' work is deep understanding of college participants'. Mintzberg (2003:12) had already dismissed as a myth, "the idea that the chief does it all, coming up with the grand strategy and then driving its implementation by everyone else". Scholars of public management and leadership have also acknowledged that "strategy can be made at levels other than at national or higher level, provided that there is alignment or "line of sight at high-level strategy and functional strategies" (Lusk & Birks, 2014:25/26).

Student Affairs service research is a novel angle in connecting the meso and macro levels of strategy analysis, in a way that illuminates the intricacies of value co-creation. Explained from the theory of servicescapes (Bitner, 1992), Student Affairs' student-employee interaction, to a large degree, falls within the 'interpersonal services' of the servicescapes typology matrix. In a nutshell, this represents a very close contact service interaction, which often involves cognitive and emotional complex dynamics (e.g. counseling, health, engagement, etc). Customer engagement behaviour is another commercial concept that can further explain the realities of student support service interaction dynamics. Romero (2017) conducted a study investigating customer influence on customer engagement behaviour (CEB), and the results of that study indicated, among other variables, that CEB antecedents include relationship quality, social integration, company identification and self-enhancement. This model can be adapted and explored in Student Affairs, through the ambit of student engagement for support services. The CEB antecedent attributes can be vital in a support service strategy of a university, in order to improve the quality of relations between officials and students and to create a socially integrative culture, for all stakeholders to identify with a university, improve loyalty and bring about self-enhancement for students through engagement. The use of servicescapes and CEB analysis demonstrate, at the micro-level, the parallels of private commercial concepts on the one hand and practice at the Student Affairs context on the other hand.

This study sought to promote innovative ways of strategically generating new value within the existing resources repository, including sourcing this value from service consumers, and reciprocally generating value for consumers, through value co-creation engagements.

Building on the work of Woodall, (2003); Woodall, Hiller, and Resnick, (2014), presented a model of what constitutes value for customers, and listed dimensions such as attributes of products or services that are beneficial to a consumer;. The attributes included the; outcomes that are associated with the offering; value for money – balance of benefits and sacrifices; and net value – a combination of all benefits; cheapest option – bargain based on minimum possible sacrifice. Itani et al. (2019) built their "value get, value give framework" (Figure 2.3) on the original work of Zeithaml (1988), who described value as what I get, for what I give. Figure 2.3 shows the value model, whose attributes (most) resonate with the support service interaction context.

Value from Firm to Customer:	**Customer-Firm Relationship**:	**Value from Customer to Firm:**
Benefits	Satisfaction	Customer engagement
Utility	Trust	Market share
Service	Commitment	Social influence
Low costs	Identification	Referrals
Lower expenditure	Acquiescence	Advocacy
Low risk	Propensity to stay	Knowledge sharing
Quality shared values	Low uncertainty	Feedback
Communication	Companionship	Participation
Image	Self-connection	Cooperation
Participation		Resilience

Moderating Variables:
Customer (demographics)
Market
Offerings
Micro-variables (market competition, technology)
Macro-variables (Social, culture)

Figure 2.3: Value get, Value give framework.

Source: Itani, Kassar and Loureiro (2019: 80).

This study sees value as more than just the monetary value, but the total benefit and total experience, as implied in Kuk and Banning's (2009) definition of Student Affairs. Hence, a scale was developed to further measure the support service value attributes in the present study. The complexities of managing universities, especially in South Africa with a dire shortage of financial resources, was briefly discussed, and Student Affairs division is located at the centre of new strategy approaches of value co-creation and customer engagement. To this end, a "value get, value give" model by Itani et al. (2019) is included as a prototype of how this concept could be considered in the support service framework.

2.5 SERVICE STRATEGY

Some organisations traditionally provide service offerings while others traditionally provide products. However, environmental changes including competition have compelled the latter sector to change their business model and integrate servitisation (Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988), which became one of the key strategic moves as pointed out by Ahamed, Kamoshida and Inohara (2013). Manufacturing firms have adopted servitisation as a strategy of differentiation (Brax, 2005). For Vandermerwe and Rada (1988), who were the pioneers of servitization, this is a strategy for 'adding more value to the core offerings through services'. Echoing the notion of service differentiation, Mathieu (2001) noted that service strategy is one of the competitive strategic approaches. Likewise, Frank, Mendes, Ayala and Ghezzi (2019) as well as Wang, Lai and Shou (2018), agreed that 'servitisation brings strategy benefits and competitive advantage for an organisation'. One of the mechanisms to deliver servitisation is through a product-service system (Frank et al., 2019). The product-service system (PSS) as viewed by Frank et al. (2019) is a bundle of product and service functionalities provided to a customer. Servitisation researchers have coined what they call "advanced services" (Marcon et al., 2022:97), describing a triad interaction of the manufacturer, intermediates, and customer. These researchers found that the central catalyst of advanced services is new capabilities. The point on the servitisation discussion is to emphasise the strategic benefit and competitive differentiation offered by the added or support services. Paiola and Gebauer (2020) contends that design and delivery of services are key capabilities for organisations. Servitisation, PSS, and service integration concepts are generally linked to a traditionally product-offering organisation.

Service-dominant logic (Lusch & Vargo, 2004) is another service strategy research stream, (which is central to the present study). Service-dominant logic was developed from a marketing theory background, with special focus on customer interface and value co-creation. Service-dominant logic (SDL), therefore, takes a more central space in an environment that provides both core (service) and support services. Prominent scholars in service management and marketing literature, Vargo & Lusch (2008:26) define service as "the application of specialised competences (operant resources – knowledge and skills), through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself".

This definition of service refers to 'specialised competences' denoting the soft part of resources or capabilities in the form of knowledge and skills, with people at the centre of knowledge and skills concepts. In his recent work on dynamic capabilities theory, Teece (2019) explained that skills of the firms' employees form part of resources. Feiler and Teece (2014) equated what he called ordinary capabilities to competence, while dynamic capabilities are explicated as an orchestration or bundling together of various resources. So, 'the application of specialised competences through deeds, processes and performances' (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) as a view to how service is defined, synchronises with the dynamic capabilities perspective.

Pernaloza and Venkatesh (2006) proposed a paradigm shift and differed slightly with Vargo and Lusch on the notion of value-in-use (Greer et al., 2016). Pernaloza and Venkatesh (2006), felt that for a social construction of value, the interaction between a firm and customer should be before, during and after the service exchange and use. Other service scholars such as Ordanini and Parasuraman (2011) also extended the SDL, from a service innovation perspective, to include collaborative competence, dynamic capability customer orientation and knowledge interfaces.

Ordanini and Parasuraman's (2011:5) study found, among other factors, that direct inputs from customers lead to more incremental innovations. Their study partly rescued SDL from Pernoloza and Venkatesh's critique, because, through the collaborative competence, it emphasises "collaborating with customers during the innovation process". Ordanini and Parasuraman (2011) re-iterated Vargo and Lusch's (2004) thesis of SDL, namely, that collaboration with customers during

service development transform customers into resources, thus further responding to Pernoloza and Venkatesh's concern. Gronroos and Voima (2012) contributed to SDL by identifying the roles of the firm and customers, the scope, locus, and the nature of value and value co-creation. They also emphasised the importance of direct interactions between the service provider and the customer in the value co-creation. The service-dominant (logic) view, as further developed by Vargo and Lusch (2016, 2017), and Ng and Vargo (2018), which emphasises the co-creation of value for and with customers, fits into the empirical process of this study. The SDL's concepts such as collaboration, interaction, interface, capability, resources, and value creation are relevant for a sustainable support service strategy framework, and thus useful for this study. Lusch and Vargo (2004) as well as Mele and Corte (2013) noted that the SDL perspective postulates that an organisation can only make value propositions. The explanation of this foundational premise is that, an "enterprise can offer their applied resources for value creation and can collaboratively (interactively) create value once value propositions have been accepted, but they cannot create and/or deliver value independently" (Mele & Corte, 2013:199). This proposition, as initially championed by Lusch and Vargo (2004) liberalised the traditional focus of value creation from a firm-based angle to co-created value (including the customer). In the present study, it is argued that applying the resources and capabilities perspective in combination with the SDL fits better in the context of higher education/Student Affairs where services are co-created. In the South African context, students participate in decision-making from departmental/faculty level to university council level (the highest decision-making body). Most of the individual support services such as counselling, health, sports, leadership, are produced with the input of the students/service users. Others such as residence services and mentorship programmes are co-delivered by service employees with students, and this indicates a potential for the value co-creation as an SDL principle. Service dominant logic and servitization are in the broader family of service management, and there is no service strategy without service provision and management of such services.

Service management became a recognised area of research in the 1980s. Vast literature on service management has focused on quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985, 1988, 1991), and this led to the development of the SERVQUAL scale. SERVQUAL is a service-quality instrument/scale, for measuring customer

perceptions and expectations when it comes to service quality. Taylor and Cronin (1992) argued that the SERVQUAL scale was inadequate. In 1994, they then sought to extend the SERVQUAL and developed SERVPERF, which is a scale they described as an alternative method of operationalising perceived service quality but focusing only on customer perceptions of quality. When the concept of value started to gain traction, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed what they called PERVAL scale to determine what consumption values drive purchase attitude and behaviour. Zeithaml (1988) investigated the concepts of price, quality and value, asking questions similar to those of this study, and he noted the variety of meanings of value held by consumers. The strategic management literature has adopted the concept of value but refers to a variety of outputs, including production and output chain, profitability and competitiveness (Porter, 1985), resources and sustainable competitiveness (Barney, 1991), as well as benefits and usefulness (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2000). Some authors of strategy even concluded that, 'a business is profitable if its value exceeds the cost of performing the value activities' (Porter & Millar, 1985). The concept of value is indeed replete with semantic diversity (Woodall et al., 2014). From a strategy perspective, within a service sector context, Wirtz and Ehret (2017) posited that service organisations capture value by connecting resource markets and service markets. They then identified three types of assets for connecting markets and capturing value within the service sector context, namely:

- Resource-based assets, shaping capabilities and capacities of services:
- Platform-based assets, connecting resource owners with users; and
- Market-based assets, providing the interface for interaction with customers.

One key construct emanating from Wirtz and Ehret's work is 'service capabilities' which extends the theoretical ambit of resources to include services. This construct ought to be considered at the level of dynamic capabilities, as recommended by Teece (1997, 2014, 2019), because services have an intangible dimension, and consumer needs are dynamic, especially in higher education with a bigger segment of younger people. Wirtz and Ehret (2017) concluded their study by proposing a typology for service assets, recommending three key dimensions for the framework, including physical assets, intellectual assets and social assets including service

climate. The resource perspective is vividly embedded in the conceptualisation of such a service framework. The present study also developed a specific typology for a sustainable support service strategy framework.

2.5.1 The Support Service Strategy Context

Some scholars have already reported that many business concepts have been widely used in higher education administration and management. Student Affairs provides specific types of support services that thus far do not have an integrating strategy framework. Student Affairs strategic contribution is currently in various strands including; student development, retention, and student success, which has been pointed out by several scholars (Garl & Thomas, 1993; Lewis & Miller, 2013; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016; Ching & Agbayani, 2019).

The shortage of resources in the higher education sector has a negative impact on the delivery of a myriad of student support and development services. Other scholars argue that "campuses must use all the resources in the education and preparation of the whole student" (Ching & Agbayani, 2019:198). The notion of the 'whole student' is central to Student Affairs philosophy. In an article he penned for the International Association of Student Affairs and Services Publication (IASAS), Professor Bawa, who was the Chief Executive Officer of Universities South Africa (USAf) succinctly described the concept of developing a 'whole student'. He explicated that in developing a whole student, an institution "galvanises its resources to shape the intellectual, social and emotional growth of its students" (2020: 9). Bawa further acknowledged that "at the heart of this project [developing a whole student] is a new, more complex, more exciting role for those individuals and structures at universities that focus on the areas of student development and student services" (2020:9). In this regard, scholars and practitioners have posited that "resources must be allocated to those student services and programmes that are proven to enhance student learning and success in relation to demonstrated need and demand" (Ludeman, Perez-Encinas, Pillay, Skaggs & Strange, 2020:49). Ludeman et al. (2020), however, caution that 'student affairs programmes and services' missions and strategy must have a strategic fit with the institutional mission'. The present study's proposition is that a strategic fit could be achieved through an integrated and sustainable support service strategy framework.

Some researchers such as Webber and Ehrenberg (2010) have done empirical studies on the relationship between the amount of funds expended on student support services and level of graduation for students. These scholars recommended more funding for student support services in order to balance the scales, but this too is not sustainable if the original sources of funding are diminishing. This study follows the premise that since scholars have agreed that higher education (including Student Affairs) face a major challenge of external funding sources that are perpetually drying up, it is imperative that the sector looks inside itself for creative ways of sustainability. Citing Wernerfelt (1984), Galpin (2019:5) propounded that internal resources play a major role in helping organisations to achieve high performance.

This section theoretically introduced the context of support service, with an explication of how this meso level of strategy connexts and illuminate the macro level phenomenon. The next section moves on to discuss how Student Affairs (as a chosen support service empirical area) practices strategy.

2.5.2 The Student Affairs Strategy Praxis

This sub-sector (Student Affairs) of higher education is recognised at international levels as well as at a national level. In 2002, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), in collaboration with the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS), published a practical manual for developing, implementing and assessing Student Affairs programmes and services. The purpose of the manual was to offer "institutions of higher education concrete proposals and models for the establishment and management of such support activities" (UNESCO, 2002: no pagination). Furthermore, it was to put emphasis on "the important higher education issues related to development of the *total student*, including cognitive/intellectual, affective/emotional, and social/interpersonal dimensions" (ibid). Emphasis added. The UNESCO-IASAS manual lists 25 Student Affairs and Services units, of which 13 are prevalent in the South African higher education context, including academic advising/educational counselling, campus activities/student organisations, careers service, psychological counselling services, dining/ food services, disability [support] services, financial aid and student employment, health services, international student

services, new student programme/ services/ orientation, sports/ recreation/ intramurals, student discipline, student housing/ accommodation and residence life.

The Student Affairs fraternity is therefore a strategic partner for HEIs in the provision of these comprehensive sets of out-of-classroom support and development services (Kuh, Kinzie, Shuh, and Whitt, 2011; Romine, Baker, and Romine, 2018). This strategic position suggests a bottom-up alignment between institutional (corporate-level) strategy and student support services (meso-level) strategy. This strategic alignment (Wadstrom, 2019), is demonstrated by the strategic outcomes of the Student Affairs and Services as proposed in the UNESCO-IASAS manual. The strategic outcomes as listed in the manual include;

> "(a) high quality and well round higher learning experience; (b) improved higher education access regardless of ability/disability and background; (c) better retention and higher graduation rates; (d) enhanced career/employment prospects and life-long learning interests; and (e) a life as a responsible, contributing community member and citizen" (2002: 2/3).

The Strategic Framework 2015-2019 of the USAf, among other imperatives, emphasises the prioritisation of "access" and "success", urging universities "to provide students with opportunities and experiences that will foster their success" (p.2). Bawa noted that an amount of higher education learning takes place outside the classroom, and thus urged the "student affairs and services fraternity to assert new roles that give students they serve an opportunity to grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally" (Bawa, 2020:9). In the USAf 2018 annual report, the then Chairperson of USAf (Professor Thandwa Mthembu) announced that USAf Strategy Groups was investigating, among other strategic broad areas, "conditions to be met for universities' long-term viability (e.g., adequate funding, differentiation within the system, requisite infrastructure including student accommodation)" (p.8). Long term viability is synonymous with sustainability in the strategy lexicon, and servitization has been the one forms of creating a differentiation strategy. Student Affairs can contribute to the latter strategy in higher education. This point is also ventilated under the discussion on student choice, with universities bundling their student recruitment offers with Student Affairs support service offerings (e.g. student accommodation and sports).

In the context of South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is the custodian of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (the Act), that outlines and regulates the registration of institutions, government oversight role, and providing the framework for structures and the running of the higher education sector. Section 5 (2) (g) of the Act gives recognition to the existence of "student support services" in public HEIs, and the work of Student Affairs is centred on student development and support services. DHET has some direct relations with Student Affairs in one form or another. For example, in consultation with Universities and Student Affairs leaders, the DHET developed a Policy on Minimum Norms and Standards on Student Housing in Public HEIs, which was gazetted in 2015. Furthermore, the DHET Amended Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 includes the development of a policy framework for issues around mental health and gender-based violence at tertiary institutions. As acknowledged by various scholars (Flisher, de Beer & Bokhorst, 2010; Stanley, Mallon, Bell & Manthorpe, 2009), these activities and issues reside within the remit of Student Affairs. The same DHET's strategic plan also announced a "multifaceted and comprehensive plan for Student Housing" (p.11), to be rollout in year 2021. The purpose of the latter discussion was to highlight the level of recognition of Student Affairs and Services at an international level (UNESCO, and IASAS), and nationally, in the higher education sector (DHET and USAF).

Funding challenges in higher education worldwide have resulted in governments adopting the 'New Public Management approach' (Santiago & Carvalho, 2012) as a response to institutions' requests for funding and resources. The New Public Management approach has had a neoliberal influence in the transformation of the public sector resulting in bricolage managerialism in higher education. The bricolage managerialism is due to the resistance and scepticism that strategy planning has received in the higher education sector (Frolich & Stensacker, 2010). Governments, however, have been persistent in imposing corporate governance practices on higher education, due to the funding and regulation of stakeholder power. Part of the empirical project of the present study investigated how these imposed commercial managerial and strategic principles are enacted in practice. Universities are finding themselves mandated to adopt the business strategic management 'native language'

(Kuhn, 1996), from DHET's regulations for reporting by public HEIs, gazetted in 2014. Section 4 (p. 3) of the DHET's reporting regulations require that:

- Each public higher education institution must prepare a strategic plan setting out the institution's vision, mission, policy, priorities and project plans for at least a five year period and which must be approved by its Council.
- A strategic plan must have strategic goals and objectives for the institution, focusing on each of its main service delivery areas supported by the financial plan.
- The strategic plan must lay the foundation for the development of the annual performance plan.

So, through the new public management theory, strategy management principles and practice has been migrated to and institutionalised in the HEIs. The next discussion maps out how Student Affairs feature and contributes to the strategic goals of the HEIs.

The common strategic goals of higher education institutions include student retention and success. Some scholars have published works on the relationships between what they call 'outside-classroom' student development and student retention and success (Kuh, Kinzie & Shuh, 2011). Among others is Roberts (2018), whose studies suggested a positive relationship between administrative services and student retention and success. The *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* has published articles on specific Student Affairs services such as residences that contribute positively to student success (Groenewald & Fourie-Malherbe, 2019; Xulu-Gama, 2019). Other journals such as the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* released similar articles (Brown, Volk & Spratto, 2019; Vaccaro & Kimball, 2019). Still, a variety of research works pertain to student disability support by Student Affairs (Burke, Friedl & Rigler, 2010), international student support by Student Affairs (Barr, 2013; Briggs & Ammigan, 2017); student engagement (Kuh, 2009; Pomerantz, 2006); advocacy (Harrison, 2010); student retention and collaboration between faculty and Student Affairs (Gulley, 2017; Tinto, 2006); student persistence and retention (Tinto, 2017); student drop out (Tinto, 1975); and student support (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). These studies have highlighted the role played by Student Affairs in higher education globally. Student development became the core focus and

philosophy of Student Affairs from the early 1970s in Western communities (Bloland, Stamatakos & Rogers, 1994). South Africa also has Student Support Services fraternities in various domains such as; campus security (CAMPROSA), student counselling (SAACDHE), student health (SAACHS), student housing (ACUHO-I SAC), student financial aid (FAPSA) and disability support (HEDSA). At a broader fraternity level, South Africa also has the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Practitioners (SAASSAP), and is part of the IASAS which is a global association represented in 90 countries in Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. These associations demonstrate the level of national and global recognition of Student Affairs and Services fraternity.

The strategic (competitive) positioning of Student Affairs is however still an incipient area of research. At the core of a university's mission and strategic objectives are the academic programme offerings. The question is: what differentiates these academic offerings in a competitive higher education landscape? Why should a student choose University A over University B, when both are offering the same academic qualifications? To a large extent, the fundamental answer lies in differentiation strategy. Some scholars such as Marginson (2006), Sutic and Jurcevic (2012), Overton-de Klerk and Sienaert (2016), have recognised the phenomenon of competition in higher education. Barr (2013) made a bold statement arguing that competition has some benefits in higher education. Frankly, a university of half-empty lecture halls (low enrolments) will suffer huge financial losses, and that is the fundamental principle of the sustainability element in higher education management. Internally, when certain course offerings no longer attract the interest of students, they risk being closed down, and rationalisation (of staff) is usually inevitable. Likewise, self-sufficient units of Student Affairs such as student residences, suffer a direct financial loss if such services are not used optimally. The residences unit of Student Affairs also faces direct external competition in the student housing market, i.e., with privately-owned student accommodation establishments offering better or different value for students. Additionally, there are university dining hall services that compete directly with popular and sometimes cheaper private food outlets on campus and off-campus. These university dining halls are often required to be self-sufficient with no government subsidy, just like most residences in South African universities. The point is not to say that Student Affairs is necessarily a business

unit, but to demonstrate briefly the nuanced role it plays in higher education from a strategic point of view. Therefore, competition for students in higher education is an influential element of sustainability, so, sustainable competitive advantages are continuously sought in higher education in the twenty-first century. "Increasing competitive pressure requires the management of the HEIs to develop strategies as a unique way to achieve competitive advantage", (Soewarno & Tjahjadi, 2020:1745). Many universities develop student recruitment strategies (Frolich & Stensacker, 2010) and often, due to competition, they offer admission/enrolment packages to prospective students other than just academic offers. The Stellenbosch University Sports Department, for example, reported to have offered some R7 million in 2018 in sports bursaries to students which contributed directly to their competitive advantage (www.sun.ac.za/sport). In their investigation of student choice and competitive advantage, Kayombo and Carter's (2016) study, listed sports facilities, social facilities, and student accommodation facilities under the brand elements for a university. Student Affairs programmes and services are usually show-cased to prospective students through residence tours, sports facilities tours, university adverts that include or portray a sports brand, photographic and video displays on universities' websites, as well as documented material (i.e. flyers, prospectus, and pamphlets). The support service strategy integrates these programmes and services as a value proposition in a way that entice potential students as they weigh options of choosing a university where they can join a vibrant and supportive community.

In a study of UK higher education, Lynch and Baines (2004) posited that 'if the competitive resources thesis is plausible in terms of competition in the higher education sector using unique bundles of resources, then there are significant implications for strategy development in higher education'. There is often resistance to the reality that higher education is facing industry-type competition, and commentators argue that higher education is deviating from its core business. However, other scholars like Marginson (2006) have argued that when prospective students are faced with the dilemma of choosing a university, their decisions are influenced more by competitive position or reputation of a given university as opposed to quality of teaching which is difficult to assess prior to enrolment. Quality of teaching is extremely important but is often less known by those searching to enrol at universities, according to Marginson (2006). In a South African study,

Beneke and Human (2010) found that reputation is the most important factor for prospective students in making their choice of a university. In their study investigating the factors influencing student choice behaviour, Heathcote, Savage and Hosseinan-Far (2020) noted that reputation seems to have the greatest influence on the decision of a prospective student. There are more studies (i.e., Frolich & Stensacker, 2010; Makgosa and Molefhi, 2012) that have been conducted on the concept of reputation as it relates to choice of a university for prospective students. The admonition therefore for higher education leaders, is simplified by Soewarno and Tjahjadi (2020:1749) who argued that "the higher the competitive pressure, the higher the need for a sound strategy in an organisation".

There are other effects of reputation. For example, favourable reputation, as noted by Arraya (2016), offers a distinct advantage over competitors, and this, in turn, generates customer loyalty. University reputation has been postulated to be linked to student loyalty (Helgesen and Nesset, 2007), and the antecedents of reputation included service quality, campus social life and campus facilities. Thetsane, Mokhethi and Patrick's (2019) study found that parents, friends, peers, and siblings have strong influence on students' decision to choosing a university. This is similar to customer loyalty or student loyalty, word of mouth and reputation as reported by Arrraya's (2016) study. In a paper on higher education reputation, Van vught (2008:169) conjectured that higher education is involved in a "reputation race", whereby "HEIs are constantly trying to create the best possible images of themselves as highly regarded universities". Similar to Helgesen and Nesset, (2007), Heathcote et al. (2020:17) concluded that "as a factor, institutional reputation could be influenced by several other elements from within the HE system, its environment, and the wider environment". For prospective students, these other factors are equally or even more important, and as Marginson (2006) argued, 'institutional reputation is known, while little detail is known about the quality of teaching'. Take for example, negative reputation of an institution emanating from student protests, mental health, high levels of alcoholism and gender-based violence, poor and inefficient administration and a high dropout rate. These factors are likely to be publicly known through the traditional and social media reports, and they are likely to hinder the success of students, because success means "being outstanding academically, socially, and in extracurricular activities" (Nyström et al., 2019:466).

Some of their findings, Xulu-Gama, Nhari, Alcock, and Cavangh's, (2018) study reported that the majority of their student participants did not know enough about their study programme before enrolling. The same study also listed things that students disliked about their institution, including "strikes, [and] violence leading to a bad reputation" (ibid: 1309). The aforementioned campus dynamics converge under the umbrella of Student Affairs services, and hence the present study's proposition of a support service strategy which integrates the performance of Student Affairs and link to institutional strategic goals. When disintegrated and in silos, Student Affairs performance fizzles out and evaporates into the campus oblivion, and consequently losing their strategic significance. Integrating different roles harmoniously is another dimension of strategy (Hax and Majluf, (2007).

Scholars such as Lynch and Baines (2004:183) argued that "HEI resources such as reputation is sustainable over time, while teaching quality has only limited distinguishing features and may be more easily replicable by other HEIs over time". Considering some of the functions of Student Affairs, for example; mediating conflicts which relates to creating a climate of dialogue, collaborations, and managing student protests (Gaston-Gayes, Wolf-Wendel, Tutte, Twombly & Ward, 2005; Harrison, 2010; Long, 2012), mental health and counselling services (Flisher, de Beer & Bokhorst, 2002; Mayet, 2016), Student Affairs offers a strategic value in contributing to managing the reputational issues. These and other functions play a role in the student choice (Marginson, 2006), and student success (Ching & Agbayani, 2019). Researchers such as Sanchez (2012); Raposo and Alves, 2007; Rudhumbu, Tirumalai & Kumari, (2017); and Calitz, Cullen and Jooste (2020) reported that the global drivers influencing students' choice of a university include; academic programmes and quality of programmes, ranking, location, accommodation, fees, university brand, and student life. Calitz et al. (2020) further reported that the student protests and safety in South African universities have an influence on student choice, especially for international students. The factors reported in these studies fall within the responsibility of Student Affairs and Services and these studies demonstrate the direct impact these services have on student choice and reputation. Additionally, Brown, Vlok and Spratto's (2019) study on the contribution of residential services to new students' success is a case in point. The current study, therefore posits that Student Affairs has the potential to provide

valuable and unique resources and capabilities, and thus supporting the higher education strategic agenda.

A brief of demonstration of how the support service strategy proposition can be enacted is as follows. The support service strategy integrates programmes and services as a value proposition in a way that entice potential students. Therefore, from the service strategy point of view, the Student Affairs support service strategy, can be assessed through (i) the value proposition they present to prospective students and thus enhance student recruitment, (ii) the student development and value in the various support services, (iii) the loyalty of alumni, and (iv) the contribution they make at national levels. These variables aggregated under the support service strategy, can be individually empirically tested. Following a microfoundations approach (Foss and Foss, 2022), another angle of studying the link between meso-level dynamics and macro-level phenomena can be done through a stakeholder analysis perspective. Jansen, (2023), shows how 'internal stakeholder-conflicts, student protests, campus closures, etc., has consequences on teaching time, widrawal of funders, departure of leading academics, top students going elsewhere, staff morale, and the eventual governance interventions'. The microfoundations approach of support service strategy proposition goes deeper into these meso conflict issues (of co-governance) to illuminate bigger phenomena.

2.5.2.1 Student Affairs Strategy Diffusion

"Deep inside the daily operations of a university, there is a constant struggle for access to and control over finite resources", (Jansen, 2023: 31).

Given that the present study ventures into an under-researched area of service strategy, this section pushes the envelope in explicating the integration of strategic management paradigm into Student Affairs management realm.

Some scholars and some in the academia continue to oppose any move to transfer private sector/business theories and practices to the management sphere of the higher education sector. However, opposition to adopting business theories and practices is no longer tenable in a fast-changing world. Researchers have pointed out that challenges of managing a university have become bigger and more complex

(Davis, et al, 2016). What is not contestable in 'higher education is the phenomena of perpetual decline in state funding, changing student demographics, new technological developments and increased market pressure' (ibid). Due to these dynamics changes, managerialism has become entrenched in government policies on higher education governance (Santiago and Carvalho, 2012). Even strategy researchers, have noted that "[t]he leadership of public universities often faces significant counter-pressures from stakeholder groups" (Heaton, Teece, Agronin, 2022: 522). The push-back from critiques is that where managerialism has been rooted, 'the leadership philosophy of the institution is driven by cost-benefit thinking and the university is therefore conceptualised as an entity for producing skills and goods for the market, rather than as a public good focused on knowledge creation'(McKenna, 2020). Resistance to openly embrace managerial principles is also prevalent in the Student Affairs fraternity, and hence the dearth of research on support service strategy. The irony is that Student Affairs depend heavily on the provision of resources by the very universities that are facing perpetual decline in state funding. So rather than embarking on vibrant service strategy research, Student Affairs only gives prominence to student development theories research, and then hope for the best in terms of developing new models and frameworks on knowledge for their sustainability. The unending wave of student protests over the past decades (especially in 2015 and 2016 in South Africa) which often result in their budgets being cut, as well as the recent health pandemic in 2020 and 2021, should have sounded the alarm for a paradigm shift in Student Affairs leadership and research. Teece has simplified how strategy should be viewed, when he says, "strategy is about perceiving changes in the environment and positioning one's enterprise appropriately" (2022:2). So Student Affairs managers should not be timid around these business concepts because the ultimate responsibility is on them perceiving changes in the environment that provide external resources and positioning their Divisions appropriately, in line with macro-level goals. Scholars have revealed that in the daily university operations, there is a fierce scramble for finite resources (Jansen, 2023).

The present study is in pursuit of a framework for sustainable support service strategy that should be positioned as the alignment bridge to institutional strategic goals. The conceptual framework (figure 2.5) simplifies the essence of this

proposition, delineating how the native concepts of strategic management with the corollary concepts of Student Affairs form a constellation of support service strategy. Premised on resources and capabilities perspectives, the framework systemically integrates all the strategic activities of Student Affairs. As can be discerned from various parts of this chapter, the Student Affairs concepts appearing on the conceptual framework, do find resonance semantically in strategic management theoretical realm. There is a small body of literature that notes the application of strategic management concepts in Student Affairs (see Ellis, 2010; Murji, 2019; Roberts, 2018). Ellis's (2010) work shows evidence of the adoption of strategic management concepts and practices in Student Affairs. The present study also sought to contribute this incipient body of knowledge. Ellis, (2010), proposed the following steps for the strategic planning in Student Affairs;

(i) A vision statement (what the student affairs organization aspires to be)

(ii) A mission statement (why the student affairs organization currently exists)

(iii) Identification of five- to seven-core organizational values

(iv) A presentation of the student affairs organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs)

(v) A statement of five- to seven-key goals based on the SWOTs, accompanied by key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure their accomplishment

(vi) A resulting action plan to achieve the goals

(vii) Evaluation and assessment of progress in fulfilling the plan

Currently, various fragments of Student Affairs programmes and service outcomes are left on their own to find their way into key objectives of the institution, such as student persistence objective. The support service strategy provides an overarching conduit for Student Affairs key interventions from various systems, to the main goals of a university. In this way, a university can be able to do an aggregate measurement and identify the unique and systematic contribution of Student Affairs to the macro level differentiation strategy of the university. The resources and capabilities strategy perspective, shifts the paradigm and the pendulum from the laissez faire resource dependence to resource value creation. These two polar positions are explained by the various theories adopted in this study, including stakeholder theory, resource dependence theory, agency theory, and the resource-based theory.

The next discussion focuses on how Student Affairs is organized, which is, as discussed in the previous chapter, a key component of strategy (as noted long ago by Chandler), especially with regards to its implementation.

2.5.3 How Student Affairs Units Are Organised

Internationally, many top-ranked universities have placed Student Affairs Divisions in strategic and prominent positions within their structures. Universities listed below as top-ranked were ranked by the QS University Ranking, Shangai University Rankings, and Times University Ranking in 2019. "The rankings allow institutions to distinguish themselves based on who they are and what they do for consumers of higher education" (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2007: 2). From the publicly available information on the websites of the universities (accessed in May 2020) the following can be noticed in universities' structures, from different continents (excluding Africa).

- At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Student Affairs ultimately reports to the Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Student Life, responsible for the core student support services, which includes student support and wellbeing, dinning, student disability services, residential services, student development and athletics.
- At Stanford University, there is a Dean of Students that heads the Student Affairs division, with departments providing leadership development, residential, career, and community engagement.
- At Harvard University, there is a Dean of Students, responsible for student organisations and resources, housing and student life, orientation and engagement, and leadership.
- Oxford University does not show on their website if they have an organised Student Affairs division, but they have the units that provide Student Affairs services such as healthcare, disability support, counselling service, student peer supporters, and student advice services.
- Nanyang Technological University – Singapore also has a Student Affairs structure headed by a Director.
- Tsingua University (China) has a student life division.
- Seoul National University (South Korea) has a Student Affairs division headed by a Dean and an Associate Dean.

- Sao Paulo University (Brazil) does not show in their website how they are organised, but they also provide Student Affairs services such as housing and health.

- The Indian Institute of Technology (India) has a Dean of Students heading the Student Affairs division.

- The Australian National University has a Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Students and University Experience, and under this portfolio are typical Student Affairs departments (health, counselling, careers, mentorship, residential, and financial support).

- Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL) – Switzerland – has a Student Affairs division.

- The Novosibirsk University (Russia) only shows dormitories, sports, and health.

What this list demonstrates is the prevalence of Student Affairs at the world's top-ranked universities. It also appears that there are varying discrepancies on the structures. As Chandler (1962) once postulated that strategy follows structure, the discrepancies could be largely due to the fact that research on Student Affairs/Services strategy is lacking. The lack of research in this area also results in consternation on the naming of the Division and or organized student support services. "The divisions which are collectively referred to as Student Development and Support (SDS) are also called Student Affairs" (Schreiber, 2012: 22). Please see also table 2.3, showing the different titles of Student Affairs senior leaders. The debate on the role of Student Affairs is far from being settled. Some put a strong emphasis on student develop and thus sub-ordinating the 'services' as an equally important focus of research. Like many researchers, Gregory, Broderick, and Doyle (2020) stated that "the basic concept of SAS's [Student Affairs and Services] practice is to *develop* the whole student" (p.74). Emphasis added. In concluding their article these authors state that "*SAS is responsible for providing services* to students and, secondly offering knowledge and to help students during their college career" (p.80). Emphasis added.   The varying emphases create consternation, and this is a irony considering that departments that primarily provide 'services' constitute the majority of support service departments under Student Affairs, as opposed to those mainly existing to provide just development programmes. In addition to dearth of research,

the other contributing factor to these inconsistencies is a clash of paradigms, particularly the management/strategy theory versus the student development theory, and to this end, the dichotomous positions may affect how Student Affairs is viewed and conceptualised.

The South African Education Act 101 of 1997 gives powers to the Minister of Higher Education and Training (the Minister) to establish a Council on Higher Education (CHE), which provides advice to the Minister, as well as providing quality assurance, quality auditing, qualification accreditation for South African Universities. Section 5 (2) of the Act, read with subsection 5 (1), further stipulates that the advice to be provided by CHE to the Minister, includes; "qualifications, quality promotions and assurance, research, the structure of the higher education system, the planning of the higher education system, the mechanism for the allocation of public funds, *student financial aid, student support services*, *governance of higher education institution* and higher education systems and language policy" (Higher Education Act 101 of 1997:8/9). (Emphasis added). Additionally, further accountability of public higher education is done through the Minister's "Regulations for Reporting by Public HEIs" (the Reporting Policy), as prescribed by sections 41 and 69 of the Act. Section 2 of the Reporting Policy (as per Government Gazette No. 37726), requires that public HEIs "must produce a strategic plan and update it at least every five years" (p.6), with further production of annual performance plans. The annual performance plans, among other requirements, must "show separately income and budgeted expenditures; (i) primary activities that is, teaching/learning and research; (ii) *student housing* and (iii) *other activities*" (p.7) (Emphasis added).

Thus, in the South African context, higher education is required by legislation to develop strategic plans. This means that strategic planning is institutionalised in higher education, and Student Affairs features in the government regulatory framework. It follows, therefore, that Student Affairs ought to actively play a role in the strategy development for higher education. In carrying out this strategic role, Student Affairs however needs a strategy development framework, and scholars have not done much work in that regard. The institutionalisation of strategy in higher education means that despite it being originally conceptualised for commercial and profit-focus contexts, it has, however, found its utility in a non-commerce, non-profit

context. In this sense, the utility of strategy in higher education is viewed as a catalyst for meeting objectives as opposed to profit-maximisation.

The first thing that the search of the universities' websites reveals is that the majority of universities in South Africa have a Student Affairs/Services divisions led by a Dean of Students/Student Affairs/Student Services or Executive Director. A few universities even have Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Vice-Principals leading Student Affairs/Student Life/Student Support. This shows the recognition of the role that Student Affairs plays in higher education nationally. Table 2.3 depicts the Student Affairs structures/leadership of the 26 South African universities.

Table 2.3: Student Affairs senior leadership of South African universities

Vice-Principal	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	Executive Director	Dean of Students	Senior Director	Deputy Registrar	Director
UP	UWC, TUT	NWU, VUT, UKZN, WSU, SMU, UCT, UFS	NMU, UFH, CPUT, WITS, UL, MUT, UMP, UNIZULU, DUT	SU, UJ	CUT	Univen

Note:The websites of Sol Plaatjies University and Rhodes University both indicate the existence of Student Affairs portfolio, but leadership was not shown. No information could be found on Unisa website indicating an organised Student Affairs portfolio other than Student Counselling and Student Funding Services. However, Davis (2013) who conducted research at Unisa, reports that the Dean of Students position was moved to the Office of the Registrar so, as to form part of the group of cognate responsibilities that deals with administrative student support and student development.

Source: Own compilation, from South African universities' websites, accessed on 15 May 2020.

Student Affairs is located within a bigger system of higher education. Figure 2.4 provides some of the elements of the system, as well as environmental factors (PESBITE) that need to be kept in mind when developing a strategy in higher education context. In this study, PESBITE stands for Political/government, Economy, Society/Social, Business, International, Technology, and the (physical) environment.
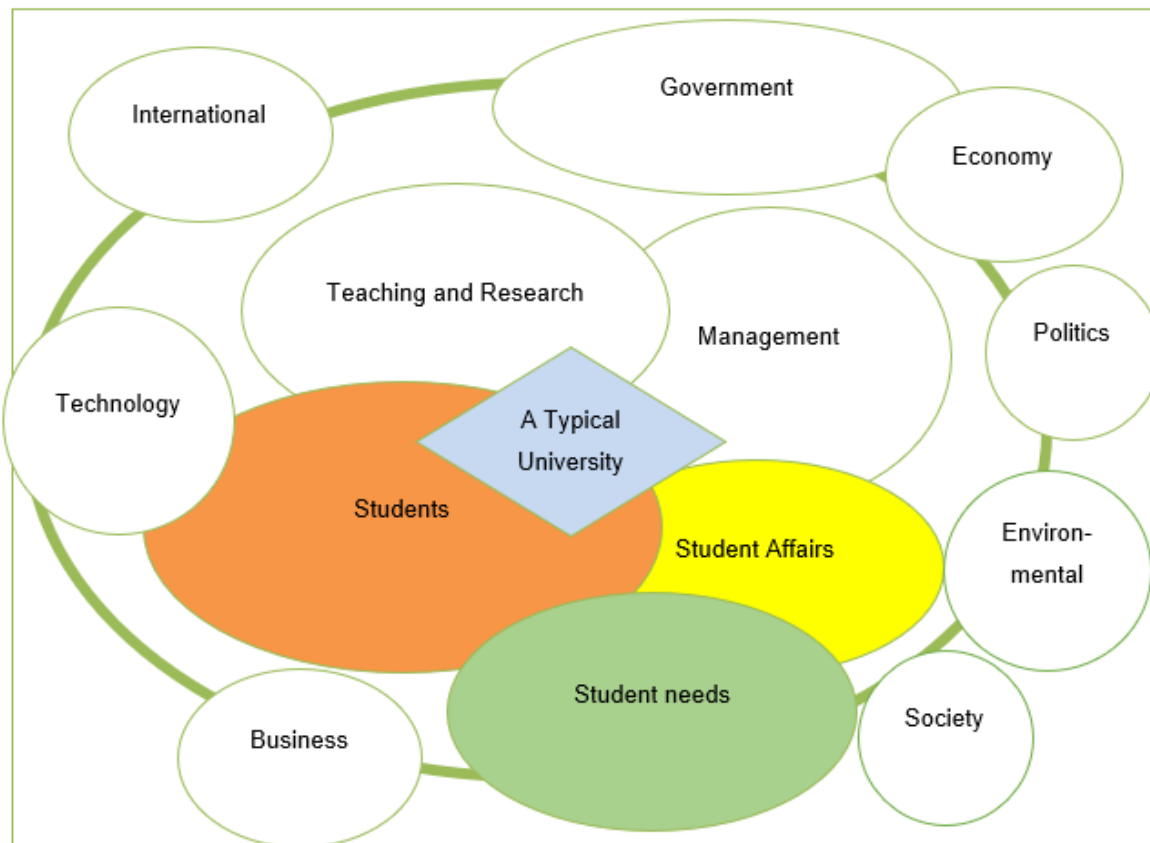
Figure 2.4: Systems map, depicting a typical university complex system

Source: Own compilation

It is important to note that student needs may be affected or influenced by many of the factors depicted in Figure 2.4. Business provides sponsorships to students, with the expectation that the university will produce well-qualified and well-developed students. Technology is crucial for students' academic and socio-economic lives. The socio-economic backgrounds of students affect student needs and success (van Zyl, 2016). Geographical location of a campus has an effect on students' physical

needs. Politics plays a major part of student socio-political lives. The economy affects the value of the fees they pay, cost of books, meals and transport. Government policies can determine university offerings, and government funding impacts directly on students. International cooperation and ranking of universities has a bearing on the standing of student qualifications. These factors (depicted in figure 2.4) could variangly have an impact on how universities conceptualise the service structures (and units) of Student Affairs. It may therefore be helpful to consolidate the varying service strata of Student Affairs into two taxonomies of services – that is the tangible and intangible attributes of Student Affairs services.

a) Tangible Student Affairs services, include physical dimensions, such as; residential accommodation, catering and dining hall services, sports facilities services, security installations and personnel services, transportation services, computer services, study rooms and halls facilities, and medical emergency facilities and services.

b) Intangible Student Affairs services include, psychological and intellectual dimensions, such as; student leadership and development training services, counselling services, primary health services, mentorship services, peer support, safe spaces, gender, and disability rights services, mental wellbeing services, entertainment and leisure services, and various advisory services.

The two types of services are often inseparable and intertwined in nature but tabling them in two categories helps in discerning the environmental influence as well as the required specialised competences for the development of strategies. In a resource and capabilities analysis, the categories also serve to identify the nuances of the vital resources necessary to deliver the services. Once these attributes have been identified, the next process is to bundle the related ones together in order to generate value in them. Tying together the key conceptual elements of the preceding literature and strategy models is the objective of the next section, because concepts and their relationships are critical in the empirical phase of the research project. When the researcher comes out of the empirical field, theoretical concepts are also critical in interpreting and theorizing data patterns and overall research results.

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is an abstract description of the relationships between concepts that help us to understand the world (Varpio, Paradis, Uitjdehaage & Young, 2020). The present study ventures into an under-researched area of support service strategy. Therefore the conceptual framework in this chapter provides building blocks with concepts from various theories and multiple disciplines. In this study, the conceptualisation approach was influenced by the works of Onwuegbuzie and Weinbaum (2017), Ravitch and Riggan (2012), Leshem and Trafford (2007) as well as the work of Grant and Osanloo (2014). A conceptual framework is derived from concepts, whereas a theoretical framework is derived from a theory (Sefotho, 2018).

The diagram below depicts the study's conceptual framework.
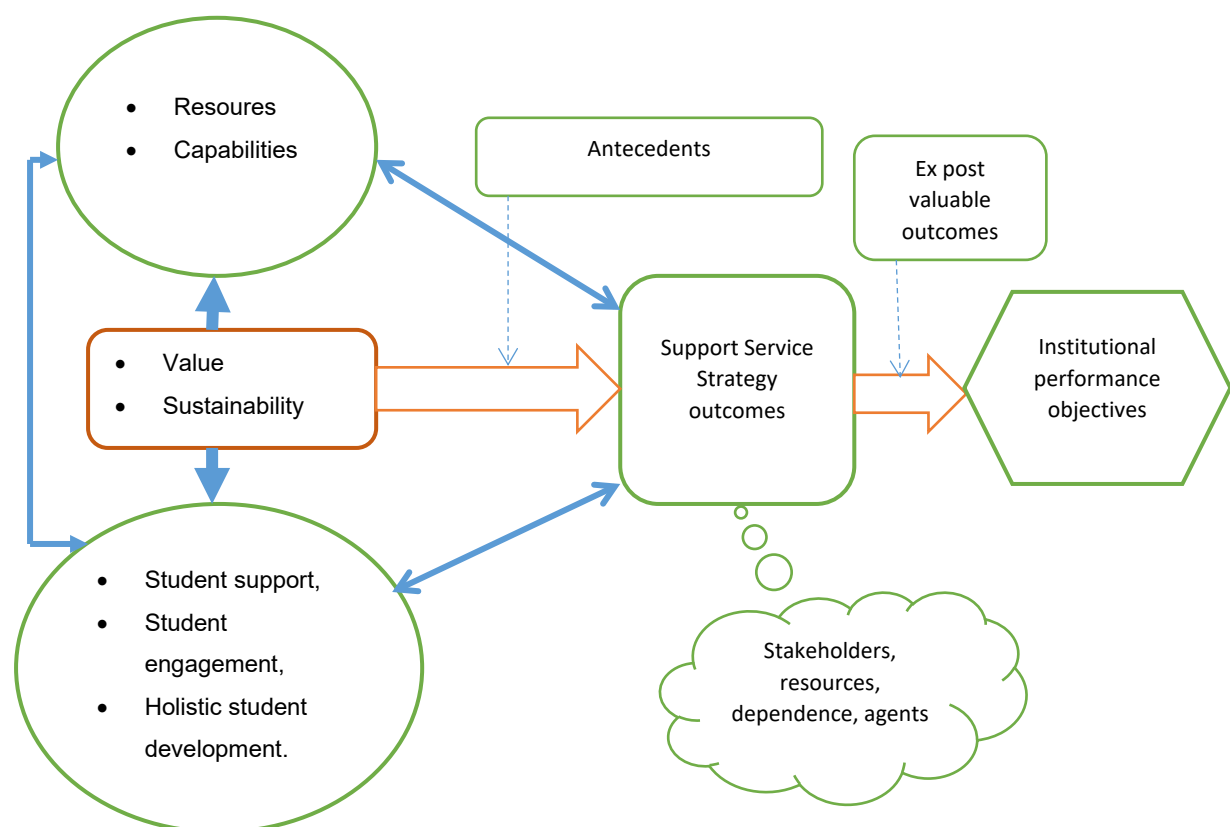
Figure 2.5: Conceptual framework of resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy.

Source: Own compilation

In figure 2.5, the (upward-facing) short thick blue arrow indicates the premise that resources and capabilities have to possess value in order to be strategic and consequently bring about a state of sustainability. On the other side the (downward-facing) short thick blue arrow indicates a proposition that; Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainable. These components of the framework are antecedents of the support service strategy outcomes, and this effect is shown by the horizontal thick red arrow. The next thick red arrow shows the relationship of the support service strategy to the macro-level institutional strategic goals. The double-pointed arrows show the iterative relationships. More elaboration on these relationships of concepts is covered later in this section. The present study's findings illuminate this conceptualized model.

In order to locate and embed the study's conceptual framework within the field of strategic management, this brief section foregrounds the foundational principle of strategic management process in general and strategic planning process in higher education.

Taking into consideration different perspectives of strategic management, Lazenby (2018) summarised the process of strategic management as follows:

i. Formulating a strategic vision, mission and values, indicating the long-term direction of the organisation.
ii. Identifying resources and capabilities through internal environmental analysis.
iii. Analysing the external environments to identify challenges and opportunities for the organisation.
iv. Identifying the long-term goals and the most applicable strategies to deliver value to stakeholders.
v. Coordinating and integrating the efforts of people, structures, technologies and allocated resources to implement the identified strategies.
vi. Evaluating the success and implementation of the strategic choices through strategic control and evaluation.

Lazenby's synopsis of strategic management outlined above, cover the key aspects of strategic management that have been identified in higher education contexts in general as well (see Immordino, Gigliotti, Ruben and Tromp (2016). Most of these strategic elements are also practised in the Student Affairs contexts. Shah, West and Dunn-Coetzee (2020), provided a summary of Student Affairs strategic planning, which includes; "mission statement, a vision statement, a statement of values, goals for student affairs, and objectives that need to be accomplished and are part of the larger statement of goals" (p.69). Some researchers have posited that "it is integral that Student Affairs Departments and Divisions have a clear purpose, vision and mission to ensure continued success and longevity" (Murji, 2019:x). In their investigation on the formulation of higher education institutional strategy, Labib, Read, Gladstone-Millar, Tonge, and Smith (2014) developed a decision-making model. These authors suggested that their model was theoretically specific enough to prioritise strategic options and to optimise the allocation of scarce resources in the context of a business school of higher education. Murji's (2019) study was built on the phenomenon of resource scarcity, in the context of Student Affairs strategic planning. Applying the resource dependence theory, Fowles (2014), echoing Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), noted that the latter theory looks at organisational behaviours that are shaped by availability of external resources for survival. Using the work of Tromp and Ruben (2010), Immordino, Gigliotti, Ruben and Tromp (2016) depicted the higher education strategy planning framework, as shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Strategic planning for higher education framework

Mission, Vision, and Values	Defining the reason for the organisation's existence, the desired future state of the organisation and the principles and perspectives that guide and influence daily work and the organisational culture
Collaborators and Beneficiaries	Identifying the major stakeholders and their needs, expectations, and satisfaction levels
Environmental Scan	Considering the social, economic, political, regulatory, technological and cultural environment in which the organisation functions including assumptions and potential challenges
Goals	Identifying the organisation's broad high level ambitions
Strategies and Action Plans	Formulation of the specific detailed ways in which goals will be fulfilled and through which the approach and concrete activities needed to transform the organisation will be executed
Plan Creation	Creating a document that clearly articulates the organisation's plan and serves to inform, influence, anchor, and guide the organisation's future
Outcomes and Achievements	Translating goals, strategies, and action plans into tangible and meaningful measures that can be used in monitoring outcomes and milestones and for assessing the ultimate impact of the planning effort

Source: Tromp and Ruben (2010), cited in Immordino, et al. (2016:39).

Murji (2019) also used Tromp and Ruben's (2010) framework in examining the Student Affairs division's strategic planning process. Hinton (2012) provided a guide of what Higher Education institutions' strategic plan should include, and she listed the following;

i.   Enrollment goals and enrollment management initiatives;

ii.   Student population goals, such as percent of students living on campus, shifts in student categories, etc.;

iii.   New academic programs, educational initiatives, changes in pedagogy and the need for supporting facilities;

iv.   The impact of changes in enrollment, programs, or student type on support services and facilities;

v.   Student Affairs programming initiatives;

vi.   Changes in staffing levels and training and development needs for both academic and non-academic staff;

vii.   Goals or initiatives from department or division plans that rise to the strategic or institutional level.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.5, illustrates the key concepts and relationships that underpinned the study. Knott, (2015) noted that much of research on resources and capabilities tend to focus on 'non-disaggreated service attributes as if they do not trace back to antecedent resources'. While avoiding the infinite regress trap, figure 2.5 conceptually depicts the support service antecedents and the trajectory contribution to macro-level objectives. The conceptual framework diagram proffers seven key concepts for this study, with concepts such as 'value' and 'sustainability' being the proposed nexus for the support service strategy. In other words, the study's proposition is that, without 'value' and 'sustainability', the support service outcomes are just mandane and not strategic. Therefore, in this conceptual framework, valuable resources and capabilities precede the activities of holistic student development, student engagement, and student support. Overall, the study's conceptual framework shows how a support service strategy contributes to aggregated goals of an institutional strategy amidst lack of resources, competition, and instabilities in higher education context. The next discussion further unpacks the concepts of this framework.

2.6.1 The Central Concepts of the Study

The central construct of this study is 'sustainable support service strategy', anchored in the resources and capabilities theoretical perspective. The key concepts are **resources, capability, sustainability and value**, all related to the general strategic management field. Furthermore, concepts such as; **support services, student engagement, and holistic student development,** are also included and relate to the support service strategic priorities of the research context of this study. Strategic management concepts will enhnance the strategic solutions for Student Affairs research, and they offer a framework for practice or for influencing organisational practice (Svensson, 2013; Whetten, 1989).

The concepts discussed below are central to the present study and are also related to the research questions that inform the data collection and analysis processes.

2.6.1.1 Resources

In one of his most cited papers, Barney (1991) echoing Daft (1983), defined resources, as 'all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes, information, and knowledge, controlled by a firm that enable a firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. In 1995, Barney explicated the concepts of resources (and capabilities) as including all the financial, physical, human, and organisational assets used by a firm to develop, manufacture, and deliver products or services to its customers. Some researchers (Lockett, Thompson, and Morgenstern, 2009; Wernerfelt, 1984; Knott, 2015) have classified resources to include an organisation's brand name or reputation. The latter resource (reputation) is critical for higher education institutions in attracting students and public funding, and this has been discussed at length in this chapter. In line with Barney's (1991) and Felin, Kaufman, and Zenger's, (2020) view, resources often have a (non-obvious) dormant value. Micro-level capabilities (e.g. individual managers) create and or modify routines which in turn unearth the latent value in existing resources. Resources and capabilities concepts are almost inseperable, and they are central to support service strategy.

2.6.1.2 Capabilities

The concept of capabilities is often used interchangeably with resources, and as such a distinction is not always obvious. For the purpose of the present study, and using the perspective of Teece, Shuen and Pisano (1997), capabilities can be defined as the management of resources, skills, knowledge, and learning in the context of an organisation. When viewed from the service dominant logic, capabilities are analogous to 'operant resources', which are defined as "resources (such as *knowledge and skills*) that can act on other resources to create a benefit" (Vargo and Lusch, 2017: 48). Emphasis added. Teece et al. (1997) championed the concept of capabilities and dynamic capabilities, to assist in explaining the sustainability of performance amidst dynamic changes. Constant changes in resource provisions, tied with prevailing conflicts and instability as well as competition in higher education warrant asking research questions similar to those posed in the present study.

Gebauer, Joncourt and Saul (2016) conjectured that service capabilities can create sustainability and competitive differentiation, especially when firms tap into the SDL principle (Lusch & Vargo, 2004) of co-creating value with customers. From servitisation scholarship, capabilities have been identified to be critical in implementing advanced services model (Marcon et al., 2022). The concept of 'student engagement' for example, is an established concept in higher education. It is however, the capabilibilities that create valuable student engagement that are regarded as strategic. Mbhele and Sibanyoni's (2022) study showed the dangers of managerial inertia and the resultant student engagement that does not produce valuable outcomes, and thus not contributing to a sustainable support service strategy.

2.6.1.3 Value

"The capacity to recognise new value starts with knowing what one is looking for in the first place, by ex-ante specifying something unique amongst the vast reservoirs of latent unpriced resources and uses" (Felin, Kauffman & Zenger, 2020:9). The present study supports this position, and hence the study's sub-questions pertain to the value of resources in the context of Student Affairs. Hence, the study's findings present a resources typology with various types of value attributes. The study seeks to inject a nuanced understanding of value attributes into the strategic management body of knowledge, derived from producers and users in support services. In illuminating the concept of value, Peteraf and Barney (2003) emphasised what they called consumers' perceived benefits, and tying this to the perceptions of the consumers. On the other hand, these authors also posit that for the producer, greater value implies efficiency.

Conceptually, some of the present study's research questions that pertain to the concept of value can be analysed using Sheth, Newman and Gross's (1991) model on consumer choice values (Figure 2.6).
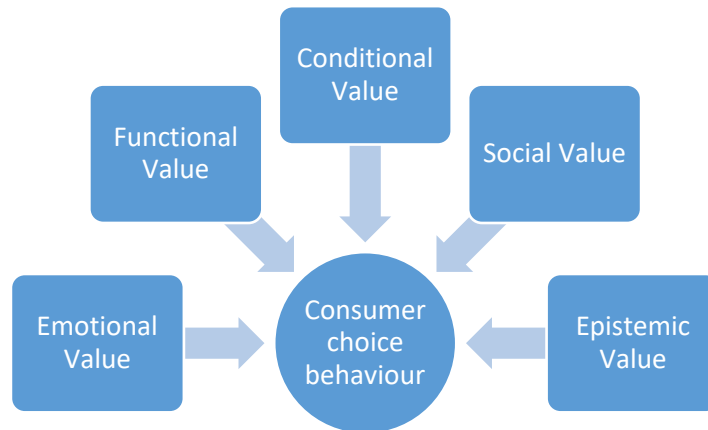
Figure 2.6: Consumer choice functional values

Source: Sheth et al. (1991:160).

When looking at value, a conceptual application of the Sheth et al.'s (1991) consumer choice values is shown in Table 2.5, bearing in mind the resources and capabilities perspective. (RSQ = research sub-question).

Table 2.5: Application of the consumer choice value model

Consumer Choice Values	Student Affairs Offerings	Research Questions
Conditional value (antecedents are physical or social contingency factors)	• Distance to campus (Accommodation, dining halls, student transport) • Funding & talent (Sports bursary, Sports facilities)	RSQ3, RQS4 ➢ Attributes of resources ➢ Tangible service offerings - Spatial planning issues in the South Africa's context - Socio-economic issues in the South Afric's context
Social value (associated with social groups)	• Sense of belonging for new students (Student life Campus groups, Clubs & Societies, Residence communities, including study and tutorial group sessions)	RSQ1, RSQ3 ➢ Valuable service characteristics ➢ Service resource impact
Emotional value (associated with emotional response)	• Sense of identification and attachment (Alumni, parents, siblings, friends, campus life experiences) • Role models (Student development and leadership, i.e., past SRC leaders and current leaders)	RSQ2, RSQ3 ➢ Valuable resources attributes - Memorable experiences, loyalty. ➢ Sustainable value - Holistically developed graduates' impact, nationally and gloally.
Epistemic value (induce desire/curiosity for new knowledge)	• Career and new environment (study skills training, career counselling, open days, school visits, student activities in residences and on campus).	RSQ2 ➢ Marketing of services by Student Affairs ➢ Knowing what prospective students need. ➢ Providing training to students.
Functional value (Physical characteristics/attributes, utility value)	• Campus physical outlook and utility costs (sports facilities, residence architecture and facilities, cost of accommodation, availability of IT networks in the living spaces, etc.)	RSQ1 ➢ Physical resources and their antecedents (characteristics)

Source: Author/Researcher developed from the consumer choice value model of Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991)

2.6.1.4 Sustainability

When clarifying the concept of sustained competitive advantage, Barney (1991) explains that such a position is said to have been achieved if it continues to exist after failed attempts by others to duplicate it. For this study, sustainability is regarded as the persistent performance and delivery of high-quality and valuable support services, despite sectoral resource shortages, instabilities and competition. The present study follows Lazenby's (2019:4) view of sustainability, who observed that

"organisations want to survive in the long term, and therefore strategies must be sustainable". Venter (2014:47) also concedes that "any business operates with the basic underlying goal of surviving and perhaps prospering - in other words, being sustainable". The operational definition of 'sustainability', in this study, refers to the strategic continuity and or survival of an entity. Hence, the study's main question refers to critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support strategy framework. Heavy dependence on external resources is an existential risk for an organisation and thus not sustainable. Inertia and or inadequacies in an organisation's engagements framework with internal and external stakeholders also carry a heavy penalty and can threaten an organisation's sustainability. These two factors led to an unprecedented crisis in higher education sector in South Africa in years 2015 and 2016. The post-crisis book titles reflected the debacle, and one of such books was titled, 'As by Fire: The end of the South African University' (Jansen, 2017). As shown in the conceptual framework, creating value is central to support service strategy. In emphasizing sustainability, researchers have noted that "[c]reating a plan that ensures student affairs is adding significant value and moving to the center from the margins is the difference between thriving or becoming extinct" (Ellis, 2010:8).

2.6.1.5 Student support

Using the work of Helfgot (2005) as well as that of Tull, Kuk and Dalpes (2015), student support is viewed as 'all things related to the student and student life outside-classroom, including but not limited to, student orientation, student health, safety and wellbeing, student accommodation and food services, sporting and socio-political activities and facilities'. Particularly in the South African context, (lack of and inefficient management of) these support services and facilities are often the source of conflicts, as noted by Jansen (2017, 2023), (for example; student accommodation, NSFAS funding, transport, etc.). Student support is "a socially situated, complex and multifaceted concept" (Jacklin and Le Riche, 2009: 735) In this study, 'student support' is an aggregate term used for myriad of non-academic services that are confined to the bounds of Student Affairs bundle of 'services and functions' (Jacklin and Le Riche, 2009). Under student support, it is where a variety of support service resources and capabilities are located. Student support closely relate to the provision of 'student engagement' and 'student development', and student support services

often denotes and or include the hard services. Various student support activities and programmes have been reported to have a positive effect on student engagement.

2.6.1.6 Student engagement

Student engagement occupies a prominent place in the higher education lexicon (Zilvinskis, Masseria, and Pike, (2017). Many researchers have contributed scores of papers addressing different features of student engagement, which is variously defined (Kuh, 2009). Researchers concede that "[t]here are a wide variety of definitions of student engagement, some more dominant than others, in the higher education literature" (Smithers, Fischer, and Stafford, 2021: 405). Student Affairs has leaned towards the mainstream student engagement definition as developed by Kuh (2009). "Student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (Kuh, 2009: 683).This is the most cited definition. However, Kuh's definition did not explicitly encompass Student Affairs and or co-curricular activities, so researchers left on their own to make assumptions because his 2009 article was titled, "What Student Affairs Professionals Need to Know about Student Engagement" (p.683). It is not very easy for Student Affairs to provide cogent evidence of "activities that are empirically linked to desired college outcomes" (ibid). Besides the issue of parsimony in definitions, perhaps Kuh wanted to leave room for the falsifiability of this theory of student development. He did advised that "it is imperative that student affairs professionals remain open to alternative interpretations of what at this moment in time seem to be near paradigmatic understandings of what matters to student success and enthusiastically welcome evidence that points to other, better ways to define and measure student engagement" (p.699).   Hence, in the present study, the student engagement construct is operationally defined from a support service practice perspective. This is almost analogous to the Oxford University's (2015) policy on student engagement and representation, whose aim is 'for students to engage in various ways including as representatives on departments, divisions and University committees, or engaging with their representatives or by providing individual feedback'. Scholars such as (Wawrzynski, Heck, and Remley, 2012:106), have gone on "to fill a void in the student engagement literature by assessing (a) college

students' experiences with interest in, and time devoted to co-curricular activities"
(p.106). There are some parallel perspectives and concepts between the
commercially-based 'customer engagement' concept and 'student engagement'
concept. From the general strategic management perspective, Van Doorn, Lemon,
Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, and Verhoef (2010) noted that "[a]t the most basic level,
CEBs [customer enagement behaviours] have *cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral*
consequences for the customers engaging in them" (p.254).   Emphasis added.
Reviewing research on student engagement, Lester, (2013), identified definitional
concepts that were proposed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, (2004), and these
concepts included; *behavioural, emotional and cognitive* categories. Emphasis
added. Lester elaborate that "[e]motional engagement is comprised of students'
attitudes…" (p.3). Smith and Tinto (2022) recognise Fredericks, et al's (2004) work
on the three attributes of student engagement, namely; 'affective (emotional),
behavioral, cognitive', and they also accepted Appleton, Christensen, Kim, and
Reschly's (2006) the term 'academic' as an additional attribute to analyse networks
and social relationships on student engagement. In his 2013 work, Lester also put
emphasis on value and customer-firm relationships. In a different but pertinent
service context, Hardyman, Daunt, and Kitcher, (2015), studied the concept of value
co-creation through patient engagement, at 'micro-level service encounters' in the
health sector. Hardyman, et al, recommended that in patient engagement value co-
creation 'must contribute to the value of all stakeholders', and "collaborative patient-
provider relationships are the key to safe health" (2015:93). Similar to the present
study, Hardyman, et al, postulated that 'value co-creation occurs through direct
interactions and is therefore dialogical in nature'.

The preceding brief background sought to demonstrate how, as an example, one
study's concept straddles with varying applications between business and profit and
non-profit service sectors. Now returning the focus to the higher education sector,
Luescher- Mamashela, Ssembatya, Brooks, Lange, Mugume and Richmond (2015)
studied the concept of student engagement from the perspective of citizienship
competences, and their results suggested that "processes of student engagement
relate to and enhance citizenship competences" (p.252). This study embraces the
work of Luescher-Mamashela (2013), as well as Luescher's (2020), where they view
student engagement as the institutionalisation of the student voice in the decision-

making processes and democratic governance of a university. Furthermore, the study embraces the notion of relational student engagement as propounded by Garton, Wawrzynski, Lemon, and Naik (2022), which comes close to the work of Smith and Tinto (2022). Garton, et al (2022) argued that 'integrating academic and relational contexts broadens epistemological access by creating spaces for co-constructed knowledge and personal capacity building which influences a sense of belonging. These varying streams of research on student engagement indicate that the concept has theoretical, cultural and social nuances. Borrowing from the concept of value co-creation, the present study also looked at the individual relational engagement, and that is interactions between a Student Affairs official and a student.

Luescher-Mamashela (2013) pointed out that critiques of student engagement/involvement approach have argued that students are in transit and thus never master the art of governance, and that they do not have the experience, let alone the academic credentials of the professors and managers running the universities. Student Affairs fills this gap to a large degree in terms of providing training and continuous guidance to student leaders. Furthermore, Student Affairs plays a critical and central role in facilitating dialogue during conflicts between student leadership and university management (Gaston-Gayes, Wolf-Wendel, Tutte, Twombly & Ward, 2005; Harrison, 2010; Long, 2012; Schrieber, Moja & Luescher, 2016). This phenomenon relates to the critical capabilities part of the research question. When resources are employed in creating productive engagements, value is then realized. Therefore the value tension shifts balance in the scale towards common strategic achievements (e.g., a climate of positive dialogue and better institutional reputation overall). In this study, engagement is also viewed from the service dominant logic lens, with various individual interactions between students and Student Affairs employees. Emotional engagement is comprised of students' attitudes, interests, and values particularly related to positive or negative interactions with faculty, staff, other students, academics, or the institution. The latter lens is critical in stakeholder relationships, because positive individual interactions contribute to collective engagements as well as to the overall student wellbeing. A student who has a bad service experience and takes up leadership roles, often approaches the engagements with an intention, as they claim, 'to fix management' or

'to fix this university'. This then worsens the value tension, but persistent and well-assessed student development improves the climate of engagements.

2.6.1.7 Holistic student development

As a critical supplement to academic learning, Student Affairs provides student development on semi-academic programmes such as mentorship, study skills, stress management, as well as on social, health, political, financial and transformational aspects of student life. This is termed holistic student development because it is viewed as having an impact on the whole student life journey at the university. Holistic student development plays a role in preparing students for university life as well as life after graduation, therefore producing a "fully formed critically constructive and engaged citizen" (Schreiber et al., 2016: vi). This phenomenon relates to the critical capabilities part of the research question. The process of holistic student development can be illustrated by the use of Tinto's (1975) model which was simplified by Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke (2004).

Figure 2.7 projects a path that the approach on holistic student development could take.
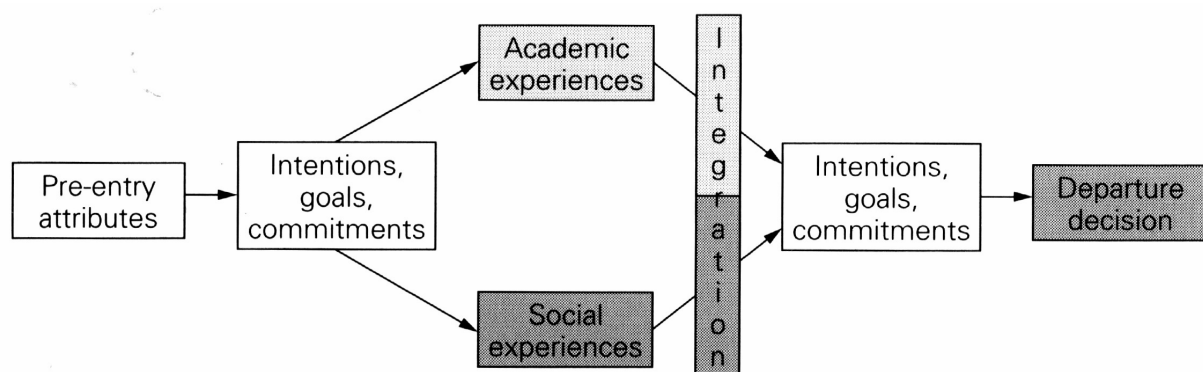
Figure 2.7: Simplified Tinto's (1975) model

Source: Prebble et al. (2004:3).

Student Affairs is one of the key stakeholders shaping socio-academic experiences of students. In addition to academic support, social support facilitated by Student Affairs student development activities 'is also important to students' persistence, and this is especially true for first-generation and low-income students' (Tinto, 2017).

In summarizing the conceptual framework, this study puts a premium on how resources and capabilities are employed with a focus on value to the overall support services. The argument of the study is that if there is no value, then there is no support service strategy. If student leaders do not find value in the various services and engagements, then they resort to tactics that are reputation-damaging for the institution. Mbhele and Sibanyoni's (2022) findings are a practical example of this phenomenon.

Concepts such as student engagement, student support and holistic student development are very closely related and are central in the literature of Student Affairs. They conceptually represent a distinct mission of support services that inherently act as a strategic differentiator as presented in the findings.

The present study's question refers to 'critical resources and capabilities'. From a resource dependence theory point of view, Fowles, (2014), echoing Pfeffer & Salancik, (2003), noted that organisations rely on external resources for their survival. This means that these external resources are critical to organisations. Crotty and Ljubownikow's (2020) study suggests a close connection between critical resources and organisational survival, especially in the non-profit sector. The importance of external resources is closely tied to the stakeholder theory that promotes the importance of stakeholders as resource owners (Friedman & Miles, 2002). Resource owners must be engaged with great tact in order to create value (Freeman, Phillips & Sisodia, 2018). Higher education has a multiplicity of stakeholders (Immordino, Gigliotti, Ruben & Tromp, 2016). Engaging stakeholders, implies either an explicit or implicit contract between the stakeholders and agents. Furthermore, engaging stakeholders on whom an organisation depends for resources, means that there is an agency relationship. The relationship under the agency theoretical perspective, is a contract under which one or more persons (principals) engage another person or persons (agents) to perform some service on behalf of the principals (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). These theoretical explanations offered by the resource dependence, the stakeholder, and the agency perspectives, seek to tie together the dynamics of critical resources and capabilities, which is the nexus of the present study's question.

If we hone in on this main question of critical resources and capabilities, the RBV seems to provide further illumination of the nuances in terms of analysing organisational performance or specifically, performance difference. The RBV is a resource-level theory (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). From the RBV, critical resources and capabilities as viewed by Peteraf and Barney (2003) are those resources that are essential to the organisation's efforts in generating differentially greater value. Grande (2011) investigated the concepts of critical resources and capabilities in the farming sector, and found that the defining universal feature is that they add value and uniqueness. In the context of the non-profit sector, Crotty and Ljubownikow's (2020) study associates critical resources with organisational longevity and survival. In the context of the health sector, using a triage model to handle the COVID-19 crisis, Maves et al. (2020) noted that extreme demand, extremely low supply, scarcity, client needs and benefits seem to represent the features of critical resources and capabilities. So, the synthesized literature consistently points to the concepts such as differentiation, value, scarcity, customer benefits, and organisational survival, as salient features of critical resources and capabilities. The conceptual framework showed how a support service strategy is realized or depends on mainstream strategic management concepts such as resources, capabilities, value, and sustainability.

2.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

A synthesised literature review process was followed in this chapter. The review of literature was undergirded by the resources and capabilities perspective. The research gap was identified within the service strategy research stream. This inductive, multi-disciplinary, and analytic approach assisted in conceptually illuminating the research questions for this study. Hellriegel et al. (2017:156) posed two research questions: "what resources and capabilities must a business have in order to compete successfully in the industry?" and "what resources and capabilities does the organisation currently have that it can use to take advantage of opportunities and defend against threats?" These two questions influenced the research question for the present study, and the resources and capabilities perspective connects the question to the research phenomena. The four main theories discussed in the chapter are also aimed at showing understanding of different angles of phenomena being investigated by this study. The theoretical

perspectives included; the resource-based view, resource dependence, agency and stakeholder elements of the phenomenon, and thus helped the researcher for the planned empirical journey, which is unpacked in the next two chapters.

Three management paradigms were prevalent in the current chapter: scientific management, management principles, and human relations management. Management scholars such as Wren and Badeian (2002); Greenwood, Wren, Teahen and Bedeian (2015); and Kwok, (2014), played a key role in chronicling these classical management thoughts. These paradigms are still relevant in twenty-first century management thought and spawned the development of new concepts.

Management and leadership theories were identified, discussed and organised into tables. Castillo and Hallinger's (2017) work on leadership and management provided a rationale or basis for the proposed people and resources two-pronged view of management for higher education/student affairs. Castillo and Hallinger's conceptual framework also served to give a clear outline of what the people and resources' view looks like.

Student Affairs services attributes were discussed and categorised into tangibles, which are the physical dimensions and the intangibles that include the soft, psychological and intellectual dimensions. Student Affairs is argued to exist at a meso-level, connecting people and resources vertically and horizontally. The strategy levels included emphasis on interlinks amongst the three levels of an organisation, with support service strategy level being at the centre. An operationalisation of this view was demonstrated through how the Deans of Student Affairs were central in mediating relationships during the South African student national protests in 2015/16. The focus of the study on service strategy, servitisation and the SDL was discovered in the literature and adopted as crucial approaches in value co-creation, combined with customer engagement and social integration. Itani et al.'s (2019) "value get, value give" framework of value co-creation served to illustrate how the notion of value creation and co-creation can be conceptualised.

The empirical part of this study takes the concepts, constructs and attributes from this chapter to a research context. Armed with the literature background, the next

chapter presents the epistemological approach, plan and techniques adopted in search of socially constructed knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to identify critical resources and capabilities that are vital in the development of sustainable support service framework. The aim is to contribute to an improved support service planning and delivery, as well as to contribute to strategic management body of knowledge.

Since the study ventures into an under-explored angle in strategic management research, the methodological approach follows an exploratory qualitative orientation in order to fit the complex research context. The main research method (qualitative) is complemented by a quantitative method. In short, the support service strategy angle is a less explored area when it comes to strategy research. The study's focus relates to higher education support service resources and competitiveness, so, a methodology with more than one research approach is beneficial in pursuit of new knowledge. This study assumes that there currently is no axiomatically established link in research between support service micro/meso-level strategy and the macro-institutional-level strategy.

This chapter presents the study paradigms, research methodology, the research design and the methods applied in collecting and analysing data.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

"The social order produced in the process of social construction contains contradictions, ruptures, inconsistencies and incompatibilities in the fabric of social life. Radical breaks with the present order are possible because of contradictions" (Benson, 1977:4).

The present study embraces a philosophical dialectical stance (Cronenberg & Headley, 2019), in that it focuses on the perspectives and experiences of both the service user and the service producer as contributors in the development of a final product (framework) of this study. Sefotho (2018) explained that Socrates (a Greek philosopher) used the term philosophy to denote a search for wisdom. As we search for wisdom, "we dialogue with others and take down notes, arranging them in this and that form" (wa Thiong'o, 2018:12) in order to understand and interprete

phenomena. In order to understand the nuances and complexities of higher education middle managers' work, Davis, et al, (2016) found the constructivism-interpretivist paradigm to be most appropriate. Kuhn (1965) has been credited with the development of the philosophical term "paradigm". Scholars such as Simmons (2017), Orman, (2016), Urry (1973), Percival (1976), Walker, (2010), and Patton (2018) criticised, reviewed and contributed to further development of Kuhn's structure of scientific work. Others such as Eckberg and Hill Jr. (1979) defended Kuhn. Masterman (1974) identified 22 different ways in which the term paradigm was used. Kuhn saw her (Masterman) as his sympathiser. In 1974, Kuhn (1974:2) defended his definition of the term paradigm, as "what the members of a scientific community, and they alone, share". He further explicated that his original reference to a paradigm as a "set of shared beliefs" is a subset of the main definition.

Some scholars continued to critique parts of Kuhn's work, arguing that the incommensurability of paradigms thesis has problematic aspects (Orman, 2016) and is no longer tenable (Patton, 2018). Others further posited that "Kuhn's work did not provide a clear game plan for paradigm change" (Vos, 2017: 308). Recent authors have posited that the incommensurability thesis has been overtaken by a pragmatist stance and a dialectical stance (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019). There is, however, greater consensus on the definition of a paradigm, anchored in Kuhn's original work. The consensus appears in the works of different scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2003, 2013, 2018), Alise and Teddlie (2010), de Vos (2017), Babbie (2017) and Sefotho (2018) who viewed a paradigm as a set of beliefs, values, shared by a given community, as a worldview and framework to guide actions. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, (2013) went on to dedicate 18 pages in their published work, tabling different kinds of paradigms. The main paradigms are positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism, and interpretivism. Other paradigms include feminism and critical race theory. Interpretivism is often positioned, in terms of paradigm wars, as the opponent of positivism. The former is a paradigm that is closely related to constructivism, as we shall see from the definitions below.

- **Positivism:** Kankum (2019:3) describes positivism as "a research paradigm that is established on the ontological principle and doctrine that truth and reality is free and independent of the viewer and observer".

- **Constructivism:** "the constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings) and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013:27).

- **Interpretivism:** Sefotho (2018:25), describes interpretivism as "conceptualised as having a relativist ontology with a subjectivist epistemology…that accepts multiple meanings about phenomena". In interpretivism orientation, "[r]eality is constructed and interpreted by individuals according to their ideological and cultural positions. A single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations or meanings". (Hussain, Elyas, and Naseef, 2013: 2376) The interpretive research seeks to understand values, beliefs and meanings of social phenomena and thereby extracts *Verstehen* [understanding]" (ibid: 2375).

- **Post-positivism**: This is a paradigm that 'recognises that multiplicity and complexity is the reality of all human experience'. Post-positivism embraces the use of qualitative data, without abandoning tenets of conventional positivism' (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Henderson, 2011).

- **Critical realism:** 'critical realism is a movement that opposes the logical positivist, realist and anti-foundational epistemologist' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). "Critical realism is embedded in emancipatory goals" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 726).

- **Critical race theory:** is a "paradigm based on an awareness of race and a commitment to racial justice" (Babbie, 2017:39).

- **Feminist paradigm:** This paradigm "not only reveals the treatment of women or the experience of oppression, but often points to the limitations in how other aspects of social life are examined and understood" (Babbie, 2017:38).

In her discussion on the paradigm wars, Bazeley (2019:20) stated that "constructivism was associated with interpretive methodologies, using qualitative methods of data collection and analyses that constructed meaning from… participants' perspectives". Sefotho agreed with this view and noted that "within interpretivist paradigm, meaning is constructed…" (2018:26). One of the critical elements of interpretivism as noted by du Plooy Cilliers is the admonition that "we cannot study human beings in the same way that we study objects" (2014:27).

Clough and Nutbrown (2012), explained, from a qualitative orientation perspective, that 'researchers seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created (constructed) and given meaning (interpretation)'. Clough and Nutbrown (2012) conceded that, in reality, many researchers do not select one research paradigm to investigate all questions. To this end, this study adopts a hybrid of a constructivist-interpretive (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013) paradigm, in order to capitalize on their complementary strength.

Since the 1960s, the positivist approach to strategic management research has been and still is dominant. Strategy has been theorised to explain an organisation's performance and competitiveness. Until Mintzberg (1979, 1986) infused a different (post-positivist-type) paradigm, challenging the rigid objectivity, logico-deductive approach, many strategy scholars were settled on a mono-methodological approach. As long ago as 1986, Mintzberg rebutted what may be called the 'predictability thesis' of strategy, in his analysis of deliberate and emergent strategies. Student Affairs, as a meso-strategy level for support services in higher education, is grappling with 'puzzles (to be solved) to gain facility in the application of theory and rules' (Kuhn, 1996) and university campuses continue to have "contradictions, ruptures and inconsistencies" (Benson, 1977:4).

3.2.1 Constructivism-Interpretivism Worldview

As is traditional in research projects that are dominated by qualitative methodology, the researcher needs to explain the study's paradigm. The definitions of constructivism and interpretivism have already been discussed in the previous section. The ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological assumptions are discussed in this section.

Ontology relates to the nature of reality (Bazeley, 2019; Lincoln et al., 2013; du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).The ontological assumption for the present study is that the research context has multiple realities and sometimes competing realities. Higher education leaders view the sector's landscape through certain lenses, often different from those of students and other stakeholders such as the government and the public. The PESBITE (figure 2.4) environmental analysis illustrated the multi-stakeholder context. There are therefore multiple interpretations of reality, which makes such a context complex.

Epistemology relates to how knowledge about reality is acquired (Sefotho, 2018). The epistemological assumption for this study is the recognition of the subjectivity of realities as well the relationship between the researcher and that being researched (Lincoln, et al. 2013). As a dominant epistemological approach, this study emphasises the meaning that research participants attach to the concepts of the research phenomena. The research starts with a close epistemological distance between the researcher and the participants through qualitative methods and the distance gets much wider during the second phase of the data collection (quantitative method).

Axiology relates to values, experiences, beliefs and ethical consideration (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Axiological assumptions in this study are that the researcher has a significant level of lived experience in the research context, but the epistemological position adopted is that 'our understanding of phenomena is partial, incomplete and fallible' (Maxwell, 2019). Higher education is a context replete with inconsistencies and ruptures. The study remained driven by the ontological "belief of what is" (Biddle & Schaft, 2014:329) in terms of existing realities. The researcher, thus, acknowledges the constructivist-interpretivist co-creation of knowledge by all research participants (students and staff), without making a biased judgement of "what should be" the reality. "Qualitative methodologies also offer a multifaceted view of the nuances of social reality, so as not to privilege the interests of any one person or group simply because they occupy a position of authority within a given society" (Hesse-Biber, 2018:5). The research questions warrant that empirical data are equally solicited from all participants (students and staff) so that no group of participants is "marginalised by research" (Sefotho, 2018:25).

3.2.2 Pragmatism

Creswell and Creswell (2018) see pragmatism as a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies. Likewise, Denscombe (2008:273) equates it to "a philosophical partner for the mixed methods approach", because pragmatism promotes practical, contextualised solutions to the inquiry problem (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). However, Morgan (2014:4) cautions against the adoption and use of pragmatist thinking "as a methodological eclecticism". Denscombe (2008:274) also argued that some writers use the term pragmatism for "expediency" as opposed

to philosophy which is a rigorous search for wisdom. Pragmatism, promoted by Howe (1988) raised a truce flag during what Denzin (2010) calls Paradigm War 3 (i.e., paradigm incompatibility). When Howe (1988) championed the compatibility thesis, this promoted the proliferation of mixed methods; thus, many mixed methodologists extol the virtues of pragmatism. However, the fact that pragmatism is defined as "anything goes" or "what works" paradigm, by some scholars such as Howe (1988), and Kankum (2019), makes it less favoured in this study where the interpretation of socially constructed realities is critical. Methodological discipline is therefore essential so that others can track the epistemological journey.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

A methodology emanates from how we know what we know and is defined through different perspectives. Gog (2015) regarded methodology as a philosophical assumption of how research is conducted. Similarly, Mayer (2015) defined it as a bridge connecting philosophy and methods. Kellmeriet (2015) viewed it as a rationale and frame for methods. It is embedded in the philosophical assumptions that influence the collection of data (Molina-Azorin, 2017) and it is an approach (Mayer, 2015) and means or procedure for gaining knowledge about the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This is a mixed methods study and the research approach followed a qualitatively-driven methodology (Hesse-Biber, 2018; Morse & Cheek, 2015; Tashakkori and Teddie, 2010), so, the data collection methods were both qualitative (core) and quantitative (supplemental). Other studies that have used a qualitatively-driven methodology in mixed methods include that of Arifine, Felix and Ferrur (2019) and Hall and Ryan (2011).

This hybrid research model is usually represented by an acronym, e.g., QUAL-quan (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morse and Cheek, 2014). The capitalisation in the acronym represents the dominance or weight between the two research methods.

3.3.1 Research Methods

Plano Clark and Ivankova (2016) reported that there are varying definitions of mixed methods research approach. "Paradigm wars" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:14) that have been metaphorically equated to "sumo wrestling" by Datta (1994) have

contributed to the lack of one accepted or best definition for mixed methods research (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). However, there is a level of agreement that one distinct characteristic of mixed methods is the integration of methods and data, as well as the benefit of a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study. Hence, Guetterman and Fetters (2018:903) echoed Plano Clark and Ivankova (2016) in defining mixed methods as "the process of integrating quantitative and qualitative research to more completely address a study's purpose or research questions". One of the most cited definitions of mixed methods is that by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007:123) who defined mixed methods as,

> *"a type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches…for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration".*

Ngulube and Ngulube (2015) posited that the use of mixed methods research approaches provide researchers with a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon. The breadth and depth benefit, is the main reason why the present study employed a mixed methods research approach. The qualitative strand of data collection assumed a relativist ontology, with a subjectivist epistemology where the researcher and informants co-create understandings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). The supplemental (quantitative) strand of data collection led to the positivist philosophical orientation that assumed that knowledge and reality is free and independent of the viewer and observed (Kankum, 2019). The two research approaches were employed independently, and following a specific research design.

3.3.2 Research Design

The most common designs for mixed methods research strategies include sequential mixed methods design (one method preceding another in one study) and concurrent mixed methods design (two research methods implemented parallel to each other). The present study follows a qualitatively-driven, sequential mixed methods design.

Bazeley (2018:335) argued that "any phenomenon has both qualities and quantities, each of which might be described both objectively and subjectively". The research design of the present study began by exploring the qualities and subjectivities of the phenomena (qualitative strand), followed by the measurement of quantities and

ubiquities of the phenomena (quantitative strand). Creswell and Plano Clark (2018:86) also promote the use of an exploratory sequential design (QUAL-quan) in order to "explore a phenomenon in depth and measure the prevalence of its dimension". The strength of the quantitative method was used to measure the prevalence of the support service resource value attributes. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) also noted that since the exploratory design study begins qualitatively, a greater emphasis is often put on the qualitative data and hence the resource typology model (see chapter 5) produced in the present study is based on the qualitative multi-case epistemology.

In using a qualitatively-driven, exploratory sequential mixed methods, Arifine, Felix and Furrer (2019) were able to generate a list of items from the exploratory qualitative phase, to use in the secondary quantitative phase of the same study and concluded that this approach provided novel insights and a theoretical foundation for future research. Brear, Shabangu, Fisher, Hammarberg, Keleher and Livingstone (2018) used an exploratory qualitatively-driven research design to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon as well as its prevalence. Similar to the process of the present study, Taghipoorreyneh and de Run (2019) used an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach and noted that the qualitative phase of their study was useful in developing a comprehensive list of constructs, as well as to develop theory categorisation. This process however requires a clear research strategy.

3.3.3 Research Strategy

While multiple case study research strategy appears to have a post-positivist influence (Eisenhardt, 1989b; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), 'there is a general consensus in the literature that the philosophical assumptions underpinning such a research strategy are more common in qualitative studies' (Merriam, 1985). As one of the key proponents of the multiple case research approach, Eisenhardt (2017) admitted that she used to call herself a positivist, further clarifying that she considered the multiple case research strategy as an inductive approach. In March 2021, I wrote to Professor Eisenhardt and asked "*…in a continuum of post-positivism on the one end, and interpretivism on the other end, where do you place your work of multiple case?*" Her response was "*the multi-case approach is not on that*

continuum…That is an error that some make". She did not want to be associated with just one philosophical orientation when it came to the multiple case research strategy. As in many qualitative research studies, Eisenhardt put emphasis on the inductive and theory-building nature of the multiple case research strategy. Having completed her PhD thesis using a quantitative research approach, researching higher education strategy, Eisenhardt (2021) explained that she developed the multi-case method with the aim of bridging the quantitative-qualitative divide. She further observed that in the 1980s there were few published qualitative studies but there was almost no guidance on how to execute theory-building research from case studies. Eisenhardt, (2021:287), defines a case study approach as a research strategy with "a rich empirical instance of some phenomenon, typically using multiple sources of data". She further states that a case can be about a group or an organisation. The present study followed a multi-case approach, involving four universities in the higher education sectoral context.

3.4 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

As a multicase research approach, the study sought to identify and use research sites that have a myriad of characteristics so that the empirical findings carry a wide spectrum of ideas. The research sites listed below, were therefore chosen for their various characteristics, including their history, the ranking status nationally and globally, and their location in the country. Location of universities in South Africa comes with historical spatial and the education system planning of the twentieth century politics in the country. The other objective was to ensure that the sample includes institutions from provinces with big populations (Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape) as well as one with relatively smaller population (Free State). Additionally, to also cover a wide range of university types (traditional, comprehensive, and technology). The first part of this section describes the research context based on secondary data and the second part gives an empirically-based description. Data triangulation for constant comparison in the analysis (Strauss and Glazer, 1967; Eisenhardt, 2021), is recommended in multicase research approaches. The four universities discussed below were chosen because they met the charasterisics mentioned above, as provided by the secondary data.

3.4.1 The University of the Free State (UFS)

UFS is a traditional university established in 1904, located in the Free State Province of South Africa, with three campuses (Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa and the South). Having started out as a college in 1904, it evolved into a university. This university was chosen for it being a traditional university with an Afrikaans ethnic history and traditions, located in a relatively smaller city, surrounded by vast rural and farming landscapes. UFS has also undergone a process of mergers or incorporation of other institutions to form today's University of the Free State. UFS has a division for student support services, headed by a Dean of Student Affairs. The UFS strategic plan (2018 – 2022) (UFS, 2018) had six goals, namely:

- improve the success and wellbeing,
- renew and transform curriculum,
- increase UFS to local, regional and global knowledge,
- support development and social justice through engaged scholarship,
- increase efficiency and effectiveness of governance and support systems,
- achieve financial sustainability,
- advance institutional culture that demonstrate the values of UFS.

The Student Affairs division's strategic plan (2018–2022), has three pillars; the academic project, the human project and support services. The division has units such as Student Governance and Development, Specialised Support (Counselling & Development) and Health & Wellness (Sports, Health, Career Guidance).

The above information was sourced from the UFS website, https://www.ufs.ac.za/about-the-ufs/strategic-plan-and-itp accessed on 5 October 2019.

3.4.2 The University of Johannesburg (UJ)

UJ is a comprehensive university and one of the big (in student population) contact universities in the country. UJ has a history of a merger (Witwatersrand Technikon, Vista University and Rand Afrikaans University), located in the City of Johannesburg, in Gauteng Province of South Africa. UJ (2018) had six strategic objectives including:

- Excellence in research and innovation:

- Excellence in teaching and learning:

- An international profile for global excellence and stature:

- Enriching student-friendly learning and living experience:

- Active national and global reputation management; and

- Fitness for global excellence and stature.

UJ has a division that provides student support services, named Student Affairs and comprise of Student Life and Student Governance, Student Accommodation and Residence Life, Student Ethics and Judicial Services. The Student Affairs is headed by an Executive Director. It also has a Student Support Division, with Sports and Health falling under this division.

The above information was sourced from www.uj.ac.za and

https://www.uj.ac.za/about/Documents/2018%20UJ%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf
Accessed on 5th October 2019.

3.4.3 The Durban University of Technology (DUT)

DUT is a university of technology that was formed through a merger (in 2002) of the then M.L. Sultan Technikon and Natal Technikon, with a history dating back to 1907 and 1931 respectively. DUT has various campuses in two cities (Durban and Pietermaritzburg) of the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. It has a student services division headed by a Dean of Students with departments such as Financial Aid Service, Sports Centre, Student Counselling and Health Centre and Student Housing. DUT's strategic plan was reportedly driven by a philosophy of student-centredness and engagement, with four strategic goals, namely;

- building sustainable student communities of living and learning,

- building research and innovation for development,

- building a learning organisation, and

- building a sustainable university.

The above information was sourced from the DUT website. (www.dut.ac.za), https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/DUT-2018-Annual-Report.pdf accessed on 5 October 2019.

3.4.4 The University of Cape Town (UCT)

UCT transformed into a traditional university between years 1880 and 1918. UCT is located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa and is one of the highly ranked universities, nationally and globally. The 2018 annual report of UCT lists strategic goals for the university as follows:

- Inclusivity
- Internationalisation
- Research
- Teaching and learning
- Engaged scholarship

Details of these goals are available on the annual report, but too elaborate to include herein and summarizing the details here will do injustice and possible misrepresentation.

The student support service department is headed by an Executive Director: Student Affairs, with clustered units including, Student Development, Financial Aid, Student Wellness, and Student housing and Residence Life.

The above details were sourced from the UCT website, www.uct.ac.za and http://www.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/431/finance/operations/statements/afs2018.pdf . Accessed on 5 October 2019.

The four universities were chosen for their variety in terms of size (number of students), history, location, ranking, resources and population dynamics that could provide rich empirical data. The following additional description of the research sites is based on empirical data from this research project;

(i)   The universities of the Free State (UFS) and Cape Town (UCT) both have Executive Directors of Student Affairs. Both Executive Directors of Student Affairs in the latter universities report to the University Vice-Chancellors – Principals. In 2021, the UFS Student Affairs, led by the Executive Director, was composed of; Student Communities, Student Counselling and Development, the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support, Student Wellness and Student Social Support. At the beginning of 2022, the UFS Student Affairs division was to incorporate fully, the

Department of Sports (KOVSIE Sport) and the Department of Housing and Residence Affairs.

(ii)   The UJ had a slightly different structure, led by the Senior Executive Director, with three divisions, namely, University Relations, UJ Sport and Student Affairs. These divisions are led by senior directors and Student Affairs has departments such as Student Accommodation and Residence Life, Student Ethics and Judicial Services and Student Life and Governance (SL&G). However, at UJ, the Campus Health/Primary Health Care Services reside under the registrar. Numerous attempts to obtain information and potential research staff participants from the NSFAS Office and Student Counselling Managers were unsuccessful.

(iii)   The DUT had a University registrar who is, among other divisions, a leader of what they term "student Services Sector". The Dean of Students leads the departments under the Student Services Sector, including among others, the Student Life (Governance) Office, Student Housing Office, Student Counselling and Development, Sports Department, Financial Aid/Student Funding (NSFAS) Office and the Student Health Clinic. There are directors, heads of departments and managers leading the various departments under the Student Services Sector at DUT.

(iv)   At the UCT, Student Affairs is led by the Executive Director: Student Affairs, who has four consolidated special portfolio units, including Student Development, Student Financial Aid, Student Wellness and Student Housing & Residence Life. Sub-units of Student Support such as Sports, Student Health Clinic and Student Counselling fall under these four main units. The four main units/clusters are headed by directors.

The four universities studied, show that there are varying organisational structures of Student Affairs in the higher education sector. On the one hand, the difference in organisational structures is due to history, the mergers of universities and the context. The different structures also evolved through deliberate strategic changes and alignment.

The diverse characteristics of the units of analysis fitted well with the multi-case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989b, 2021; Yin, 1981, 2018) and the rationale was to see how the investigated phenomena manifested in the diverse cases of Student Affairs. The documentation was also used to triangulate data from various research participant groups. What became salient from the documentation and was amplified during the interviews, was the practice of strategic management in the context of Student Affairs.

3.5 SAMPLING AND DATA ANALYSIS

Sampling is a 'process of selecting a subset or sample unit from a larger group or population of interest' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Cohen, et al, 2018), and its purpose is to address the study's research questions. Bazeley (2019:54) agreed with this view of defining sampling, but she also added a positivist view, that "the characteristics of [a sample] are usually intended to illustrate or represent those characteristics in the larger population from which they are drawn". As recommended by Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) who are among eminent scholars of mixed methods approaches, this study as a mixed methods design, used two types of sampling to cover both qualitative and quantitative components. The purpose was for each sample set to address the research questions and to meet the objective of this study. Generally, mixed methods studies use probability random sampling and non-random purposive sampling (Bazeley, 2019) approaches.

3.5.1 Qualitative Sample

In line with the conventions of the qualitative paradigm (i.e., social epistemology), the study used a non-probability purposive sampling scheme (Saunders, et al., 2003; Babbie, 2017). The qualitative sampling population was in four South African universities (DUT, UFS, UCT and UJ).

After analysing various study approaches (i.e., ethnographic, grounded theory and phenomenological), Hagaman and Wutich (2017) recommended 20 to 40 interviews for a general qualitative study to be sufficient, especially in multi-sites with heterogeneous characteristics. Mason (2010) sampled 560 PhD theses that used qualitative research approach studies and found that the mean for data saturation was 31 interviews. McIntosh and Morse (2015) recommend 30 participants for a

semi-structured interview sample. Slightly in the upper margin of the literature recommendations, in the present study, the sample size was estimated to an overall of 48 student and staff participants (n = 48) for the four institutions, but the actual qualitative strand sample was n = 49 participants. The present study targeted 12 participants for interview sessions per research site, which allowed for the "identification of patterned meaning across a data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2016: 741). By means of online interviews, data collection was managed by the researcher. The following sections tables and discusses the sample charateristics of the actual reseach participants as well as the dynamics of the field work and interactions.

3.5.1.1 Research Staff Participants' Characteristics

Table 3.1: Staff research participants' characteristics

Job titles of staff participants	Number of participants
Executive directors, deans, senior directors	5
Directors	4
Acting directors	2
Heads of department	2
Assistance directors	1
Managers	4
Senior coordinator	1
Number of years' experience in the current job	
Between 6 months and 1 year	2
Over 1 year to 3 years	3
Over 3 years to 5 years	4
Over 5 years to 10 years	3
Over 10 years to 15 years	5
Over 15 years	2
Gender split observed	
Female	10
Male	9
The racial demographics were diverse, representing the main racial categories in South Africa (i.e., African, Coloured, Indian and White)	
Departments represented included: Student Governance Offices, Student Funding (Financial Aid Office), Student Counselling and Development, Student residences, Sports Administration, Campus clinics, senior line management and executive officers	

Source: Researcher compiled

Table 3.1 provides the details of research participants from multiple cases (research sites). It is a cross-case and cross-sectional type of units of analysis, with one group constituting management staff members in various managerial positions, and another group constituting students in their various levels of study. This combination of units of analysis formed part of triangulation and validity of findings.

3.5.1.2 Staff Participants Recruitment and the Interview Contexts

Each research site for this study has multiple campuses and research participants were interviewed online from their respective campuses. Some were interviewed online from their respective homes because they were working from home due to the prevailing COVID-19 conditions and related health precautions, such as staff rotational work between home and office. This was a policy in many organisations to prevent high numbers of employees in one work place that may result in high COVID-19 infections. Because of the researcher's work experience in higher education, he was generally familiar with the various campus landscapes in the present research project and had previously visited for work purposes, 17 of the 26 public universities in South Africa.

Following a purposive sampling approach, staff participants were recruited directly by the researcher using information obtained from websites of the four selected universities. (See Appendix C). Many emails were sent to targeted management staff. Some opted not to participate while others said they were not the right persons. Many emails were not answered. A few online interview appointments were not honoured repeatedly by potential participants. They would simple not connect after having agreed to be interviewed, and not respond to follow up e-mails. Thankfully, costs of flights, car hire, meals and hotel accommodation were not incurred in the fruitless recruitment and dishonoured appointments, because the interviews were scheduled to be online. Many appointments were scheduled for the lunchtime period to accommodate the busy schedules of managers and directors and the researcher himself, but flexibility in terms of the researcher's availability was applied. Some appointments were scheduled through participants' secretarial staff but this posed a challenge for recording through the MS Teams online platforms which did not allow the researcher to record when he was an invitee. However, the researcher used two devices to record the interview sessions (with express permission from

interviewees). One was the MS Teams online platform and a backup, being a separate recording device. The second device helped on some of the occasions when the MS Teams recordings could not be opened or reviewed and when the internet connection and audio was poor on the one recording mechanism. Only a few network interruptions and disconnections were experienced during the interview sessions and fortunately, participants were patient enough to either reconnect or wait for the researcher to reconnect to the online platform. Minimal interruptions such as an office phone or cellphone ringing or a colleague knocking on the office door, happened and these could be accommodated easily and provided contextual campus office dynamics, albeit virtually.

It was a cordial virtual environment and jokes and laughter often took place, especially when discussing difficult situations that often affect most universities. Sombre moods would surface temporarily when reference was made to the havoc of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unavoidable scramble to close campuses. Participants would take time when venturing into the sadness of the experience of losing their colleagues to the pandemic, but often would also hasten to mention the lessons learned about the importance of staff wellbeing, situational leadership and adapting to the 'new normal' for Student Affairs/Support Services as a fraternity. One participant reported a state of apprehension among campus health staff whose conventional mode of service delivery was contact or face-to-face with a patient. They had to think of ways of assisting students virtually, while at the same time insisting, especially based on their professional training, that diagnosis or examination of patients had to be physical.

Another observation revealed a sense of spontaneous keenness to tell 'a survivor's story' whenever reference was made to student protests and related instabilities on campuses, including what was nationally-dubbed by students '#FeesMustFall' protest of years 2015/16. In the latter phenomenon, participants felt entrusted with the responsibility to bring about harmony on campuses. A research participant reflected on campuses that were seen as student protest capitals, further indicating the responsibility for leaders like him to grapple with such a phenomenon as part of their core business in higher education. One participant even cautioned the researcher that if during the interview session, if he heard students singing 'Solomon' (a popular protest song in South Africa), he would have to terminate the interview

and rush to the scene. In his reflection, this participant even concluded that Student Affairs should endeavour to engage student leaders at national level in the country because issues of contestation at one university tended to have a snowball effect on other universities.

Another participant at a different research site complained of exhaustion because they had been working at night attending to after-hours student support emergency, which is a common occurrence in a residential university where you have students on campus 24 hours. A different example on the spectrum of work dynamics of Student Affairs management was a frequent reference by a participant to the fact that their support service offerings had been embedded in student recruitment packages for the university in question.

Interestingly, others reflected on university mergers as the source of the legacy with which they were grappling. The merger phenomenon of early 2000 in higher education and the 2015/16 student national protests were frequently cited by participants as sources of sustainability perils for their departments in Student Affairs/Support Services. Some reported some job losses from these two landmark events in higher education.

Most, if not all, lamented the lack of resources of various types, which reportedly acted as hindrances in them successfully achieving their strategic objectives. The majority of participants showed interest in the title of the study, as it seemed to resonate with their work and they were also keen to see the findings. This indicated an active interest in the present research and an anticipation of not only a theoretical, but also a functional contribution to practice.

Out of the 19 staff participants, 17 showed their videos on the online platform cameras, where the researcher was able to see them virtually. Five participants kept their videos on throughout the interviews, while most only showed their videos for introductory purposes. One participant preferred not to show their video and another requested not to show it due to their being at home with young family members in the same house. The researcher kept his video on throughout all interview sessions in order to keep the participant in touch and to also provide some non-verbal feedback to the participant such as nodding, smiling or frowning, to affirm that he was listening and to encourage the participant to tell their story. In all these

interviews, the researcher kept an attentive observation of facial expressions when a participant's video was on and other non-verbal cues such as the change in the tone of voice, emphasis and emotions. The non-verbal cues nudged the researcher to probe the participant and make note of the issue and test it on another participant within the same site and in another site.

Notes of the observations were made and used in analysing how participants made meaning of the various concepts and how they reflected on their lived experiences. All participants appeared to be smart-casually dressed and seemed relaxed. Participants seemed keen to tell their story, and some were familiar with concepts used by the researcher on the interview protocol. The researcher would briefly introduce the study and objectives in order to create rapport. Confidentiality was emphasised. Permission was sought for the recording of the interviews and many interviewees would say they understood why there was a need for a recording. Some were doing their master's and doctoral degree studies as well, while a few were already doctoral graduates. The researcher would indicate at times, in the middle of the interview, that he wanted their opinion on a concept that had been raised by other research participants at other research sites. This cross-case strategy was helpful in scrutinising and testing the meaning of concepts in varying cases or contexts of the higher education sector.

3.5.1.3 Research Student Characteristics.

Table 3.2 depicts the characteristics of students who took part in the data collection process, providing the stakeholder and service user's view on support services, especially their meaning (and experiences) of support services as well as the inherent value for them.

Table 3.2: Student research participants' characteristics

Level of study of student participants:	Number of participants
First year students	4
Second year students*	4
Third year students	10
Postgraduate students (Honours / PG diploma)	3
Master's students	7
Doctoral students	2
Total	**30**
Other relevant categories**	Number of participants
Student Representative Council member	2
Former Student Leader (#FeesMustFall)	1
Sub-structures (SCF, house committee, PG Student council, Outreach group)	4
Research Assistants	1
Tutors	2
Residence Advisor (Student)	1

*Second year students were not originally to be included as they were expected to not provide significantly different experiences. However, due to the fact that the researcher was not allowed direct access to recruiting students in three of the universities, he had no control over which students got invitations for interviews. This cohort of students turned out to provide valuable information after all.

**Other relevant categories are included in the 30 participants and their student structures' role was voluntarily given to the researcher.

Number of student participants who reported to have used the various support services			
Type of Service	**Number of student participants**	**Type of Service**	**Number of student participants**
Student Counselling	12	Student Residences	23
Student Governance	15	Sports Services/Facilities	9
Student Funding	27	Student campus Clinic	17
Student transport	18	Disability support	0
Security Services	17	Residence dining halls	5

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

3.5.1.4 Student Participants Recruitment and the Interview contexts.

Similar to the staff interviews, student interviews were conducted online using the MS Teams online platform. After the processing (and issuing) of research site ethical clearances and permits, various university officials at all four research sites assisted in the recruitment of student participants. A recruitment letter with the research information and informed consent was supplied by the researcher, with the email address of the researcher (Appendix D and E). Students would then use the email to write to the researcher and indicate their consent and interest and thereafter further interaction between the researcher and a potential participant would ensue, in order to complete the consent form and set up a suitable date and time for the interview sessions.

Most of the 30 interviews were conducted after hours between 17h00 hours (5pm) and 22h00 (10pm), from Monday to Sunday, in order to accommodate students who were engaged in their academic activities during the day. Interviews were set up to last for 30 minutes each, in order to avoid students getting bored during the session and to ensure that they were active for the duration, considering that most sessions took place after a long academic day. Fortunately, none of the student participants seemed exhausted or distracted. They seemed keen to tell their stories, especially when an opportunity arose for them to venture into their experiences of applying to a university, switching from high school to university environments, campus life adversities, difficulties with support and academic services, tempting moments to drop out of university, the role they played on campus, student protests and resilience.

The researcher requested permission to record the interview sessions for transcription and analysis purposes. Many participants seemed to be aware and expecting it, probably because it was stated in the documentation that had been sent to them prior to the interview sessions. The researcher explained the content of the study and objectives and asked if the participant had any questions. Another request would be to ask the participant to turn their videos on, if they were comfortable, especially for the purposes of introduction. Some student participants kept their videos on for the duration of the interview sessions, but most only showed the video for the introduction. The researcher kept his video on for all sessions. There were a

number of internet connection disruptions, but participants were patient enough to reconnect or wait for the researcher to reconnect.

When asked, participants indicated that they were either at their residences, private flats, or their homes. Some participants were at their parents' homes in different provinces of the country away from their respective universities, due to COVID-19 lockdown. One international student participant was in their home country. 70% of student participants were between 3rd year and doctoral levels of study, which meant they had both contact and virtual campus life experiences. This became an emerging interview question that was put to many participants and many lamented the absence of physical presence when consulting for support services, especially for mental and health-related service needs, sports and access to residences' WiFi network facilities. Furthermore, mostly those who were at their homes reminisced about peer and social support on campuses.

What cuts across the four research sites was the varying student experiences, from a first-year student who had a confusing and overwhelming campus experience when migrating to online learning, to a doctoral and mature student who either felt independent or hesitant to approach Student Affairs for support. Other patterns ranged from individual students who had very negative individual experiences and were once on the brink of dropping out of university, to student leaders who felt the university saw them as enemies and were put under surveillance during the student protests. However, the reflections were balanced, in that the majority of participants felt that student support services were indispensable and had a significant impact on their social and academic lives, including the motivation to enrol for postgraduate studies at the same universities. Empirical data evidence in this regard is presented in the next chapter.

The data collection interviews for both management staff and students were guided by an interview protocol (please see Appendices F and G for the full protocols). Below is an example of the interview questions.

Table 3.3: Summarised extract of the research interview protocols for both students and management staff

Management staff participants' interview questions	Student participants' interview questions
• What has been strategic changes of your Division's name in the past ten years?	• Which name correctly reflects the services you want: Student Affairs, Student Services, Student Life?
• How do you collaborate with students?	• How do departments collaborate with students?
• What is the role of people in the management of your department?	• How do you see staff in the support service departments?
• What do you believe to be the critical resources and capabilities in your division?	• What do you believe to be the key resources and capabilities in Student support division?
• How do you determine the value in a resource or in capabilities?	• What are the characteristics of value in support service?
• How do you define a resource? And how do you define capabilities?	• How do you define value in support services?
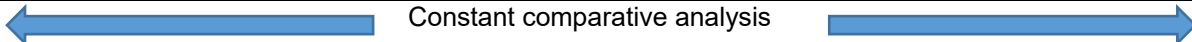
Source: Own compilation

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

In order to decipher the meaning of the empirical data and thus illuminate a case for a support service strategy framework, a thematic analysis, complemented by template analysis as a heuristic, was employed in analysing this corpus of data. Interviews for both students and staff were carried out over a period of four months (August to November 2021), with one staff interview session held in February 2022. The overall qualitative data analysis took seven months to complete, with the first four months being the initial empirical data analysis carried out concurrently with interview sessions.

The overall qualitative data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis guideline, combined with Brook and Kings's (2014) template analysis. The guidelines have six phases displayed in Table 3.4, juxtaposed with the template analysis techniques.

Table 3.4: Summary of the thematic data analysis

Braun and Clarkes' thematic analysis guide	Brook and King's template analysis technique – complementary
Phase 1: Getting familiar with the data	Step 1: Familiarisation with data
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Step 2: Preliminary coding (using a priori codes)
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Step 3: Clustering
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	Step 4: Producing an initial template
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	Step 5: Applying and developing the template
Phase 6: Producing a report	Step 6: Final interpretation
Constant comparative analysis	

Sources: Braun and Clarke (2012); Brooks and King (2014), Glaser (1965)

The thematic data analysis phases were as follows:

3.5.2.1 Phase 1: Getting familiar with data

The initial analysis was based on reviewing the recordings and notes. This phase involved extracting data from audio and video recordings which required re-living each interview. Listening to the voices, tones and reactions provided an immediate cue for how the participant constructed the meaning of the stories they were narrating. Where possible, transcription was also done at this phase, but the daunting transcription exercise was often left incomplete, in order to concurrently move to the next phase, which set the momentum for the next interview session. Notes were made for further probing of emerging issues.

3.5.2.2 Phase 2: Preliminary coding (a priori codes)

From the initial review of the field notes and audio data, new notes were added. A priori concepts derived from the study's conceptual framework (Figure 2.5), and research site documents obtained from the websites were scrutinised against the new notes. The process was driven by checking patterns and unexpected areas of interest. The second interview was then conducted and thereafter the first two complete transcripts were produced and uploaded to the Atlas.ti software for coding and memoing. Coded data was then downloaded as reports which were imported to MicroSoft Excel document for clustering (King, 2004) and further analysis.

3.5.2.3 Intermediate Phase: Template technique

After each interview, Phase 1 and Phase 2 were repeated. Between Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the thematic analysis process, the researcher incorporated the template technique as a multi-case heuristic. The process of coding followed what is termed axial coding as well as selective coding (Blair, 2015). Axial and selective coding generated data categories and sub-categories, dovetailing well with the template heuristic. Developing a template of codes after the first two interviews therefore helped to do a within-case verification of similarities and differences within one research site. In doing so, salient issues that, as King (2004) suggests, pertain to the interview questions, were teased out. Similar to Braun and Clarke's six phase model, Brooks and King's (2014) template analysis also has six steps – Step 2 (initial codes), Step 3 (clustering) and Step 4 (developing an initial template) were infused in the process. Overall, both groups of interview data collection generated 329 pages of interview transcripts, with a total of 455 initial codes.

3.5.2.4 Phase 3: "Searching" for themes

At the first research site, a total of six staff interviews were conducted. Brooks and King (2014) suggested that it is possible to develop an initial template from the first interview, but they cautioned against starting to code data too early. At interview 3, a template of clustered codes (King, 2004) was applied, which also served as a form of theoretical sampling (Coyne, 1997) for further data collection. The clustered codes or concepts were applied in the first three data sets (coded interview transcript reports), to look for 'patterns of shared meanings that were united by a central concept' (Braun & Clarke, 2020), in order to develop 'initial themes that capture something about the research question and sub-questions' (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Phase 3 of the thematic analysis was named by Braun and Clarke (2006) as 'searching for themes', but they further explained that themes do not just emerge "as if their data set was a pile of crocodile eggs and analysis involved watching the eggs until each baby crocodile [theme] emerged" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:63). Indeed, in the present data analysis, themes were developed through a tedious iteration between and across the first copies of the transcripts, the coded transcripts on Atlas.ti software and the cluster of coded templates on MS Excel. Interview notes, research site documents and interview protocol were also checked. The template was modified

through collapsing and re-clustering codes that seemed to share unifying features (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A practical example is that concepts that seemed to share attributes of resources were moved to those having attributes of capabilities and vice versa. At the end of Phase 3, which was at the end of the sixth staff interview of the first research site, a template with potential themes, also containing data extracts was produced and applied as the research continued.

3.5.2.5 Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

Research Site 2 interviews began after the completion of Research Site 1. Four staff interviews were conducted at Research Site 2. The process of audio recordings and notes analysis, transcription, uploading to Atlas.ti, coding, importing to MS Excel and further coding incorporating thematic analysis and template analysis began again from Phase 1 to Phase 4 for the second research site. However, at Site 2, the template developed from the previous site was also applied to see if there were any comparative or different and emerging concepts and themes that could provide alternative answers to the study's research question (Eisenhardt, 2021). The initial template for Site 2 combined the Site 1 template and emerging concepts from Site 2. A priori concepts were also blended into the clustered codes, in order to keep the mining of data theoretically connected to the study's conceptual framework. The same process of Phase 1 to Phase 4 thematic analysis and modification of the template was repeated for Research Site 3 and Research Site 4. Six staff interviews were conducted for Research Site 3 and three staff interviews were conducted for Research Site 4, with some concepts having long reached saturation before the analysis of the interviews from latter research site. However, even Site 4 provided new insights. It was at the final research site that all initial themes for all research sites were scrutinised at an aggregate level. The themes assessment process adopted Braun and Clarke's (2012) guide to see if the themes (a) were not just codes; (b) had quality in terms of bringing a revelatory insights towards the research question; (c) had boundaries in terms of the focus to support service strategy as opposed to academic strategy; and (d) provided sufficient data evidence; and whether the supporting data provided a scaffold for the themes. This assessment guide provided critical assistance in the revision of themes and preparation for Phase 5 of the thematic analysis.

When data collection from management staff participants began at Research Site 2, permits began to be issued for student cohorts of participants. Thus, the data collection and analysis for both management staff and student participants happened concurrently, with the last two months of data collection and analysis focusing on student participants. The thematic analysis of data for the student groups was carried out in the exactly the same way as in the management staff data analysis process. For student participants, there were 8 interviews at site one, 7 each at sites two and three, and another 8 at site four.

3.5.2.6 Phase 5: Defining and Naming themes

The clustered codes for staff data, developed at Phase 3 of the data analysis, produced 38 empirical concepts. Phase 4 built on the previous phase and produced what the researcher named 'descriptive second-order themes', influenced by the lexicon of Corley and Gioia (2011). Twenty (20) descriptive second-order themes were produced. In Phase 5, the 20 descriptive themes were further scrutinised against; (a) the data evidence; (b) the research site documents; (c) field notes; (d) their relationships and independence of each theme; and (e) the research question and sub-questions. This exercise of Phase 5, refined the 20 themes to nine (9) interpretive themes. The last consolidation then produced six (6) aggregated themes and four (4) sub-themes.

The clustered codes for students' data, also developed in Phase 3 of the data analysis, produced 78 empirical concepts. During the interviews, many student participants were not as conversant with the theoretical concepts and the researcher often had to explain the terms used in the interview protocol. This was expected and understandable because they were not practitioners in Student Affairs. The researcher's notes indicated that some student participants would often pause and think before commenting or ask the researcher to explain a term/concept being used in an interview question. This observation is also helpful if one is developing rules, conditions and policies for student support services, in terms of the meaning of concepts. Scholars have noted that concepts have embedded meaning with an understanding by a special socio-cultural group (Hupcey & Penrod, 2005). It is possible that participants were assessing the concepts to determine their 'familiarity' and 'resonance' (Gerring, 1999) leading to them asking the researcher for further

clarification. To this end, the 78 empirical concepts from this cohort of participants were largely migrated with their empirical meanings and outlooks to the abstract level. Five (5) descriptive second-order themes were developed from clustering 15 first-order concepts. Ultimately, further analysis and refinement produced 24 interpretive themes. The 24 themes were consolidated into 11 interpretive aggregated themes, with four (4) embedded sub-themes.

Overall, there were six (6) themes from management staff data analysis and 11 themes from student data analysis. The two groups of final themes were compared for similarities and differences. The juxtaposition process identified seven (7) themes that were similar from both groups, while six (6) themes were complementary to one another. More scrutiny and theorising about the phenomenon, further collapsed these themes to four (4) final themes. This is the reason why the four themes are presented as group types, which is further discussed as a model of resource typology in Chapter 5 of the present thesis.

The qualitative findings were incorporated in the development of the quantitative data collection instrument. The next section briefly discusses the data collection plan for the quantitative research strand.

3.5.3 Quantitative Sample and Questionnaire Development

The study's instrument measures the prevalence of support service value constructs and their general (non-monetary) value or importance or usefulness. The final questionnaire (with a sampling guide) and survey invitation letters, were e-mailed to universities' officials at the research sites, for circulation to potential student respondents through internal survey platforms.

3.5.3.1 The quantitative sample frame and the sample.

Table 3.5 shows the sample frame for the student cohort of respondents. No staff resondents were included in the survey.

Table 3.5: The research sample frame

Institution	Total Number of Contact Students	Reference Source
University of Johannesburg	49 000	(UJ Revised Strategic plan 2025) www.uj.ac.za
Durban University of Technology	35 272	(2019 annual report) www.dut.ac.za
University of Cape Town	28 605	(2019 annual report) www.uct.ac.za
University of Free State	35 393	(2018 annual report) www.ufs.ac.za
Total	**148 270**	

Source: From the four research site/universities

Calculation of sample size: The researcher did not have a direct access to the sample frame due to research sites rules and regulations. After written permissions (see appendices B1 – B4) had been granted by research sites, authorised staff members in each institution assisted in the distribution of the questionnaires. Authorised staff members assisting the researcher, had access to the sample frame (lists or database of all students in each university under study). A detailed guide on the randomn selection of the sample was given authorised staff to use in sampling. A range of responses (to the questionnaire) came from 202 first year students to 25 doctoral students, with various characteristics in terms of race, gender, age, and places of stay. Please see tables 4.27 to 4.32 for more details. Using population figures in Table 3.5 above, the sample was developed as follows:

a) Combined round total for all four universities is approximately 150 000 students (overall sample frame).

b) A mean of 37 500 student participants per university was used, calculated as 150 000/4, where 4 represents the four institutions listed in Table 3.5.

c) Following a recommendation by MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang and Hong (1999) for exploratory factor analysis a sample of $n=300$ participants per site was deemed to be good. The target was 1200 participants (300 x 4) for the four research sites.

d) Using a formula by Fox, Hunn and Mathers (2009) and Babbie's (2017) recommendation, the sample selection interval was calculated as follows:

- 37 500/300 = 125. The sample selection interval was therefore aimed at 125.

3.5.3.2 The Development of the Questionnaire

This section discusses how the research instrument for the quantitative data was developed by the researcher. A new instrument was developed to measure the research constructs, with various considerations, including literature, conceptual framework, the research questions and empirical data. The study's instrument is called Higher education Support Service Value scale (HedSUSERV). Available instruments do not measure the phenomenon of support service value attributes as presented in the current study, but rather measure broader phenomena including services that do not fall under support service such as academic activities, lecture halls, library services and the like.

Building a data collection instrument (questionnaire) from the preceding findings contributed to the instrument's validity – in that the measuring items resonate with the respondents' language. The constructs that became salient and theoretically relevant for measurement as value attributes are; 'student-centredness', 'employee competence attributes', 'value in support services', 'student engagement', and 'collaboration'. The building of some of these constructs included the consideration of a priori concepts that were the subject of the conceptual framework.

What follows is a discussion on how the conceptual framework has been applied in developing the research scale for the present study.

3.5.3.2.1 The agency theory and the "student engagement" construct

Student Affairs leadership is like a sub-agent entity, delegated with the responsibility of facilitating the involvement and engagement between student representatives and university executive management. The concept of 'student engagement' was an a priori concept included in the study's conceptual framework. The study's qualitative data strand also identified the concept of 'engagement' and the findings reported certain attributes of engagements that are ubiquitous in the research context of higher education, namely; *peaceful engagement* and *hostile engagement*. Scale items included attributes from these two types of engagement. The items also connect to how the agency theoretical lens illuminates the intricacies of how the 'agent' (university management) on behalf of the principal (government) enacts the prescripts of the Higher Education Act, with regard to co-governance. The scale

therefore measures how the student engagement construct represents the value attributes of resources and capabilities for a support services strategy.

3.5.3.2.2 Stakeholder theory, "student engagement" and "collaboration" constructs

The stakeholder theory's focus is on the building and maintenance of sustainable stakeholder relationships as key to organisational performance and creating value (Freeman, Dmytriyev & Phillips, 2021; Freeman, Phillips & Sisodia, 2018). The qualitative findings showed that Student Affairs is delegated with the task of continuously building and maintaining engagement capacity of student leaders as key stakeholders in the sustainable governance of HEIs. An environment of collaboration between student leaders and university management creates value for students as well as for the university. Some student participants reported to have narrowly escaped dropping out of university after they were assisted by the student leadership who engaged university officials. The present study's scale items included the notion of student-led support services and programmes which attests to the value of collaborations. From a perspective of stakeholder theory which puts a premium on relationships and collaborations, the present study's scale measures the construct of collaboration as a proposed value attribute for sustainable support service strategy.

3.5.3.2.3 The RDT, "collaborations" and "value" constructs

Collaborations between organisations and their environmental resource stakeholders fall within the explanation of the resource dependence theory (RDT). This theory emphasises an organisation's dependency on its environment for valuable resources (Coupet & McWilliams, 2017). Dill (1981) noted that, in pioneering the theory, Pfeffer and Salancik were mainly assessing an organisation's level of dependence on outside groups for resources and tracing how organisations assessed the nature and significance of dependence and ways of reducing the resultant uncertainties. The higher education environment has high uncertainties with regard to governance and management. The main findings were that senior management staff participants described their work contexts as replete with uncertainties. Valuable resources are propounded to be critical for support services in minimising uncertainties posed by internal and external stakeholders. The scale thus measures these internal collaborations as value attributes for sustainable support service strategy.

3.5.3.2.4 RBV, support service "value" and "student-centredness"

The RBV perspective focuses on valuable resources as a collective independent variable that is associated with 'performance difference as a dependent valuable' (Davis & DeWitt, 2021). However, in the present instrument, value is theorised at a level of "value-in-use" (Greer et al., 2016: 139), or value for consumers (Alexy, West, Klapper & Reitzig, 2018). The value-in-use angle is closely related to the student-centredness construct, which basically puts students at the centre of strategising about support services. The main utility of the present instrument was to measure value attributes, but the concept 'value' was included as a construct to see if it has its own independent properties. To this end, the scale measures the construct of value as perceived by internal stakeholders (i.e., students) and student-centredness as the shared principle of Student Affairs practitioners.

3.5.3.3 The Constructs of the Questionnaire

3.5.3.3.1 Student-centredness

The term "student-centredness" is used by Student Affairs practitioners and also emerged from the qualitative findings of this study. The UNESCO's (2002) manual for the role of Student Affairs in higher education, provided a framework 'on ways to build an effective Student Affairs and Services operation that *puts the student at the centre of all efforts'.* (Emphasis added). Lavinder (2021) notes that Student Affairs's work broadly involves, 'student learning, student engagement and student success', and this is one demonstration of student-centredness. To this end, the construct of "student-centredness" is defined operationally, as a student support service principle for guidance, development and support of student success.

3.5.3.3.2 Employee competence attributes

In the present study, the construct, "competence" is operationalised as cognitive job-related elements or skills acquired through formal education, as well as desirable personal traits and knowledge for support services necessary for student success. The results of the main research strand of the present study suggested that it is the competence attributes of employees that are perceived by students to create value in the support services. The scale therefore measures this finding. Other researchers (Nkonoane, 2015; Pansiri & Sinkamba, 2017; Xaba, 2021) have investigated the

importance of competences for Student Affairs. Nkonoane's (2015) study that empirically tested the current construct "revealed a general support by student affairs practitioners for the establishment of professional competencies in the field of student affairs" (p.124). The present study measured this constructs' value attributes for students.

3.5.3.3.3 Value (in student support services):

The concept, 'value' is central in distinguishing between a normal plan and a strategic plan. The present scale looks at value-in-use proffered by support services, as perceived by students. Hence the study's sub-questions pertaining to this. Greer, et al, (2016) conjectured that "value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined" (p.3). Based on this premise of the SDL, it is therefore argued that value attributes should be relevant to the service context as opposed to assuming that value attributes of academic service for example is the same as value attributes of support service. The idea in this argument is that there is more validity in measuring value attributes in the right context because value is phenomenologically determined. The point is not to prevent this theoretical proposition of support service value from scientific falsifiability, but to improve precision in description and testability, while widening its applicability. As far back as 2002, Schmidt had argued that 'value-added' should be embraced by higher education in order to improve their offerings. However, Schmidt (2002) explicitly excluded support services in his construct of 'value added', but he employed the service dominant logic and Sheth's value typology model. Schmidt boldly claimed that "the student is a customer of classroom instruction" (p.37). "In a fast-changing, sometimes financially uncertain and increasingly consumer-led HE [Higher Education] landscape, proving value and worth is at a premium", (Grieves and Pritchard, 2018:2). Therefore various sources of value need to be explored. In Petrusch and Vaccaro's (2019) study, "eight attributes were identified that related to what students consider value in HEIs' administrative and academic services: reliability, empathy, access, responsiveness, self-service technology convenience (SSTC), communication, personalization and imperceptibility", (p.869). Most of these attributes are covered in the scale for the present study and this shows how this construct has been measured by others. Petrusch and Vaccaro made a call that "HEIs need to increase efficiency and to provide new or increased value through services that can differentiate them from

their competitors" (p.862). Value (in use) in the present study and is operationally defined as an attribute of support services that provides sustainability and benefits to service users.

3.5.3.3.4 Student engagement

The concept of engagement has been entrenched in higher education literature and practice (Kuh, 2009). Notwithstanding its evolution, it is a concept that is viewed as referring to "the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (Kuh, 2009: 683). South African university leaders also view the concept of student engagement with regard 'to how much time and effort students spend on academic and other *personal development activities,* including the way in which institutions allocate resources and organise *learning opportunities and services* to help students participate in and benefit from such activities' (USAf, 2018) (Emphasis added). As it appears in the Univeristy of Oxford's Policy and Guidance on Student Engagement and Representation (2015), often in practice, the term engagement is understood to represent commitment, communication, persuasion, negotiation and participation. Hardyman, Daunch and Ketchener (2015) noted that, in the health care environment, patient engagement represents 'involvement' and 'participation'. In the present study, the concept is operationally defined as an effort of active participation and involvement in personal development, problem-solving, and institutional governance underpinned by support, guidance and facilitation.

3.5.3.3.5 Collaborations:

Improving the quality of student experience demands cooperation by two groups on campus who spend the most time with students, and those are; faculty members and Student Affairs professionals (Kuh and Banta, 2000). The construct, "collaborations" in the present study is measured within the context of student support services, especially the role that students play in delivering student support services. The construct includes and sometimes is a consequence of student engagement as well. The construct is therefore operationalised for this scale, as a process whereby Student Affairs and students work together to deliver support services and to resolve campus problems.

The qualitative results of the present study revealed convergent and divergent perspectives between management staff and student participants on all five constructs being measured on this scale.

3.5.4 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data were analysed through the measurements of central tendency (mean and dispersion). Data were downloaded from Zoho survey platform to MicroSoft Excel, cleaned up and thereafter imported to the SPSS software for the analysis with the professional assistance of a statistician.

The main findings' concepts and themes were the basis for identifying the constructs and the raw data from the student participants' scripts produced an initial set of 40 items of this 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was a self-administered online version, hosted by Zoho online surveys software application. A consent form with information about the study and ethical clearance approvals information was the first page of the questionnaire. The consent page also had email contact details of the researcher and the name of the supervisor. One respondent emailed the supervisor giving suggestions on the structure of the questionnaire items. Two respondents wrote to the researcher, with one giving suggestions and feedback on how the questionnaire was, another having difficulties in opening the questionnaire link. The questionnaire structure had three sections, covering demographic data, the constructs and the satisfaction/dissatisfaction section on support services.

There were five constructs as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, with a five-point Likert-type scale (with labels: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree). Labelling the points on the scale allowed respondents to understand the measurement of their answers, in order "to maximise the reliability and validity of the data obtained while acquiring as much information as possible about subtle differences between different people's points of view" (O'Muircheartaigh, Krosnick & Helic, 2000:1). Krosnick (1999) observed that scales with labelled points improve data quality. The midpoint (Neutral) was included in order to allow answers from respondents who may not have had an opinion on the statement. The midpoint allows "respondents to place themselves at a midpoint to indicate neutrality, indifference, or ambivalence" (O'Muicheartaigh et al., 2000:2).

Krosnick and Presser (2010:269) supported the inclusion of a midpoint in a scale and their view was that "for someone with a neutral attitude, a dichotomous scale without a midpoint would be suboptimal". Krosnick and Presser (2010:271) further cautioned that some people may want to communicate their genuine neutrality, therefore, "eliminating the midpoint will force them to pick a point either on the positive side or on the negative side of the scale, resulting in inaccurate measurement".

3.5.4.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) "provides procedures for determining an appropriate number of factors and the pattern of factor loadings primarily from the data", (Fabrigar, McCallum, Wegener & Strahan, 1999:277). The final instrument was sent out to an overall sample targeting 1 200 student respondents (from the four universities). A total of 638 valid responses (53%) were received. A sample of 304 from the survey results was used to do a post-hoc factor analysis (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003). Parallel analysis was chosen for determining the number of factors in the test. An oblique rotation solution was conducted to see the relationship of factors, using promax criteria. As shown in table 3.6, the test had five factors and four of the factors had between 4 and 7 items loading. Loadings project a cluster, with a pattern of relationships and association of characteristics (Rummel, 1967). The fifth factor had four items from the scale, but only two items loaded in the test, with one item loading to factor 1 with 0.468 loading and a uniqueness of 0.666. The uniqueness "indicates to what degree a variable is unrelated to others" (Rummel, 1967:465). The fourth item did not load and had uniqueness of 0.718. Factor 4 had eight items, with four loading and the other four not loading, but their uniqueness was 0.609, 0.614, 0.668 and 0.685, respectively. Factor 3 had six items and five loaded with one not loading, with uniqueness of 0.820. Factor 1 had six items, all loading, with one item from Factor 5 joining the pack. The purpose of doing this post-hoc EFA 'was not to do data reduction, but to reach a parsimonious understanding of a set of measured variables by determining the number and nature of common factors that may account for the observed pattern' (Fabrigar, et al. 1999; Rummel, 1967). The tables below show the results of the EFA, in terms of the factor loadings.

Table 3.6: EFA factor loadings

Chi-squared Test

	Value	df	p
Model	1045.825	295	<.001

Factor Loadings

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Uniqueness
A5	0.882					0.330
A4	0.837					0.420
A2	0.761					0.469
A7	0.731					0.501
A1	0.703					0.505
A3	0.697					0.554
A6	0.588					0.629
D4	0.468					0.666
E2		0.873				0.418
E1		0.788				0.479
E3		0.748				0.481
E4		0.659				0.543
E5		0.643				0.551
B3			0.885			0.332
B2			0.842			0.349
B4			0.793			0.429
B1			0.497			0.813
B6			0.458			0.683
C3				0.906		0.406
C2				0.870		0.449
C4				0.514		0.675
C1				0.452		0.791
D2					0.908	0.207
D1					0.709	0.411
B5						0.820
C5						0.668
C6						0.685
C7						0.614
C8						0.609
D3						0.718

Note. Applied rotation method is promax.

Source: Own complication, from JASP statistical analysis software

Table 3.7: EFA factor communality

Factor Characteristics						
	Unrotated solution			Rotated solution		
	SumSq. Loadings	Proportion var.	Cumulative	SumSq. Loadings	Proportion var.	Cumulative
Factor 1	6.423	0.214	0.214	4.448	0.148	0.148
Factor 2	3.453	0.115	0.329	2.745	0.092	0.240
Factor 3	1.550	0.052	0.381	2.577	0.086	0.326
Factor 4	1.308	0.044	0.424	2.459	0.082	0.408
Factor 5	1.057	0.035	0.460	1.562	0.052	0.460

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 3.8: EFA factor correlation

Factor Correlations					
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Factor 1	1.000	0.495	0.284	0.307	0.042
Factor 2	0.495	1.000	0.465	0.470	0.377
Factor 3	0.284	0.465	1.000	0.585	0.211
Factor 4	0.307	0.470	0.585	1.000	0.237
Factor 5	0.042	0.377	0.211	0.237	1.000

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 3.7 shows the factor communality mattrix of items in the scale. All five factors were retained, with one factor carrying the minimum four items. The five factors shown in table 3.8 above represent the classification (Rummel, 1967) of the present study's constructs. The communality of patterns, which is a proportion of total variation in each variable involved in the pattern (Rummel, 1967) is shown in Table 3.7, ranging from 1.057 to 6.423 of the sum squared loadings of the unrotated solution.

3.5.5 Validity

The researcher developed and tested the first draft of the questionnaire online to assess the amount of time it would take to complete it. The first and final drafts were discussed with the researcher's supervisor. For testing face validity, a colleague of the researcher, who works with students, was also asked to complete the draft questionnaire to gauge the duration of completion and whether the language was clear and easily understandable. Furthermore, two students were also requested to

check and complete the questionnaire to determine their understanding of the items and the time it took to complete. The final first draft was sent to 100 students (first years to PhD level) at DUT. Seventeen responses were received from this pilot. The pilot responses included respondents in various years of study, including two PhD students. The pilot was done in order to ensure appropriateness of the questions and to improve readability and clarity. Based on the assessment of the pilot responses, two items were removed, through the revisiting of the main findings' salient concepts that made up the construct of the questionnaire. The two items were not prominent in the main findings' concepts. The final questionnaire had 38 items and the questionnaire was ready for full administration.

3.5.5.1 Additional Assessment for Validity

The questionnaire instrument was also assessed against criteria proffered by Zilvinskis, Masseria and Pike (2017). The criteria are listed on the table below.

Table 3.9: Validity additional assessment criteria

Criteria (Zilvinskis, et al. 2017)	How the study's instrument met these criteria
a) The information is known to respondents	The opening statement of the questionnaire provided a simplified explantion on the object of investigation. The interleading section between Sections A and B, provides a detailed list of the support services, and also urged respondents to keep these in mind as they answer questions. It is therefore assumed that those who responded to the questionnaire were familiar with the concepts in the questionnaire.
b) The questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously	The items were extracted verbatim from students' data of the qualitative findings. The development and pilot sought to address clarity and ambiguity.
c) The questions refer to recent activities	The questions were based on students' recent reflections.
d) Respondents think the questions merit a serious and thoughtful response	The items were also chosen for their emotive elements as expressed by participants in the main findings. Some made reference to "academic life", "protests", "stress", "care", etc.
e) Answering the question does not threaten, embarrass, or violate the privacy of the respondent or encourage the respondent to	Anonymity and confidentiality was assured at the informed consent stage and respondents were not required to include their names. Questionnaire invitations with the survey links were sent by gatekeepers. The responses only included data

| respond in socially desirable ways | that was on the questionnaire. |

Source: Zilvinkis et al. (2017)

Babbie (cited in Zilvinkis et al., 2017: 152) defined validity as "the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration". Keeping in mind Zilvinkis et al.'s criteria, the statements used in developing the data collection instrument emanate from empirical findings of a similar population. The study's instrument can therefore be deemed to adequately reflect 'the real meaning of the constructs under study' (Babbie, 2017).

3.5.6 Reliability

Cronbach's alpha reliability describes the reliability of a sum (or average) of questionnaire item measurements (Bonnett & Wright, 2015). The reliability analysis in the present study follows the 'internal consistency reliability', which is "[w]hen the measurements represent multiple questionnaire/test items" (ibid: 3). Internal consistency coefficients estimate the degree in which scores measure the same concept (Ritter, 2010). Gliem and Gliem (2003:84) advised that "Cronbach's alpha is a test reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability for a given test". Due to time and resources constraints, internal consistency reliability measures are convenient, because they require only a single measurement at one given time (Ritter, 2010). Table 3.10 below presents the internal consistency reliability measurements. Appendix J provides the various tables showing the breakdown of each construct in terms of the reliability analysis.

Table 3.10: Cronbach's alpha of all constructs

Construct	Internal consistency reliability α
Student centredness	0,869
Student Support Services Staff Competences	0,729
Value in Student Support Services	0,771
Student engagement	0,633
Collaborations	0,813
Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with support services	0,734

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Gliem and Gliem (2003:4) citing George and Mallery (2003), noted that the general rule of thumb for interpreting the internal consistency reliability of questionnaire instrument is; >.9 = Excellent, >.8 = Good, >.7 = Acceptable, >.6 = Questionable, >.5 = Poor and <.5 = Unacceptable. Bonett and Wright (2015:4) observed that internal consistency reliability of <.7 was not preferred, but they further argued that "there is no universal minimally acceptable reliability value". Taber (2017) reviewed 69 different papers and found that many reported a Cronbach's alpha of ≥.7 as the norm of acceptability (or reliability). However, Taber's (2017) findings also demonstrated the lack of consensus and subjectivity in the parlance. Taber (2017:1278) reported that:

> "alpha values were described as excellent (0.93–0.94), strong (0.91–0.93), reliable (0.84–0.90), robust (0.81), fairly high (0.76–0.95), high (0.73–0.95), good (0.71–0.91), relatively high (0.70–0.77), slightly low (0.68), reasonable (0.67–0.87), adequate (0.64–0.85), moderate (0.61–0.65), satisfactory (0.58–0.97), acceptable (0.45–0.98), sufficient (0.45–0.96), not satisfactory (0.4–0.55) and low (0.11)".

As can be seen in Table 3.10, the internal consistency reliability for the current instrument, ranged from 0.633 to 0.869, in terms of different constructs. Student engagement construct had the lowest Cronbach's α of 0,633. Latif, Latif, Sahibzada and Ullah (2019) applied the Higher Education Service Quality scale (HiEduQual) with one of the items measuring engagement activities and the factor loading of that

item was 0.548. "Student-centredness" had a highest Cronbach's α of 0,869. The overall mean (mean of means) of all the constructs for this instrument was 0.758. The internal consistency reliability range of the constructs in the present instrument fell within satisfactory, moderate, adequate, reasonable to good and robust. Taber, (2017), found that there was no consensus on the most appropriate labels. According to Taber, some researchers cited fewer items as the rationale for a lower Cronbach's Alpha α, while others cited the level of knowledge of the respondents.

Taber's (2017) study found that most researchers reported a Cronbach's α of ≥.7 as the norm of acceptability (or reliability).

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher for this study has over 20 years of management experience in Student Affairs at the Universities of KwaZulu-Natal, the Witwatersrand and Pretoria, so, he has some level of experiential closeness with the higher education environment. To this end, the researcher tables the following strategies as a way of dealing with the experiential closeness to the research context:

3.6.1 The Research Paradigm as a Guide to Ethics in the Study

The constructivism-interpretivism paradigm employed in the present study is such that social construction of knowledge is paramount leading to the choice of an exploratory design and qualitatively-driven methodology, in order to allow research participants in the higher education context to provide empirical data, rather than just imposing externally-developed concepts and constructs.

3.6.2 Methodology as a Guide to Ethics in the Study

Qualitative methodologies may be seen by positivist purists as subjective, but they have the power of revealing the voices of research participants, as opposed to arbitrarily chosen and imposed items in quantitatively-inclined research instruments. The advantage of the researcher being part of the higher education sector provided a relatively emic view of the context. Lincoln and Denzin (2003:51) argued that "by decontextualising themselves, researchers become detached observers and manipulators of nature".

3.6.3 Sampling, Ethical Clearances and Permits

The quantitative sample of the targeted overall *n*=1200 students provided a safeguard against researcher bias in the choice of respondents. The data collection was only conducted after the Unisa ethical clearance had been granted (Appendix A) and once permissions had also been granted by the research hosting universities (Appendix B1, B2, B3, B4). Prior informed consents were sought from participants for each interview and for questionnaires (Appendix C and D). Identities of all research participants and respondents were kept strictly confidential. The researcher identified himself as a student at UNISA and explained that the data provided by participants was for academic purpose only. The research report did not publicise the names of research participants. The researcher did member-checking of the qualitative data with available and willing research participants.

3.6.4 Methodological Rigour

This is a mixed methods research study, and this research approach enhances the ethical robustness of a study. Corrigan and Onwuegbuzie (2020:797) define legitimation as "the mixed methods bilingual nomenclature that connotes the quantitative term validity and the qualitative term trustworthiness". Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson's (2012) legitimation model for mixed methods research, was used to assess methodological rigour in the present study. Table 3.11 shows how the present study was assessed against the legimation criteria.

Table 3.11: Research method's rigour (legitimation) assessment

Legitimation criteria	Study methodological attributes
Sample integration (Extent to which relationship between qualitative and quantitative sampling design yield quality meta-inferences)	➢ Qualitative findings built a quantitative data collection instrument ➢ Quantitative findings created a wider reach of the qualitative findings' concepts. ➢ Integrated interpretation yielded comprehensive insights
Insider-outsider (Insider's view and observer's view of the researcher)	➢ The Researcher bracketed prior knowledge and experience of the context ➢ The Researcher triangulated methods to enhance reliability ➢ Researcher involved various groups of participants.

Legitimation criteria	Study methodological attributes
Weakness-minimisation sequential (Extent of methods mutual compensation and reversed inferences not compromised)	➤ Qualitative empirical data provided validity for the quantitative instrument measurements. ➤ After quantitative study strand was completed, qualitative interpretation further illuminated the quantitative findings
Conversion (Extent of qualitising and quantitising yield quality meta-inferences)	➤ No data conversion was done. Study was qualitatively-driven. But the quantitative data analysis was done statistically, with results patterns explained narratively.
Paradigmatic mixing (Declaration of mixed paradigm)	➤ Study follows a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm – with a dialectic stance (embracing both methods).
Commensurability (Whether meta-inferences reflect mixed worldview and understanding of multi-perspectives and integration into a new mix).	➤ Both data collection methods sought to answer research questions ➤ Triangulation part of the qualitative method accommodated multiple perspectives ➤ Integration yielded comprehensive insights
Multiple validities (Use of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods validity types yield to high quality meta-inferences)	➤ Descriptions of research sites and interview sessions and verbatim narratives of the qualitative strand provided trustworthiness. Combining and refinement of constructs and questionnaire items through the exploratory factor analysis of the quantitative strand, yielded new concepts for theoretical contribution – "one plus one equals three in mixed methods" (Fetters, 2018).
Political (Extent to which the researcher addressed the interests, values and standpoints of multiple research stakeholders)	➤ Paradigm is anchored on social construction of reality ➤ Dialectical stance embrace multi-perspectives ➤ Qualitative method strand involved multiple participants, with empirical data evidence included.

Source: Researcher, using Collins et al.'s (2012) legitimation guide

3.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the study paradigms, methodology, design and the methods applied, setting out the journey for the field work to collect empirical data and cement the originality of this thesis project.

The research questions and the conceptual framework gave direction and purpose to the study linked to the topic of this thesis. According to past and current literature,

the research context is deemed to be complex and this complexity influenced the choice of the research paradigm for the researcher. Kuhn's (1962, 1974, 1996) work plays a critical role in paradigmatically guiding the way a complex research context is analysed in order to employ an appropriate research method. In addition to the influence from research questions, the paradigm and the research context suggested a multi-pronged qualitatively-dominant methodology with an exploratory foundation. The study sought to go further than exploring the phenomena, so, a mixed methods approach assisted in integrating techniques and data in order to answer the questions accordingly and also to develop concepts that contribute to theory. Sequentially, the exploratory qualitative data collection was followed by, and contributes to the building of a quantitative data collection instrument. The next chapter presents the research findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reports on the main (qualitative) findings, with illustrations of how thematic categories evolved, undergirded by the study's conceptual framework as a bridge between first order interpretation and construction of meaning, and second order theorising. There are four key segments of the results (i.e. common mission of Student Affairs, principles of strategy formulation, definition of support service resources, and support service resource typology). The second section presents the supplemental (quantitative) findings, focusing on the resource value attributes for support services.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN (QUALITATIVE) RESULTS

This section begins by tabling the present study's results pertaining to how Student Affairs aligns its strategy to their respective HEIs. Succeeding sections focus on the presentation of the central findings through specific concepts and themes relating to conceptual framework of the study, research questions and study objectives.

4.2.1 The Strategic Alignment of Student Affairs Missions and Institutions' macro-level goals

The findings indicate that Student Affairs leadership is highly conscious of the need to continuously formulate strategies or strategic plans for support services that connect to their respective institutions' strategic goals. Contrary to the general view that strategic management is an exclusive domain of commercial and private sector, the results suggest a strong prevalence of what would be summarised as 'strategic thinking, strategy translation and enactment', in higher education, including the Student Affairs environment. One impetus for this phenomenon is the growth of the new public management approach – which is largely pushed by governments, as stakeholders of higher education.

As part of data triangulation, the following are extracts of the four universities' visions and strategic goals that can analytically be connected to the strategic work of Student Affairs:

4.2.1.1 "Sustainable student communities of living and learning"

The above statement was extracted from the DUT's 2019 annual report, published by the University as one of the four strategic focus areas. This particular one is termed, Strategic Focus Area 1 and under it, Student Services strategic plans are tabled. The report also lists departments under Student Services as; Student Counselling, Student Health, Student housing, Student Life and Sports and Student Governance. The report (DUT, 2019:10) declares that:

> *Student Services [division] enhances the quality of student life at the University and plays a critical role in ensuring a positive student experience. Student Services has been identified as the custodian of holistic student support (HSS) to be piloted in 2020 through the Siyaphumelela project, in conjunction with "Achieving the Dream" project. To this end, collaborations are underway with our Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) to ensure the rollout of activities that will assure access with success for the 2020 first year cohort. These initiatives will ensure student retention and minimise attrition and dropout rates.*

In reporting their respective portfolios, an example of how the Student Services departments demonstrate their link to DUT's overall strategy, a section of the report under the Student Counselling and Health portfolio, states that; "[i]n pursuit of *building sustainable student communities of living and learning*, this department provided psychosocial, emotional and health support to participants". (Emphasis added). This department of the Student Services division directly cited the DUT's strategic goal. One research participant summarised how they viewed Student Affairs holistic support of students, as follows:

> *…now you will appreciate that Student Services falls within the registrar's office and the registrar's office is essentially responsible for what is called a student lifecycle. That is from registration until graduation. But of course, talking about the principle of access and success, you then bring in the notion of HSS.*

Another research participant explained that:

> *RAs [Residence Advisors] are entrusted with the responsibility of providing psychosocial support to our students. So, they will be the main first point of contact, when it comes to issues of wellness and academic challenges.*

The Student Affairs management participants consistently reported on the alignment of their university's strategic goals (especially the goal cited above), with their division's mission, which includes; 'nurturing sports talent','"providing psychological support to students', 'support and guiding SRC, Clubs and societies', 'providing accommodation that support students' and instilling 'entrepreneurship'. DUT calls their strategy "Envision 2030" (DUT, 2020). The next section discusses a different university.

4.3.1.2 "An enriching student-friendly learning and living experience"

The statement above was extracted from the University of Johannesburg's strategic goals (UJ, 2025) that relate closely to Student Affairs/Support Services goals. Research participants consistently spoke about their goals at a Student Affairs/Support Services level and there were close connections with the university goals. Some of the statements that participants made were as follows:

> *…more than anything, we provide services for students, in essence, for us, it's more on student life, welfare and wellbeing…without Student Affairs, students will not be taken care of*

> *…the university sees [type of support service] as a [redacted], but we are also seen as a contributor towards the welfare and wellbeing of both staff and students.*

The university strategic goals resonated at the Student Affairs/Student Support Services level. Archival data was confirmed by the participants' empirical data. Next is the assessment of how another university that is different from the first two universities, positioned the agenda of support services against the overall institution's vision and strategic goals.

4.3.1.3 "Improve student success and wellbeing"

The above statement was extracted from archival data of the University of the Free State's strategic goals (UFS, 2018) and the quoted part related to the Student Affairs

strategic goals. Below is how research participants translated the university goal to their levels:

> *One key area is your student success. The second one would be wellbeing of students. The third one will be student experience. And the fourth one will be student development.*

> *Student Affairs also has to contribute towards the university strategy. It can only then do that if it is properly integrated. Its services are properly integrated and student services are properly located. They are not all over the show… ours is to take care of students outside the classroom environment.*

The triangulation of archival data and field work (interviews) data suggested a praxis of close relationships between the university goals and those of Student Affairs practitioners. The last one is another university different from the first three universities;

4.3.1.4 "Vision 2030: Unleash human potential to create a fair and a just society"

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) strategic framework cited above has direct connection to Student Affairs strategic mission and vision. The UCT's Department of Student Affairs' document (https://uct.ac.za/dsa/about/overview) reported that "…the Department of the Student Affairs (DSA) is currently hard at work conceptualising its Strategy 2022. This Strategy will be foreground on the UCT's "Vision 2030". The DSA declares their strategic value statement dedicated to ensuring humanising encounters. The strategic mission (purpose) speaks to the reader and refers to empowerment with both spiritual and emotional agility for students' wellbeing and success.

Analysing the different sources of archival (document) data illuminated the high-level strategic lexicon. During the virtual field work (interacting with research site participants) at UCT, 'unleashing human potential' as decoded at the Student Affairs level was expressed among other statements of research participants as "*rekindling, rehabilitating and radiating the soul of a student to succeed ad infinitum*".

What was referred to by participants as the three R's (Rekindling, Rehabilitating and Radiating) were the strategic drivers to enacting the university's vision at the Student Affairs level. One participant translated one of the R's to be the:

> *…pedagogy around the healing of students.*

To this end, paraphrasing participants' explanations, plans were already afoot to 'reform the residences, student leadership and development curriculum'.

Research participants aligned the university's vision and that of Student Affairs strategy focus and further explained the translation or connection of the university vision as follows:

> *…if you look at Vision 2030 of the university that speaks to the idea of unleashing the human potential, we're saying, if you then address the three R's, then you have opened up, you know, that potential to flourish ad infinitum.*

This analysis of the archival (document) data and the empirical data evidenced strategic thinking at UCT, expressed in a philosophical way to emphasise the Student Affairs leadership commitment to the wellbeing and success of students.

The synthesis and analysis of the triangulated research data of the four research sites culminated into what the researcher identified as a common mission and goal of Student Affairs, and is represented by the following descriptive thematic statement, namely:

Co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience.

The findings suggest that various departments within Student Affairs and/or Student Services contexts relate to some or all of the strategic concepts embedded in the above statement, in terms of their missions and goals. Table 4.1, with additional data evidence of research participants, depicts in a summarised process, how the descriptive thematic common mission and goal of Student Affairs was developed in the present study.

Table 4.1: The concepts of the common mission and goal of Student Affairs

Empirical Data	Empirical Concepts	Common Goal	Link to Literature
"The first role is to look after the student wellness". 'secondly, is to look at student development, holistically, in an integrated way" "student wellbeing is our number one priority". "We are more on the out of the classroom experience rather than inside the classroom" "Well, for me, one is the kind of support that they provide in terms of wellness of students and their preparedness for the world after graduating, you know"	• Student-centred services • Extra-curriculum services • Intervention outside-classroom • Outside-classroom development • Wellbeing, growth and academic success • Holistic development of students • Out-of-classroom student experience • Co-curricular develop outside-classroom • Enabler of growth of students outside-classroom • Student life, welfare and wellbeing	Co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience	• Co-curricular development (Xaba, 2021) • Student development (Long, 2012) • Health and Wellbeing (Silverman and Little, 2021; • Student experience (Buultjens and Robinson, 2011) • Student development (Bloland, Stamatakos and Rogers, 1994; Mazodze, Mapara and Tsvere, 2021)

Source: Own compilation

The purpose of tabling the empirical research results on the Student Affairs common mission and goals was to profile Student Affairs' strategic role in higher education, because as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the research gap that the present study addresses is that Student Affairs strategy is an under-researched area and yet it plays an important role in higher education students' experience. Once the common mission had been identified, strategy formulation also emerged, and this is the focus of the next section.

4.3.2 The Principles for Support Service Strategy Formulation in Student Affairs Context

The findings of the present study found that Student Affairs engage in strategising on a regular basis. The interpretation of the results showed a salient pattern of principles that Student Affairs leadership follow in the formulation of service strategy. The principles are listed below;

4.3.2.1 Supporting the strategy direction of a university.

As a student support service, a Student Affairs strategy is typically developed to support the strategic direction of a university. One research participant summarised this principle, by saying that Student Affairs as a division is:

> …*one of the scaffolding legs for the university.*

Another research participant referred to their department that provide student support services:

> …*as a marketing tool,* for the university.

So, the findings suggest that the support service strategy of Student Affairs is formulated around supporting the strategic direction of a university.

4.3.2.2 Strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal).

Closely linked to the first principle of supporting the direction of a university, the enacted institutionalisation of strategic thinking, is ensuring alignment of Student Affairs to a university's vision and goals. For example, the UCT announced their Vision 2030 and subsequently, Student Affairs leadership of the same university, was talking about aligning their vision and objectives accordingly. In another university, a research participant summarised the strategy as follows:

> *Every year the university draws up what's called an annual performance plan. We then translate the annual performance plan, to an extended annual performance, which must then speak to the university's strategy, which is then further broken down and cascaded to individual departments.*

The other critical level of strategy alignment is what is called in this study, 'horizontal' alignment. One participant viewed horizontal alignment as an integration. She emphasised the *need to be integrated as an institution*. Further, giving a practical example she said:

> *they have their own vision in terms of delivering their academic service, but they must also understand there's also support that is needed outside that academic context.*

So the findings suggest that alignment is through Student Affairs constantly assimilating and interpreting the institutional vision, as well as striving to integrate the academic project with the support service endevours.

4.3.2.3 Strategic changes for composite support services and student-centred approaches

Horizontal strategy alignment is a lynchpin, for integrating the services under the Student Affairs umbrella and to ensure that the service offerings are student-centred for a complete student experience. When asked to discuss strategic changes in their Departments and Divisions, some participants emphasised the concept of what they called 'integrated services' or 'composite support services'. Paraphrasing the response of one participant, who narrated that if a student is homeless or cannot get residence accommodation due to issues of funding, the participant was able to negotiate with both the Student Housing and Student Funding departments to seek a synergised solution. The participant mentioned that this was possible if both these departments were integrated under Student Affairs, as opposed to each reporting to different executive line management. At a different university, another research participant who is a member of the executive management, echoed the same view and said:

> *If you have the services elsewhere and then you creating a situation where, when there are problems, it's awkward to resolve them, because those Divisions report elsewhere, but on the ground, students want answers from Student Affairs.*

Thus, the study noted a pattern of structural changes precipitated by the need to integrate support services, especially since Student Affairs is tasked with the

responsibility, among others, of mediating between student leadership and the support services departments, as well as the rest of the university in terms of engagements.

4.3.2.4 Multiple strategic alliances

The study revealed that Student Affairs formed alliances (or partnerships) in broadly two ways. The one way was internal (university-wide) alliances with other university units/departments (outside of Student Affairs) as well as with student structures. The second approach of building alliances for Student Affairs was through external alliances. These external alliances included, for example; services for mental health organisations, sports affiliations and student accommodation accreditation services. One example of an external alliance is cited below, which is a strategic decision for the university to mitigate the pressure and demand for student accommodation – a frequent source of protests (see Jansen, 2017). One participant explained it as follows:

> *… we go out and accredit off-campus accommodation. We don't provide them with a list and say, here are the students who are going to stay there. No, we just accredit, we just tell our students, listen here, these are okay places you can go and stay there, we undersign or cosign their standards and the quality.*

Due to lack of funding to build student accommodation residences on campuses, Student Affairs pursue an alternative strategy of building alliances with privately-owned student accommodation properties. Over decades, student accommodation has been a perennial challenge for higher education, in addition to socio-economic issues, because of the country's historical spatial planning, where the majority of universities are located in the cities and large sections of the population are located on the outskirts. (See also the demographics of the quantitative results that confirms this pattern). As a result in 2011, the South African government appointed a commission to investigate the phenomenon and recommendations were made to build more student accommodation but funding remained a challenge.

A different participant discussed how in their department within Student Affairs pursue the strategy of external alliances and the participant said:

…we use the SADAG line as a screening tool. So, the first contact if a student contacts us for therapy sessions, we put them in contact with SADAG and SADAG has that initial session instead of, you know, waiting for four to six weeks.

SADAG is an acronym for South African Depression and Anxiety Group (www.sadag.org), an organisation that deals with issues of mental health. SADAG joins alliances with universities through Student Affairs, in alleviating the excess pressure on the university Student Affairs staff (i.e., Student Counselling units) who often do not have sufficient resources to assist students. Mental health has also received due attention in higher education, but resources continue to be in short supply.

4.3.2.5 Strategic contribution to society

The findings also point to the existence of broader strategic thinking of Student Affairs leaders, in terms of the role they play or could play in the broader society. Generally worldwide, public HEIs are funded through the public fiscus, so, it is a necessity that leaders within the higher education sector use social systems thinking in their strategic plans and practices. Explaining how they contribute to national sports development, one participant proudly reflected on their role in provincial and national sports and said that:

…as [University X] we had a number of our students play netball league for [name of the province] teams… for us it is important to continuously ensure that we contribute to the national agenda, because we also look at how our students grow in terms of individual sports.

A different example is that of a research participant who posited that:

…the role of Student Affairs is to really calibrate a student leadership that will be globally competitive.

Demonstrating their broader strategic thinking, another research participant cautions that,

It's not just engaging on student issues at the campus or institutional level, but rather at a national level as well, because I think through FeesMustFall, we learned that sometimes we try to come up with an institutional cure for national flu, for lack of a better word.

This was an indication that the participant is conscious of the national issues at sectoral level and or at socio-economic level. The same participant concluded that:

Student Affairs is one [entity] ideally placed, to control, [and] to mediate what we do at campus level, [and] at national level. We must be in constant communications organizationally and at the national level of our student political organisations, SAUS and the higher education sector.

The rationale for thinking more broadly is that students come with many challenges that are at a societal level and there is always an interconnectedness between an individual student and the society from which they come. Therefore, strategically contributing to national priorities, which is a bigger society, is important, especially if Student Affairs claims to be creating a holistic experience for students.

The five principles for Student Affairs strategy formulation proposed and discussed above are each independent but also interlinked. Each principle shows how strategic thinking, strategy translation and enactment manifest for Student Affairs. The qualitative findings identified a common mission for Student Affairs, the strategy formulation principles, and the resources and capabilities typology, and the latter connects directly to the research questions and objectives. The resources typology is presented in the next section in a thematic format.

4.3.3 Main Results in Aggregated Themes

The previous section discussed results as they relate to the broader findings on support service strategy. This current section presents findings directly pertaining to the research questions of the study. The format of the results presentation is a form of themes that answer the main research question and some of the sub-questions. Table 4.2 below depicts the four themes that were developed through the analysis and theorising from a priori concepts and empirical data.

Table 4.2: Study findings themes

Theme 1: Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour
Theme 2: Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement
Theme 3: Finance and internet connectivity "biopower"
Theme 4: Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation

Source: Own compilation

The four themes are discussed in detail in the section below. In this section of the research report, the research sites are referred to, as University A, University B, University C, and University D, for the ethical and confidentiality considerations with regards to research participants and the involved universities. The letters of the alphabet do not represent any order of importance of a given university. Research participants' identities and job titles are not disclosed/used, but instead, participants are referred to as, e.g., Participant A (meaning participant from University A). In the participants' codes, a staff participant is indicated by an F and student participant indicated by a U and each participant is given a number under each research site. Words that give away clues about a research participant's name, or job title, or actual university, have been "redacted" *[redacted]* in this publication.

For each research site, the results are presented based on issues pertaining to the research questions. For ease of reference, the research questions for the present study were as follows:

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy in the context of Student Affairs?

SUB-QUESTIONS:

RSQ1: How do Student Affairs leaders define resources and capabilities?

RSQ2: How do Student Affairs leaders create value in resources and capabilities?

RSQ3: Which resources and capabilities attributes create value and sustainability for Student Affairs?

RSQ4: What do students understand to be the student affairs activities that create value for them?

RSQ5: What is the support service value, as perceived by students?

The results are reported through themes that were developed from the four cases (research sites). Therefore, each theme is discussed with a demonstration of how the study phenomenon of support service strategy manifests in the varying contexts of higher education. Themes were developed through a priori and emerging codes from the first order concepts. The move to second order categories through the axial analysis was mainly driven by the study's theoretical perspective as presented in the conceptual framework (table 2.5), as well as social theories as heuristics.

One strand of research results that is reported below, preceding the tabling of themes, sought to answer the research sub-question: **"How do Student Affairs leaders define resources and capabilities?"** Even though the latter research question was directed to staff participants, the researcher (influenced by the SDL of value co-creation theory) decided to also pose the question to student participants. The question of defining resources and capabilities was a bit of a vexing one for student research participants. They pondered and paused and some preferred to skip the question, while staff participants, albeit also pensively pondering on the question, responded more spontaneously. Figures 4.1 below provide the findings on how student research participants defined resources and capabilities.

Descriptive statements of resources and capabilities:

* Elements that are at my disposal.

* Facilities that I have at my disposal and available to me.

* Things that you are able to use when you need.

Consolidated definition of resources and capabililties:

Resources are elements available at my disposal for me to use when I need them.
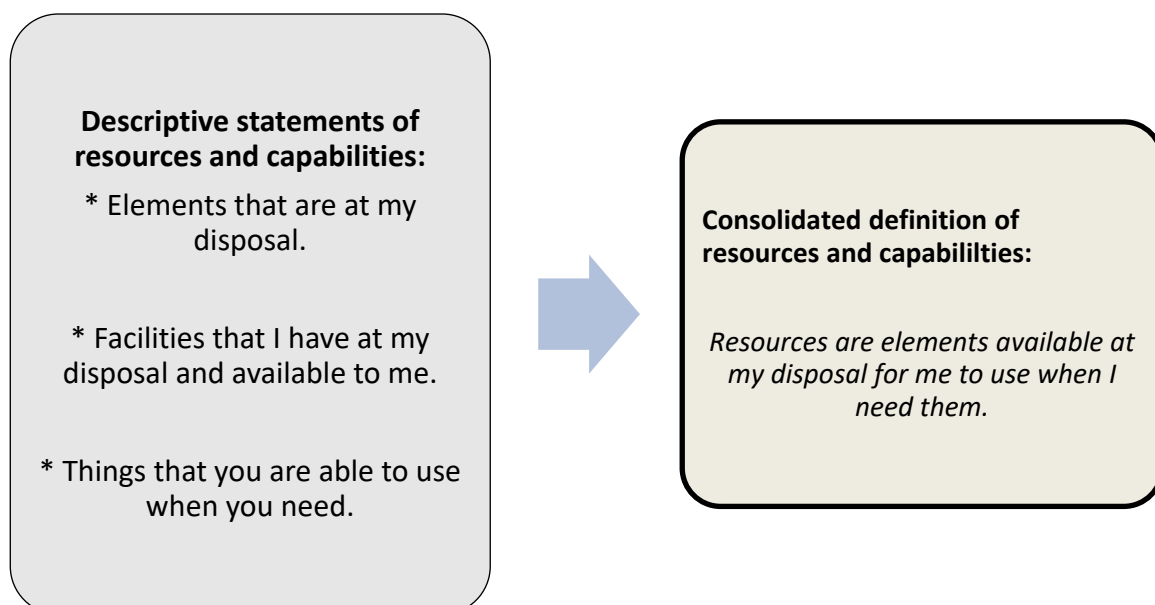
Figure 4.1: Student participants' definition of resources and capabilities

Source: Own compilation

Figure 4.2 displays how staff research participants defined resources and capabilities.

Descriptive statements of resources and capabilities:

* Something that enables the achievement of a mission and a vision.

* Anything that helps in delivering quality services.

* Something that adds value to the work we do.

Consolidated definition of resources and capabililties:

Something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achivement of a mission and vision.
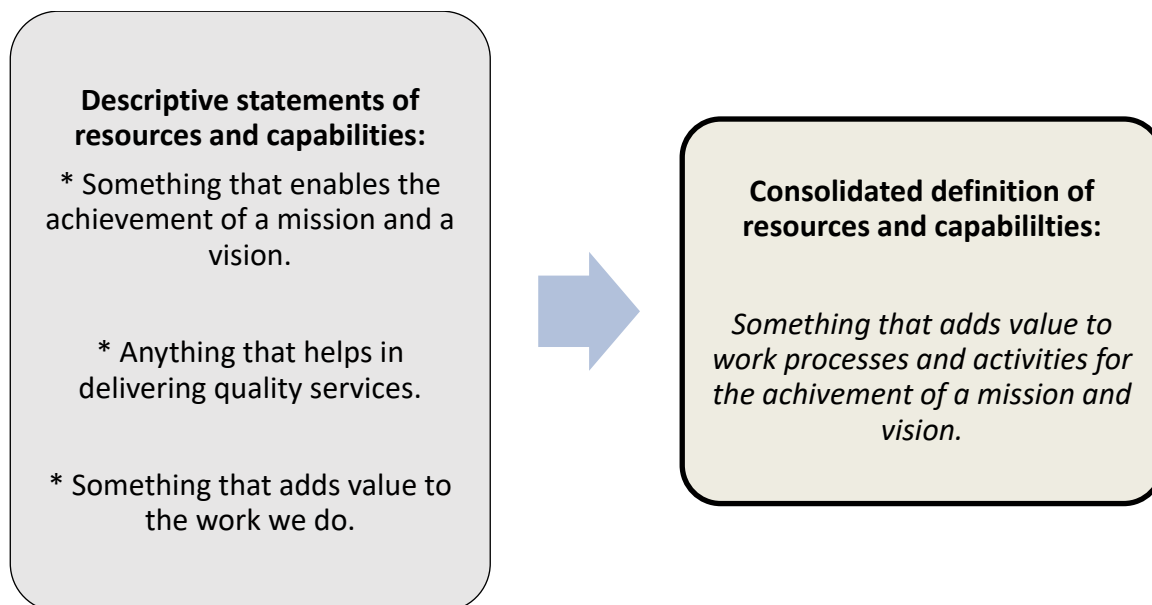
Figure 4.2: Staff research participants' definition of resources and capabilities

Source: Own compilation from data analysis

The combination and further interpretation of data from both student participants and staff participants provided a consolidated and parsimonious definition of resources and capabilities for support service. Resources and capabilities were defined as: "*something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of mission and vision".* The final definition may seem favouring staff participants' perspectives. However, what is expressed by student participants as "*elements available at my disposal for me to use"* is embedded in the something that adds value to activities. In line with the SDL, value is assumed to include value-in-use.

What follows is the unpacking of the resources and capabilities typological themes that were sculptured through the interpretation and categorisation of concepts around support service strategy.

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour

This theme is a constellation of two descriptive second-order concepts and four empirical attributes. The current theme captures the "what" and the "how" parts of the phenomenon. Theme 1 also has three sub-themes:

- "service exchange value and ethics"
- "research, fundraising, creativity and management"
- 'specialisation and in-house training academy".

As Braun and Clarke (2012) advise, themes should be related but not duplicated. Initially the sub-themes of Theme 1 were independent themes and upon further scrutiny they were collapsed into sub-themes because their attributes were captured under Theme 1. The construct, "professional behaviour", captures the first sub-theme. "Employee knowledge, and special skills" cover the other two sub-themes. An extract of the code template on the concepts of the sub-themes is depicted below, for the benefit of Student Affairs practitioners and support service managers.

Empirical concepts

Knowledge and critical Skills:

* Project Management

* Resources Management

* Financial Management

* Fund-raising skills

* Research skills

* Strategic thinking and communication

* Crisis management

Service "factory floor" knowlesdge and value attributes:

* Commitment

* Creativity

* Flexibility

* Responsiveness

* Respect and care

* Leadership academy

* Strength-based specialisation

Aggregated concepts(6)

* Project, Financial and resources Management

* Research and Fund-raising

* Strategic thinking, crisis management and Communication

* Service exchange and interactive qualities and value

* In-house academy

* Strength-based structuring

Theoretical Sub-Themes (3)

* Research, fund-raising, communication and managment

* Service exhange value and ethics

* Specialisation and in-house training.

Figure 4.3: Extract of the code template for sub-themes of theme 1

Source: Own compilation

Data from student participants on the current theme indicated a strong element of "employee behaviour", which was theorised as "service exchange value and ethics" (ethical conduct). This observation was important because support services are delivered in a context of constant interaction between service employees and students. The following discussion presents how Theme 1 was sculptured and manifested in a strong but unexpected pattern through the various cases (research sites).

University A case:

Discussing their understanding and experience of what are the critical resources and capabilities, the very first staff research participant (AF1) was very succinct in contributing to theme 1. Participant AF1's long service in the fraternity of Student Affairs could be attributed as a central factor of her eloquent articulation of what she

believed to be the critical support services resources and capabilities. The participant said:

> *…the first critical resource is qualified personnel, with the right mindset to be there, because if you haven't got that, you know, you can't just pull somebody off the street and say I'm making you a counsellor. They will run riot over people's feelings, they will be exposing their issues, no confidentiality or whatever, so, for me, when we say critical one, is our human resources, whether it's registered psychologists in the correct category, whether it's registered nurses with all the qualifications needed to do primary health care, dispensing certificates, etc.*

The participant made reference to people and skills consistently, for example when discussing the internal strengths of their department, her comment was:

> *I think that our strength is the quality of the staff that we have.*

Interestingly, Participant AF2 had a different take on the issue and said:

> *I would say, finance, here. It's a key resource and it's always not enough.*

Finance forms one of the main themes and is discussed later in this chapter. However, when the same participant (AF2) was expanding his discussion on capabilities, he advised that:

> *when you recruit, recruit based on knowledge, skill and ability and … we hire people that give us success.*

As if echoing their colleagues' views, Participant AF3 insisted that critical resources and capabilities are developed through:

> *ensuring that all divisions make quality appointments at various levels.*

This participant also gave examples and stated that:

> *[w]e require a social worker, as a resource, which will assess the level of need among students.*

Bringing in the notion of holistic approach, Participant AF3 made another example of critical resources and capabilities in a form of:

...trained nurses who can actually do counselling, as well as testing, treatment and post-testing in a holistic way.

This gives an example of what participants meant by 'quality appointments'. At this stage the code template seemed to be developing – meaning reaching some level of pattern on concepts being identified in the data corpus. However, Participant AF4 felt:

[i]n our situation, our critical resource, at this moment is funding. That's our critical resource.

This participant spoke about making use of temporary staff as a critical component of overcoming peak period demands, but in the end she was emphatic about finance being the main component.

Participant AF5 rejuvenated the previous pattern when discussing resources that are difficult to obtain for support services and pointed out that:

[p]eople are difficult to get. My biggest challenge is human resources.

This participant argued that the value in people manifests in:

Making service delivery much more efficient. Like, they give quality rather than just doing a job.

Participant AF6 brought the notion of what he termed *soft skills* to the discussion on critical resources and capabilities. Data from this participant enriched the code template. The participant elaborated as follows:

…mainly you are dealing with mostly crisis management, conflict management, you know there will be demands from the SRC regarding different issues, then you need people who are able to navigate during those kinds of challenging times.

This participant reiterated the concepts of skilled and professional personnel, because, as he continued:

sometimes you find students who are distressed. So, you, yourself should be strong enough to deal with those [students].

As if summarising or paraphrasing the views of the preceding participants, this last participant believed that:

> …when we develop recruitment processes, we make sure that we get people who are skilled enough on what is required.

The empirical concepts, categorised from the 'first-order concepts' (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013), interestingly overshadowed the a priori concepts in the first draft of the code template.

University B case:

At University B, in terms of Theme 1, one dataset provided a certain dimension that actually explained the issue of inconsistent employee behaviour prevalent in the student participants' data. Participant BF1 reflected her experience as follows:

> …in my [Unit] because we are constantly […inaudible…] working with student governance and SRC, so we find that we have, you know, positive relationships working with our student leaders. We find that for others it seems that those relationships between staff and students, especially with the SRC are almost a lot more confrontational. Yeah, so, it really depends on which, like I say, you know which [department/unit] you're in.

These data put emphasis on the inter-relational skills needed for the context of Student Affairs, which ties in with the previous case (University A). On other specific skills that were critical, Participant BF1 said:

> …we're expected to write 1000 reports, to crisis-manage and to be strategic.

The participant elaborated as follows:

> I think skills base for our staff as Student Affairs, I mean our boss always talks about being agile, I definitely agree. I think we almost have to be, as Student Affairs, you know you have to be everywhere, you have to be switched on, you need to know what the trends are, you need to be able to respond very quickly and be proactive at the same time. So, I think, to have the right skill set. And I mean there's probably a range of skills that I'm not even mentioning that we need to have as other capabilities for us to have our research data

and have capability of data analytics and being able to make data driven decisions, and not just rely on what we've done in the past, etc. For me, the big challenge is how to balance this thing of being able to be strategic and you also have to deal with the operations and sometimes those two can clash and this thing about you know, crisis management versus having the time to reflect and to write papers and we're always talking about, oh, we need to publish.

Participant BF2 pointed out what she found to be one of the valuable employee attributes, especially when it comes to crisis management. The participant cited a few major crises that affected their campus. The participant's reflection was:

In terms of the people working in our team, I think one of the things that I've noticed, is the degree of flexibility. I think that for me, is about not looking narrowly at your job description, but looking more at the needs in a broader sense. So that's the kind of staff that I think would add value.

Participant BF 2 concluded by saying:

I think the qualities of staff is, is really to look holistically at the students, to be responsive and adaptive. To also be able to do the research is also good because they begin to understand what the student needs are, but also ongoing engagement.

Speaking about her staff members with special skills and those needed to respond to emergencies, Participant BF3 shared the following:

…they run a 24 hour service over weekends, public holidays and so on. But every night, they are doing the night shift rotation, so they attend to any crisis that we have on campus and particularly supporting the students in the residences and also those that also live nearby campus, even if it's not a [name of university] residence, they respond to [redacted] emergencies and respond also to the current crisis of COVID, which is why we all haven't had some sleep. If you heard me saying, I am exhausted, I'm frontline person too.

Data from Participant BF4 presented a different view on people but brought in a nuance that is critical in the present study. The theoretical resources perspective

such as the resource-based theory places human capital resources (Barney, 1991) as one of the central pillars of the theoretical concepts. Participant BF4 strongly argued that:

> …the idea of the resources is very controversial. I'm raising that from, I mean I studied human resources and the moment you classify people, you make people to be cost, right? If we're talking about resources, it should be anything but humans. Okay. We then see them as human beings in the space, not as resources, because if they are resources then we use them as such. And then of course you know resources have no soul.

So, as we have heard from BF2 that:

> [there's a] kind of staff that I think would add value,

data from Participant BF4 nudges us further to focus on how value can be created by people as opposed to their being thought of as resources themselves. In fact, Barney (1991:101) pointed out that "human capital resources, include; training, experience, judgement, of individual managers and workers". Deciphering the concept of human capital, Schultz (1964:1) observed that "[a]lthough it is obvious that people acquire useful skills and knowledge, it is not obvious that these skills and knowledge are a form of capital, that this capital is in substantial, part a product of deliberate investment".

However, what the present research data show is that in addition to the requisite employees' skills and experience, managerial acumen is critical in leveraging value. As Participant BF4 concluded:

> …people, they are the nerve centre and heartbeat of this space. They're the nerve centre of the institution. I can tell you now, when people feel that they're accepted and they are valued, they go the extra mile without you asking them.

So, the latter data point to the possibility that in addition to skills and experience, people have a greater value potential if you have the right managerial acumen to unearth and harness the value in them.

Data from University B showed a pattern on the current theme, with emphasis on the concepts of interpersonal skills in terms of working with the SRCs, crisis

management skills, strategic management skills, research and data analytics skills, as well as the importance of managerial skills.

University C case

Data from University C showed stability on the code template for the current theme, with a seamless pattern around the importance of people (or people being the nerve centre) in the support services. Similar to the BF4, Participant CF1 stressed that:

> *…people are central to the process. It takes human interaction aspect of things to be a Student Affairs practitioner. You must have compassion to begin with. You must really, your heart must be in it, because on a day-to-day basis we affect directly our student lives. So, the role that people play in the space, I mean, I can't quantify it, it's too important.*

The participant continued and shared what he believed to be some of the critical skills attributes for employees in his context, saying the following:

> *…you need compassionate and passionate people, when you're working in this space, but in terms of skills as well. One, because we're in a space of advocacy, the ability to interact with students is important. So, the stronger a speaker you are, the better, is basically what in my experience I've seen. You need also to be well versed in terms of your ability to formulate policies in the space.*

Similar to Participant BF4 who declared that people are the nerve centre, Participant CF2 said:

> *…you know, people are my energy. And I always tell them that this department will thrive because of you. I value my people so much that I even partner with them whether it's research. I value everybody's skills…*

Participant CF3 echoed the previous sentiments about the role of employees in Student Affairs, which is a pattern that became an unexpected dominant theme. This is what the participant said:

Well, I view people as the most important asset of any organisation. We embrace a strengths-based approach. So, we focus on the strengths of people, the uniqueness of people, what they bring to the environment and how to harness that and amplify that for the benefit of the team.

Data from Participant CF3 suggest that people bring something to work setting and what they bring needs to be harnessed and amplified in order to generate value. The participant continued:

The person in himself as a person is valuable and precious and should be treated as such, always with dignity and honour and respect. If everybody understands that their unique role is important to make the whole system work, then people feel valued, also in terms of the functionality and what we try to achieve together.

The latter data further point to the centrality of the managerial role and capabilities in facilitating the manifestation of value in employees. The participant concluded by saying:

Everybody's talking about the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Very few people are talking about the fifth industrial revolution. The fifth industrial revolution entails the human component that you need to bring back. You need to have humans and I believe Student Affairs need to professionalise much more. We need to professionalise the environment.

Participant CF4 had this to say around the current theme, suggesting that managerial capabilities are an impetus to creating value in the services delivered:

I believe in what Richard Branson said, as a leader he always says that if you look after your staff, they will look after your clients. If you look after your people, they will be motivated… if I make sure that people are listened to, you know, they actually come back with ideas and they feel listened to and they might be more rested and they have more energy and motivation to take care of students.

Participant CF4 continued the thread of emphasising the importance of people, just like participant BF4 from the previous research site, who said that

people are the heartbeat of this space.

In terms of how managerial skills are employed in tapping into value of people, the following statement from participant CF4, suggested that inculcating professionalism and ethical behaviour acts as an impetus for consistent employee behaviour:

…with our department, burnout is extremely high too, for variety of reasons. It's that physical pressure of just not having enough time and then in your head, you know, you see the student coming in and you're like, I have no idea how I'm gonna see this student but you're professionally and ethically bound to make a plan.

Data from Participant CF5 also indicated a pattern from other datasets in this and other research sites, but also emphasised consultation and or a consensus-seeking approach as another managerial skill for support services. This is what the participant said:

People? Look, I won't exist, if they are not there. They are co-workers. And we will have discussions as equals, I will eventually as the senior manager in the department, I will take the lead and I will eventually make the call, If need be, but I've learned, if you can manage through consensus, it's much better.

Participant CF6 then provided a summary of the desired attributes of employees as human capital, which is in line with the resource-based theory literature. The participant went on to specify what he viewed as human capital. This is what participant CF6 said:

Within your space, you must be able to identify talent. And if you're able to identify talent, you must make use of that talent. There are people within your space that are orators and there are people within your space that are writers that could develop great documentation. You must be able to identify them. So, you also have researchers in the space. So, within a space, there's human capital

Data of the current theme from University C formed a firm pattern around the importance of employees, managerial skills to unearth value in employees and specific desired attributes of employees, as well as the concept of professionalism and ethics (ethical conduct).

University D case

Data from University C supported Theme 1 with some level of code saturation of the empirical concepts – which is regarded as a state where no more new data emerges around the thematic concepts. However, data from University D provided further insights. For example, Participant DF1 listed certain employee desired values and also shared how they support employees in ensuring that they create a motivating environment. Speaking about the values they expect from employees, Participant DF1 said:

> *…communication is key. Yeah, honesty. Yeah, transparency and trust. So, it's better to be with your team on a daily basis, or maybe once a week, so that I can see what's happening again, even when they need something.*

In terms of managerial skills to leverage value in people, Participant DF2 also adds her contribution on the thematic pattern, as follows:

> *Being a leader, I have to say I'm also led. But the role of the people I lead is something I take very seriously, because I usually say to them, don't forget that It's like you are holding me in the position that I am, for me to be in front, for me to be shining, it's actually you who are actually shining. So supporting them is paramount to me.*

Data from Participant DF2 further emphasised how managerial skills are employed to ensure employee value. This is how she explained it in detail:

> *I believe it is in nurturing the relationship that you are actually ensuring that the service will be provided. Service provision is done by individuals and not instruments. So, it is the nature of a service industry that unfortunately it's the way it is, I mean if for example, you're CEO of a service company, the receptionist, the cleaner, it's your face, it's representing your dream. So, if you want them to actually implement your dream, you have to make sure that they*

understand your vision and actually understand the role and importance that they play, however menial [basic], so, service industries are like that. You have to make sure that people see your vision and then can carry it out in their respective areas.

Participant DF3 suggested a different approach to leveraging value in employees and mainly focused on high performance leadership style, but also reflected on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced their relations with employees. She explained her managerial experiences as follows:

I'm results oriented. But my biggest weakness is that if people don't do it, I do it myself. And in a way it cripples their growth. But I want things done, I don't want reasons why it has not been done. It's probably because of my exposure in [redacted], because I've done a lot in [redacted] in this country. And given the fact that I was exposed to and I was part of the [redacted]. So, what I learned in that era is that you never move deadlines but you move yourself and a lot of people tend to always want to move deadlines.

The participant spoke about the concept of accountability in terms of performance management and gave practical examples, as follows:

I think for me, coming to work for [name of university] was a blessing because at [name of university] there's a whole lot of accountability. In general, we contract and we contract on deliverables. And last week I did my performance appraisal with my boss where we said, Okay, you agreed on XYZ and have you delivered? Then I went Yes, I've delivered on one, two, three, four, but I failed on five and six.

Data from Participant DF3 suggested that self-reflection is also critical in appropriately judging the environment and innovating new ways of managing or using different managerial skills. This is how the participant summarised the different managerial styles:

…change management requires a versatile leader. It's all about conversations because a lot of leaders want to impose change to their people. I think it's about the different styles of leadership. You can't always be a dictator. And you can't always be democratic, you need to weigh situations.

Participant DF3 concluded by reflecting on how COVID-19 pandemic had an influence on their view of employees and said:

It [COVID-19 pandemic] challenged a lot of us in different ways, both professionally and personally. It required me as a leader particularly to trust my staff. When we said people are working from home, I needed to trust that they are working. And I needed to trust that they are sending the necessary [redacted] programmes to students.

Data from University D indicated a similar pattern on the importance of people and how they should be motivated and given impetus to deliver value and the managerial skills that emerged included; transparency, communication, trust and nurturing relationships.

The next discussion presents the findings on how Theme 1 manifested on the various research sites (the four universities under study) from student participants' data.

4.3.3.1.2 Theme 1 from students' data at University A:

The concepts from University A student participants' data, that relate or support Theme 1 (**Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour),** are discussed below. The concepts are summarised on Table 4.3. These are first-order concepts.

Table 4.3: Staff beharioural attributes as perceived by students at University A

People (staff) attributes related concepts from students at University A
• People who are professional
• Listening, as a service attribute
• People who love their jobs
• Hiring the right people
• People with passion and care
• People with proper qualifications

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

When discussing resources, capabilities and value, employee attributes were ubiquitous in the student participants' language. The above concepts are categorised from various students' interview data from case 1. These concepts culminated into Theme 1. The only difference was that when the theme was tested on students'

data, it ended with the aggregated concept "employee behaviour", instead of professional behaviour. The construct of employee behaviour was then merged into professional behaviour.

One student participant (AU1) lamented the inconsistent employee behaviour within the Division of Student Affairs at University A. This participant said that:

> …staff, the problem is with their personalities, but some departments such as Student [redacted] Department staff have positive attitudes and helpful.

The personnel attributes were portrayed by this and other participants as both negative and positive and student participants often apportioned blame to perceived lack of care, lack of qualifications, wrong people in jobs and inconsistencies in their behaviour. On the issue of inconsistent professional behaviour, another participant (AU2) spoke about the services at the Student Health Clinic and said:

> So, there's one nurse at [redacted] campus. So, the question from the students was that the nurse from [redacted] campus [different campus] is more polite, is more nice, so they preferred the [redacted] campus nurse. So, my perception would be entirely dependent on their staff. There's no consistency. It's dependent on who you find at that time and their mood, you don't find the same treatment. If you find such moody people then there is no value. Staff members should separate their feelings and leave them at home.

As Davenport and Prusack (2009:2) argued that "data describe only a part of what happened; it provides no judgement or interpretation", the researcher interpreted this data as pointing to the importance of personnel attributes as valuable resources for the context of Student Affairs service exchange. The last sentence in the above extract is one of the interpretive indicators that what was initially interpreted as staff behaviour in Theme 1, can be amalgamated into the professional behaviour construct of the theme under discussion.

A different student participant (AU3) summarised the issue of employee behaviour sympathetically and said:

Ah, they are good people, generally. But as we all know, somebody is gonna have that day where they are just off, so, it's not gonna be all fine and all good every day.

It can be concluded therefore, that if employee behaviour is classified under the positive elements, it then becomes perceived as professional.

Other participants continued to report their views and experiences that connect to the current theme, and participant AU4 continued with the pattern under this theme and said:

[t]he way they treat us is not consistent.

Bringing in a new dimension which was theorised in this study as 'employee attributes, participant AU4 says;

…they will not listen to you, I don't think as an ordinary student, they will listen to you and us as the SRC still have a problem about [Name of the department] and [Name of the department], especially the [Staff Job title] – they just have a problem with us. So, as an ordinary student, they won't listen to you.

A different participant (AU5) added a different dimension and complained that there was:

So, much disrespect. Yeah, it's not a place where students will be comfortable to go to.

Lastly, the need for qualifications on support service employees was emphasised and participant AU6 was emphatic that they need:

…people who have qualifications, proper qualifications. Even to be [one of the positions in residences] position, you need to be a master's candidate.

In summary, at University A, data from student participants suggested that knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour are central to the development of critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. While the need for qualifications was highlighted, the employee professional attributes were central to the data pattern.

4.3.3.1.3 Theme 1 from students' data at University B:

Data from student participants at Universty B supported Theme 1, but with different concepts compared to student participants' data from University A. The concepts from student participants' data at University B, which relate or support Theme 1 (**Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour)** and its sub-theme, are discussed below. Table 4.4 lists the concepts that were deemed to be related to the current theme and these concepts are both in first-order and second-order status, because the code template from Case 1 (previous site) and Interview 1 of Case 2 (current site) was still developing.

Table 4.4: Staff attributes as perceived by students at University B

People (staff) attributes related concepts from students at University B
• Professional
• Ethical
• They are so understanding
• Service (in)consistency
• They respond well to a crisis

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

At University B, throughout the coded data and the actual interview scripts, data from the participant BU1 did not match the template from the previous case (University A). The participant spoke a lot about their dissatisfaction about the support service, giving examples such as the following:

> *…some of the departments like the department that deals with student registration and admin, I mean I've sent some of the emails since last semester and one of the departments only got back to me in the second semester. So, what value is that I mean.*

However, new concepts of crisis management skills emerged from the subsequent participants' data and it developed as a pattern. Crisis management skills is one of the attributes supportive of construct "specials skills" from Theme 1. While participant BU2 lamented the general quality of support services, they consistently commended the Student Affairs on how they handled crises and said,

[they are] very proactive when it comes to crisis like that incident that happened a few months ago… they came together, students, [and] management staff came together to assist those students with food,[and] provided accommodation for them… also another issue of gender-based violence issues, about the [victim]. We know that the lady [redacted], they were also very proactive in providing support for not just her family, but other students who knew her and provided them with counselling for that period of time, so, yeah.

A different participant (BU3) added that:

…in terms of crisis, the executive [management] loves to handle those and to be seen to, most importantly, to be seen as most appropriate.

The construct 'proactive' also emerged as a dimension of how crisis management skills are employed. From participant BU3, concepts relating to employee behaviour and special skills started to emerge. Speaking about one of the Student Affairs departments, the participant commented that:

…my experience with the nurses, was quite good. They do take some time to ask you some questions or whether you smoke or like check your weight, so, they can be able to give you the right type of [type of medication]. I think the attitude and how they do their work is good. I have no bad experience with it.

The data reveal that the value of resources is on the "how" and less of the "what"; in other words, how the work is carried out, thus contributing to the concept of professional behaviour.

The pattern of employee behaviour was quite salient in data and even when participants spoke a lot about chaos in the registration process as portrayed by a participant. Data pointed to the "how" the service is delivered or perceived to have been delivered. For example, Participant BU4 said:

…they made me wait and wait and wait and wait, they didn't even offer me a chair. And that was, you know, that was disturbing. It was frustrating.

So, even though the waiting might have been inevitable, but seemingly being offered a chair would have lessened the frustration. Adding to the notion of professional behaviour, another participant (BU5) remembered that:

> *…as a young student you felt judged when you go for birth control [at the campus health facility].*

Other empirical examples of what student participants from various cases, felt to be an employee judgmental behaviour are too sensitive to publish and hence a sub-theme named 'service exchange values and ethics' was created.

Participant BU5 commended that:

> *I know what I'm paying for, I see what I'm paying for. The help is available*,

However, another participant (BU6), referring to support services departments, felt that:

> *[t]hey are not very interactive or receptive.*

A different participant (BU7) thought:

> *staff was understanding of my situation. [Departments] such as the financial aid one, they were very effective and they were very helpful. I can see they assisted me each and every time.*

What comes out as a thread is the notion of "interactiveness", "receptive" and "understanding" a student's situation or service need. This explains the dynamics of the support service exchange context. Participant BU8 summarised their experience of support service employees as follows:

> *…very professional, always trying and striving to assist students, they respond well to crisis. They always try to ensure that students' safety comes first before anything else.*

Data from student participants at University B supported the theme and introduced new interpretive concepts such as ethical behaviour and crisis management, which added to the code template from University A.

4.3.3.1.4 Theme 1 from students' data at University C:

Data from University C's student participants was in support of Theme 1, with strong resemblance to University A case. The concepts from University C student participants' data that relate to or support Theme 1 (**Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour)** and its sub-theme, are discussed below. Table 4.5 lists the concepts that were deemed to be related to the current theme. These concepts are both in first-order and second-order status.

Table 4.5: Staff behavioural attributes as perceived by students at University C

People (staff) attributes related concepts from students at University C
• Friendliness and professionalism
• Support staff, they are really passionate about students and about helping them
• People that are really willing to go out of their way to help you as far as they can
• Inconsistent level of service by service employees
• Service employee personality
• Negative staff attitudes
• Showing interest to help and care
• To read their faces and see sincerity

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

Employee behaviour continued to emerge with strong attributes and thus gave insight into the sources of valuable resources and capabilities for support services. What Eisenhardt (2021) would call 'replication logic' became prominent in Theme 1, as the study reached University C, as can be seen in Table 4.5.

Starting with the concept of service (in)consistency, participant CU1 gave an example of how 'a front of house support service' of a department under Student Affairs discouraged the participant to explore the service further. The participant said:

> *I didn't even bother [to use the service] because of the atmosphere in the way I was welcomed the first time I called [Name of department]. What's the point of me opening up to her? What's the point because already, she's kind of, she gave me a cold shoulder. So, I don't even bother to call them. So, I never. From that day I didn't even use their services, even if they email us about the [redacted]. I just ignore it. So that is the case with me.*

Explaining the impact of staff behaviour, participant CU2 concluded that:

> …students cry because of what happens with attitude from the admin staff.

A different participant (CU3) put it bluntly and said:

> …they see some sort of commodity, not people, if we have an outstanding fee, they will just deregister you.

Participant CU4 separated between what they called admin staff and Support service staff and said:

> …support services department carries a totally different atmosphere and attitude as compared to the administrative. Support Service feels like a different building altogether even though there are in the same yard with the admin services, they are friendly to engage.

Because the interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown period where many support services were offered online, the researcher asked for student experiences in interacting with support service staff online. Participant CU5 described the service interaction and commented that:

> it's better to go see someone face to face, to read their face and see how it is, to see if they're actually sincere in helping you.

This indicated that students are not passive during the service delivery and that they are very serious about monitoring "how" the service is delivered by individual employees. Participant CU5 concluded that:

> support staff, they are really passionate about students and about helping them.

Another participant concurred with the positive element of student support and said,

> …because they know that mental health was quite, you know, an isolation, is a big issue with big factors. I think they've done well, especially for us postgraduate students and just availing a wide range of services to choose from.

Participant CU6 recalled that the support services were inconsistent in terms of employee behaviour and mentioned that:

> *…my experience in the [Name of Department]. Yeah, this year when I came, I had a problem again on my [redacted]. And I just went, just trying because I knew that the other time I went there, they refused. I tried to explain the situation, it was impossible for me to get assistance. So, this year, I went there again. I don't know whether the problem is who is on duty and who is not, the character or the personality of the person, I don't know. I could have asked why I'm being able to get the help, whereas the other time I was told that I didn't book.*

The concepts and data from University C seem to support Theme 1, especially in terms of professional behaviour, but also the sub-theme attributes of the "service exchange values and ethics".

4.3.3.1.5 Theme 1 from student participants' data at University D

Data from University D's student participants was in support of Theme 1, with strong similarities to University A and University C cases. However, there were also nuanced concepts that the data revealed for University D, such as the need for indigenous language in services as well as employee training. The concepts from University D student participants' data that relate to or support Theme 1 (**Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour)** and its sub-theme, are discussed below. Table 4.6 lists the concepts that were deemed to be related to the current theme. These concepts are in both first- and second-order status.

Table 4.6: Staff behavioural attributes as perceived by students at University D

People (staff) attributes related concepts from students at University D
• Listening and answering all the questions
• Professional; having good manners and respect
• Friendliness, welcoming and having empathy
• Crisis management diligence
• Service employee inconsistent behaviour
• Employees viewed as lazy on Fridays
• Need for training of staff
• Value of indigenous languages in support services
• Employee training deficiencies: on communication

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

At University D, the code template for Theme 1 seemed to have matured, albeit the research site also yielded nuanced insights.

The concepts of "listening" and "inconsistent employee behaviour" continued to be salient, with one participant (DU1) narrating their experience as follows:

> *I was having problems with my NSFAS and I was not attended to, my concerns were not attended. I was not being listened to, so, I brought a representative, SRC representative and that is when they decided to help me.*

The same participant brought in a new dimension on Theme 1 when they shared the experience they had with another support department in terms of the impact of indigenous languages and politeness. The participant narrated the cordial relations as follows:

> *You say Sawubona malume [Zulu greeting] at the [support service staff] and they will respond and say 'Mshana [niece/nephew], how are you?' When it comes to staff, yeah, they're very polite.*

During member-checking process the above participant specifically requested that their gender not be specified in this report.

A different participant (DU2) also reported that lack of indigenous languages in the delivery of support services hinders the use of such services. The participant explained as follows:

I know, but sometimes for us, from where I come from the problem is that for us, it's hard to talk about our things to other people. I would say it is a language [barrier] because for me I don't want to say a black person, but someone who would understand my struggles, not someone who's been privileged, who won't relate to what I'm going through. And the fact that you know when you are in the dark space, I can't use English, it's better to use my mother tongue, so, language was also an issue.

On inconsistent behaviour, participant DU2 explained that:

…if you go there early, it's okay. But like late, around, half past two (14h30) they want to leave. It's like it's horrible. But most of the time you do get helped. They're so, I would say lazy sometimes, especially on Fridays. Another employee who knows his duty, they will listen to everything you have to say.

Participant DU3 echoed the same sentiments as the previous participant, reiterating the concepts that had a strong pattern for the current theme:

…sometimes you may find someone with a bad attitude. And then someone who is cool and friendly. I think they must change their manners on how to deal with students and how they communicate with students with respect. I think they must have a meeting or and some training for staff because sometimes the workers there who are, it's like they are not willing to help. Some of those workers seem like they don't care about and not serious about service delivery.

Related to the issue of 'staff training', raised by the previous participant, participant DU4 shared the experiences of others that he read about on social media and narrated it as follows:

I've never been to [Name of Department] because on the social media platform like you, I saw people saying that may be they are incompetent at [Name of Department], they don't give advice that you truly need, because I've seen some post where they say you must first forgive yourself.

The same participant continued to share their experience, raising other concepts pertaining to the current theme that were showing signs of theoretical saturation. The participant said that;

> *[Name of the Department], people always have problems about them. They have nasty attitudes. It's as if they don't even know their job. Students even know that if I go there, I just have to prepare myself for a nastier attitude they'll give me. You just know that, yeah, they will bash me. Because many students are crying. Those people, it's as if they don't have children, they don't have empathy left in them.*

The next participant (DU5) continuing where the previous ones left off, on the interaction dynamics and emphasised that:

> *they should train their staff, on how to communicate with students. There should be respect between staff and students.*

On a more a positive note, the same participant commented that:

> *I think they are very diligent when it comes to crisis management. I remember one event there was a strike.*

This participant also said:

> *…student counselling for me was more helpful to me and more interesting, because it helped me in so many ways.*

Student participants' data indicated a repetitive pattern of concepts that supported Theme 1 and reflected a number of concepts that are also attributes of the sub-theme "service exchange values and ethics".

4.3.3.1.6 Theme 1 summary

On the whole, data from both groups of research participants (staff and students) reflected similarities in terms of the important role of employees in support services, the important skills, knowledge, personal attributes and values. Professionalism was strong in staff participants' data, while both professionalism and ethical behaviour were strong from student participants' data. The next discussion is on Theme 2 of the findings.

4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement

The theoretical phenomenon for the present study is support service strategy and therefore the concept of 'leadership' is central, in that, strategic thinking is about conceptualising a vision and direction, which begets a service strategy. Strategy formulation and management always involve introducing, responding and/or championing 'change'. Another construct of Theme 2 that emerged with strong patterns and nuanced empirical attributes was titled 'empowered engagement'. The latter construct is covered in multiple ways under Theme 2; for example, Student Affairs is tasked with the responsibility of student development and leadership training. In the present study, student development and leadership training is viewed as a way of 'empowering' students with leadership skills. Student development is an a priori concept as depicted in the conceptual framework. Student Affairs develops various cohorts of students through orientation, mentorships and related programmes aimed at empowering students with information on campus life. The leadership training, orientation and mentorship programmes influence the agency of students at individual and group levels. Students are empowered to handle the transition from high school to campus life and also to enhance decision-making capacity. On the other hand, Student Affairs facilitates the establishment and support for student leadership structures, as well as mediations and negotiations between student leaders and university management. The establishment of structures empowers students to have a representative voice in the governance of universities. The construct "empowered engagement" also indicates the institutionalised power that students often employ as organised groups, political structures and movements in pursuing their needs. The construct "empowered engagement" also demonstrates how valuable resources of support service exchange are developed. Table 4.7 presents the concepts for empowered engagement as a sub-theme.
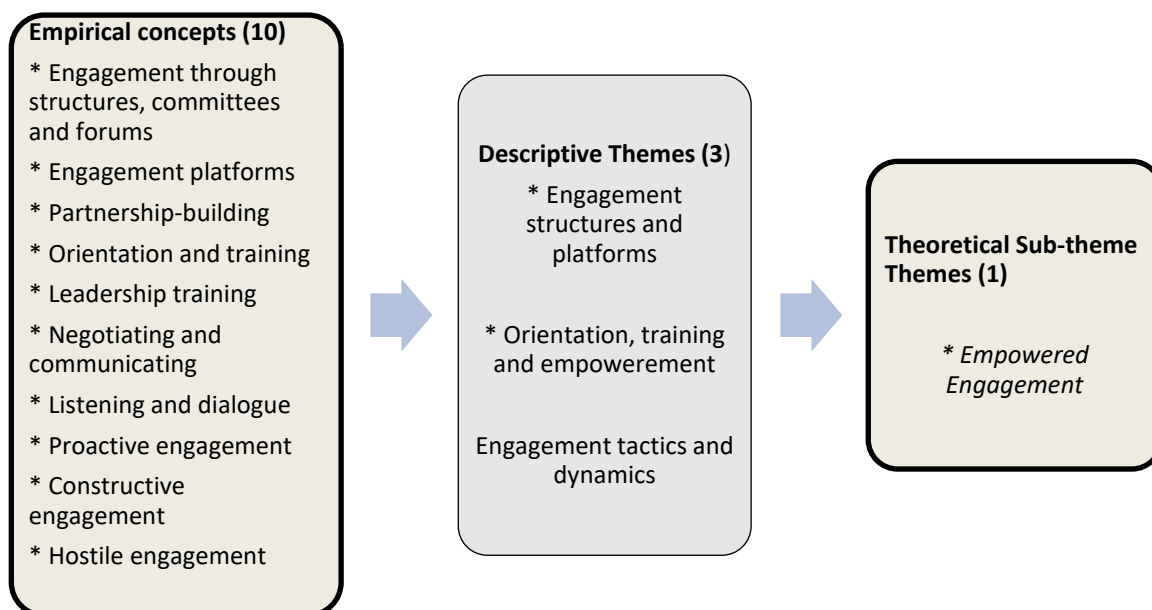
Figure 4.4: Empirical concepts and descriptive themes for Empowered Engagement concept.

Source: Own compilation

Staff participants interviewed were all in leadership positions and they shared their experiences that interpretively reflected their leadership styles, as well as the experiences of change they had gone through over the years in higher education. For example a few participants spoke about university mergers which was replete with structural changes and politics and almost 20 years later, how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced their leadership approach. Between the waves of mergers and pandemics, they also reflected on their leadership experiences during the intervening years of student national protests. All of these landmark events had an immense impact on their resources and capabilities.

4.3.3.2.1 Theme 2 at the various cases (research sites)

University A case

Staff research participants were urged to reflect on their experiences of change and the perceived effect on the departments they lead. Aspects that emerged from data in this regard, included; what a participant called "team-based leadership", which was necessary to harmonise the campuses discrepancies of the merger, as well as the synergies necessary to handle the campus instabilities, crises, and COVID-19

pandemic challenges. When reflecting on the forces of the merger, participant AF1 said:

> *When we merged, unfortunately, people thought that the merger would, what can I say, merging with a former non-white institution is going to be detrimental.*

Mergers and alliances are well-known concepts in strategic management literature, but data indicate a nuance South African higher education context where mergers were imposed nationally as a government policy to address historical landscapes.

Speaking about their department, participant AF1 said that:

> *the [redacted] support structures had to be combined, so that we holistically provide a service.*

The participant termed this holistic approach*, "composite service".* The concept of holistic or composite service approach echoed across other research sites, especially when it came to structural changes. As a result of the holistic approach adopted in the context, this participant (AF1) declared that:

> *…my philosophy is team-based. That is going to be the leadership [approach] of the century. You can't have that hero leader, or that charismatic leader, because there's no one person that can provide everything. It is the contribution of the team.*

Emphasising their agile leadership approach, participant AF1 further said:

> *After all these years Sifiso and you can support me on this. Always be prepared for the unexpected. We actually say, well in this month, you know there's likely to be some problems so, let's move it. So, we allow for that flexibility.*

Due to inevitability of change in the research context, participants had internalised the principle of change and thus viewed themselves as change agents, especially in terms of engagement with student leaders. Participant AF2 explained their role as follows:

…we make sure we keep in our thinking around the university strategic goals and try to make sure that students are the champions of strategy, like for example, I think two weeks ago we looked at the strategy of [University A], so, we developed a programme to educate student leaders to infuse this strategy in their everyday activities.

There was no relevant data on this theme from Participant AF3. Participant AF4 summarised engagement as:

A sort of interaction with student body through their elected leadership.

The engagement process in Student Affairs generally appeared to have two forms. The one form was educational and informative and the other form was mediation and negotiation. The former type of engagement manifested in various ways including orientation, mentorship, training and coaching. One example of educational and empowerment engagement was in the statement by participant AF2, who said:

…recently, we developed, or I mean we launched, a student leadership academy, in response to leadership deficits, you know, in our institution.

Participant AF4 also spoke about the leadership academy and linked its objectives to a bigger mission beyond the institution, which is a sign of a broader or societal change stewardship:

We have also set up a leadership academy. Although that leadership academy is not necessarily a feeder school for the SRC, but our vision is to try and make our contribution in a small way towards developing future leaders. So, the leadership academy is also there to infuse ideas around civic education.

The mediation and negotiation type of engagement was discussed by participants and one of them (AF1) spoke from the angle of student experience and said:

…the student experience is also where they are going to start testing the wings, you know, in terms of wanting to be contrary to the establishment.

The same participant (AF1), however, argued that:

> *It [engagement] needs to be done in a way, where they are engaged, where the engagement is also to listen and not just to be heard.*

A different participant (AF4) expands the discussion of engagements and explained the engagement efforts and facilitation by Student Affairs leaders and said:

> *We've also collaborated with other units in a university like your [redacted], particularly after the recent unrest, where we need to up our game in terms of trying to dissuade students from violent environments, now you'll recall that [redacted] was regarded as a student protest [redacted], because you will always have strikes [redacted], on an annual basis, we're working to improve the situation overall. Now, we are trying. We have not been successful, like everybody else, but we are trying to reduce that by opening forums for engagements with student leadership. What we call constructive engagement, until we find ourselves.*

There was no data relevant to this Theme from Participant AF5. When asked about their view on weaknesses in Student Affairs, participant AF6 said:

> *the issue of merger in most universities. I don't think the merger has been managed quite well.*

What emerges as a perennial merger relic for these participants is that they manage multiple campuses with different historical backgrounds. Participants spoke with a hint of fatigue when reflecting on the changes. Participant AF6 said:

> *…to survive all the changes that have been happening in the higher education sector you know, your #FeesMustFall, your free-fee higher education, you know, because it brings more students wanting [type of support service].*

However, the structural changes over the years, were also seen to have positive results at a higher level.

In their reflection of engagement dynamics, participant AF6 also portrayed the engagement atmosphere to be a challenging one as follows:

…we have to be quite open, engage our students and be transparent. So that is one thing I've observed and there's still that culture that says, we are staff members and students on other side and SRC on the other side and that creates a kind of a silo practice, which doesn't really allow us peaceful collaboration and collective thinking.

On Theme 2, the code template initially developed around the structural changes experienced by staff research participants when reflecting on their leadership journeys. What was more prominent in their narrations was what was portrayed as turbulent challenges precipitated by student protest events that tested the Student Affairs leadership capabilities to the limits. The code template then took shape and stabilised over a pattern on the concept of leadership, agency and engagement.

University B case

Data from Participant BF1 indicate that Student Affairs leaders implemented structural changes with a view to, except for addressing financial resources constraints, have a more focused "student-centred" support service:

In terms of the actual changes in the structure when [name of senior leader] took over, what year was it, sorry I'm just trying to go back. Yes, it was it was about [year] when [they] came to [name of university] and then [they] did a massive restructuring. We now have the [name of Student Affairs]. We have other units that have since moved out. …they moved out because they provided support service to both staff and students.

The participant (BF1) continued:

What [they] really wanted to do, was for the change not only be driven by the finances, but more by what is the strategy and how to bring about a more student centred approach. The common theme for all of us, especially in the early days of restructuring was to look at how we ensure that our services are student centred.

In terms of leadership, managing crises and engagement, participant BF1 emphasised the role of Student Affairs as follows:

After FeesMustFall I think people really saw our value. And we are dealing with many issues, crisis after crisis, it's always Student Affairs that has to come to the fore. Our model and our intention is really that, we see students as active participants in determining the nature of learning and the experiences. We also acknowledge and understand that there are times when students exercise their political muscle. And so, there are times when we know we have to deal with contentious politics, being, you know [as Student Affairs] so, we engage with student leaders and if they protest, we're always pushing the idea that we must bring them back to the table.

The participant concluded by speaking about other support services around the current theme and said:

We also relate with students, either through orientation of first year students. So, what we do we are programming for students or with students rather, we work in partnership. So, for instance, we say for instance, we want to do leadership development programmes we actually bring students on board to shape what the programme would be and then also to facilitate or co-facilitate and in that way they're also developing the skills, …right now we're running elections and we just appointed three students who are seasoned student leaders.

As part of the leadership training responsibilities of Student Affairs and similar to University A, participant BF2 also shared what they are doing on this aspect and said:

Yes, for example, we are putting together a leadership academy. It's still in its early stages.

The participant continued to reflect:

So, we brought those into the informal learning spaces, that students not only live in residences, but they have a space where they can collaborate and learn from peers. We also had quite an extensive tutor system.

The participant concluded by sharing how student structures are organised, which gave context to the extent of the role they play in facilitating engagement and leadership training:

> *So, in Student Affairs, we have student development [unit] and as I said, we work closely with them on aligning our student governance to the SRC governance framework, which includes elections and the constitution. We have about 10 councils across the House committees that we support. All the House committees have portfolios and those portfolios are like Treasury, Secretary General, and Chairmanship. Then we have Health and Environment as a portfolio, Entertainment and culture, Sport, etc. And because we have over 230 members of the house committee, then all of these form our 10 councils and we provide support for them.*

Data indicated that the training of students provided by Student Affairs, actually also became a valuable resource for support services. The training capability that Student Affairs employed expanded the resource repertoire for student support. Furthermore, the training capability created value in that students who were trained were able to provide support services to other students. This is how participant BF3 presented what they do:

> *We've got a peer intervention programme, which is more student-led and by the team in my department. We have peer activities that support student wellbeing and push our health promotion drives etc., on campus… our peer educators and our peer counsellors, they do focus on academic work, study skills, timetabling, dealing with peer pressure while you have to study and so on.*

Adding to the results pattern on training and development as an intervention that empowers students academically and socially, participant BF3 concluded that their intervention was:

> *…not only about the academic project, it's also about the wellbeing of the student in order for them to succeed academically and beyond. That's our real role is to, you know, support and improve that resilience.*

The broader role of Student Affairs in student engagement and leadership continued to show a strong pattern in the data. Participant BF4 summarised it as follows:

> …*student engagement is at the centre of what we do. Whether we do that in residences in a form of house committees, or residence council. Whether we do it through [name of a manager] department [Student Development/Governance] in terms of the SRC, Clubs and Societies, the associations and all of that.*

The participant concluded:

> *Student engagement is a priority for us. And of course, even if you go to financial aid, you know, so, we do create structures of engagement, you know, there are committees that are there to ensure that students are continually engaged formally within structures.*

Data from University B continued the patterns from University A on various concepts aggregated on the code template culminating in the construct of leadership, change agency and empowered engagement.

University C case:

The theme **(Leadership change agency and empowered engagement)** received solid support at University C, with concepts from the code template becoming saturated. This research site further provided nuanced insights. What was claimed in the previous cases as one of the key objectives of leadership development and engagement was discernable in the data from one of the participants (CF1) who shared their personal growth journey:

> *I was a student activist; I was a President of the SRC at some point. And I worked with various other divisions. I was a student mentor. I was a facilitator, I was a tutor, so, I've been part of the institution for [redacted] years, as a student and as a staff member.*

Data continued from the same pattern trajectory of the previous case in emphasising the role and importance of student development which empowers students beyond the university confines and further explicating what Student Affairs mean by '*development outside-classroom*'.

Participant CF1 explained:

> *…we are a terrain of development. It's one thing for students to get the qualification that they desire. But if we are to prep our students effectively for the world beyond varsity, you need to build a holistic student. So that in itself is, I think that's the common thread of development outside the classroom.*

Similar to the previous cases, the current participant also spoke about the training interventions they provided but added to the value that was created by having trained (empowered) students providing support to other students. This is what the participant said:

> *…we do training for all student governance structures, the highest being the institutional SRC. …when you're dealing with first years, it's much easier to relate to a [returning] student, than it is to first years. When you arrive at the university, you don't know your way around, but it's through our student leaders that you really get to know [the campus environment]…*

Participant CF1 also shared how they establish their university student structures as follows:

> *Yeah, elections of House committees at our institution, it forms part of the governance structure. So, when we elect associations and the residences would first elect the new leadership from those, they will contest toward the SRC for example, the residences are represented in the SRC, so, what happens is that all residences elect their residence committees, from those committees, they elect their Chairpersons and from all the Chairpersons, amongst themselves they elect one to serve in the SRC. Our system is both through the ballot in terms of the general elections and then the ex officio portfolios. The same applies to sports, all sports codes elect their executive and then the chairs of those respective sporting codes would sit amongst themselves and elect one representative to serve in the SRC.*

There is quite a vast data corpus from this participant's interview transcript, emphasising the already established concepts on the code template. Speaking on the notion of "resilience" that came out from University B, participant CF2 explained coping mechanisms provided for students as follows:

…we place quite a lot of emphasis on the development part, which is the preventative, proactive side of it. We do want the best for our students and we work, you know if it is [redacted] Services, for example, wanting to prepare students for work afterwards. For us, we want those soft skills making sure we have resilient students. So, the ultimate goal is making sure our students are doing well, emotionally, not just academically.

The participant concluded:

…we've had very wonderful collaborations with student leaders in the past, but because of changes every year, you know, you need to establish that relationship again.

Participant CF3 explained how, for example, they trained and developed student leaders:

…our students that are house comm academics, we are training them, so that our house comm members can understand the academic efforts that you know, as a central focus for the university and academic development of a student.

The participant continued:

And we are also creating the space for those who really come from a certain background with zero support, so, our orientation programme had to also change, in terms of how we had to deal with certain realities is that we had to look into programmes that we introduced at the beginning of the year where we have to create some social activities for student life.

Participant CF4 also spoke about the common goal of Student Affairs on student wellness and holistic student development and further mentioned the type of student structures that were central to student engagement:

…first point of engagement, or interaction with students, would be student leadership structures, so that would be the residence committees, the different portfolios on residence committees and the student representative councils.

Data also showed a similar pattern with regard to the value provided by Student Affairs training capabilities. As evidence, participant CF4 said:

I think the second area would be similar in the sense that you pull in students to assist in programmes and activities but different in the sense that it's not elected positions right, so, we've got a lot of student assistant positions, where students assist in programmes and activities in that regard I would even go to the peer mentoring programme. I can also say that we engage students through training, through leadership training.

Participant CF5 indicated something crucial in identifying spaces and student groups for engagement and leadership training:

Your most active students will be in residences, whether politically or active in student governance and we've got our own structures, which is also a sub-structure of the SRC.

The participant also spoke about a similar goal around holistic development that goes beyond the classroom:

…one of the key things Student Affairs must be an enabler for growth. For me, the role as an enabler, goes beyond just the psychosocial and physical. It's also to do with co-curricular development outside of class. We could teach any student the academic stuff. But if a student goes outside of class he needs to be able to engage on various topics.

Participant CF5 concluded by sharing some of his experiences on how he engaged students in negotiating for scarce resources and to prevent protests:

You need to engage them so that they can understand. They don't have to agree with you. An engaged student will be more successful in adapting later on in life because he knows he doesn't engage negatively; he's being engaged positively. You are not reactive. You are proactive if you engage

students. Now, you know, how student engagement is, usually in the olden days it was you toy-toy [protest] first and you engage later. That is negotiating with a gun against your head. Now, in my view, do it the other way around. Engage them.

Participant CF6 also began by highlighting the central goals of student wellness, holistic development and student success and emphasised that:

…the role of Student Affairs is to really calibrate a student leadership that will be globally competitive. Calibrate in the sense that young people are critical for the future. And Student Affairs has got an opportunity to interface with young people.

The code template was saturated on this pattern of the leadership training and development for future. Sharing briefly how they engaged the student leadership on matters of broader university governance, participant CF6 concluded:

All [redacted] campuses have got Central SRCs. That is your [names of campuses]. You''ve got CSRC, which is a campus SRC. So, how I engage them is, on a monthly basis, I meet all [redacted] SRCs separately. And I also meet ISRC separately. Before I see the CSRC in [name of campus] for argument's sake, I will have a 30-minute meeting with the President of that campus.

Data from University C showed solid support for Theme 2, with emphasis on leadership development, empowering training that produces value for support services. Furthermore, data formed a pattern on how student structures were organised and how leaders engaged student representatives.

University D case:

Participant DF1 spoke about how they empowered students through training and giving them experiential opportunities to develop them further, which is a nuanced angle that connects to the thematic concept of leadership training and empowered engagement. The participant said:

We were planning to have workshops for [redacted] for students. And then it will be [redacted] course for students, in order to empower them. We also take students that are doing [redacted] to volunteer and assist managers.

In terms of student wellbeing and academic support that has been reported at other research sites to be providing resilience.

The participant spoke about the available services for student support:

If they're struggling with their academics, then they can see our academic advisors and psychologists and also we have doctors.

Data from DF2 showed similarities with the previous case on the current theme, in terms of student support interventions that are implemented to empower students as a preventative measure. For example, DF2 said:

…engagement with students happens at the various levels, at an individual level, that would be when they come to consult.

The participant then also spoke about the approach of training and empowering students to help others and also working with students in promoting support services:

We do have peer educators. So, the peer educators will also assist to publicise the event. So, basically one of the engagement is through those events that we are planning.

Participant DF2 also spoke about engagements with student structures such as the SRC and as can be seen from student data in this section, the participant also conceded to the reality of negative engagements that were often resolved through information-sharing sessions. This is what the participant said:

They have regular meetings with the [support service specialist] there and for example, there's a campus forum meeting where the SRC is also present. So, some of the issues that would come out of the campus forum lead to further engagement with the SRC so, the SRCs in various campuses are quite focused and they have access to the [name of department]. Challenges that may come up, there usually would be challenges with SRC, because of either

misunderstanding or the fact that they represent the students so, generally, them being students and them not being experts, you know, in some instances we have to sit everyone down, educate and then find that the militancy is, you know, quelled because of the information that they would be receiving.

Participant DF3 also spoke about the common goals connected to the current theme (among other themes) and that is; student wellbeing and development. This is what the participant said:

…in essence, for us, it's more on student life, welfare and wellbeing, in the sense that yes, we are a [name of Division] Division but we also have a responsibility towards recreation and providing opportunities.

One of the unique findings at University D, which has also been discussed in other themes, is the initiative to create financial resources, independent of the university, by raising funds in order to provide the student support services. Data from participant DF3 is an example:

…[name of university] is one of the few institutions that support students in a big way. We've gone out to raise funds for bursaries and even now I think as [name of division] division, is one of the few that gets a huge budget for [redacted] scholarships.

Participant DF3 spoke about their (gender of participant deliberately concealed) previous experiences at other universities where student structures were involved in the services. The participant felt that it was cumbersome to involve student structures in the mainstream services and policy-making:

We don't have a [name of student structure] at [name of university] and it works wonders for me. Because I've worked at [name of another university] where the [name of student structure] wants to dictate what must happen when they don't understand the business of [type of service]. So, at [name of university] we have a structure where it is the SRC [name of portfolio] with the house committee member responsible for [type of service] but their responsibility is recreational [support], mass participation, where we organise

internally. When it gets to how we run the university [mainstream service]. They don't get involved.

The participant concludes by saying:

We, as a unit, we have a number of governance structures. We have the [type of service] Management Committee which meets once every two months where we make policy decisions. Then we have an operations committee which meets every two weeks.

Data from participant DF3 around student structures involvement pointed to the complexity of cooporate governance in higher education context, where there was an element of distrust between management and student structures – as indicated by student data later on this section. Furthermore, participant DF2 indicated that they often experienced militancy from the SRC until they engaged them further with information, similar to what participant CF5 emphasised at University C, in terms of the importance of engagement.

The following discussion also reports a strong salience from student participants' data, on the concept of engagement in a broader sense (interactions, training, mediations, negotiations and confrontations) but with nuanced attributes from this cohort of research participants.

4.3.3.2.2 Theme 2 from student participants' data at University A

Data from University A's student participants showed an emphasis on certain dynamics of Theme 2. Data from this cohort of participants, developed a pattern and shed some light on the phenomenon of tensions and instabilities in higher education. However, in this study, data from student participants indicated potential sources of value for leadership and change as well as for the general service exchange. Concepts from University A student participants' data, that relate to Theme 2 **(Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement)** are discussed below. Table 4.7 lists the attribute dynamics that were deemed to be related to the current theme.

Table 4.7: Engagement construct: data from student participants at University A.

Engagement construct: students' data at University A
• Resort to protests
• Service dissatisfaction
• They do not want to work with students
• Poor communication and consultation
• Taking students for granted
• They listen when we strike

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

Data from staff participants suggested that Student Affairs engaged students and student leadership, through various forms, including making them "champions of strategy" and engendering a sense of "mutual listening", establishing a "leadership academy" and "creating platforms of engagements". However, some student participants' data, juxtaposed with staff participants' data, suggested contrasting views on the current theme. The student participants' data showed a paradox. Below are data that emerged as supportive of the first- and second-order concepts listed in Table 4.7. The first participant (AU1) was brief and said:

> *I don't know what is their problem, or is [it] shortage of resources, or the department's leadership ignores our needs as students, especially the outsourced residences. It would be better if they were owned by the University.*

Participant AU2, who happened to be an SRC member, articulated their (gender of participant deliberately concealed) point with a similar example on how they viewed Student Affairs leadership, and the participant said:

> *…they don't want to work with the students. You see they do things, they decide, without enquiring from students. You just hear that there is a residence by that road and when you go there, you have to approve that residence and students are squashed together. …all residences must meet the minimum standards of DHET. I think there is lack of communication between the [name of department] staff members and the SRC members.*

Despite the reported establishment of engagement platforms, Participant AU3 contended that:

They take students for granted and when we say things, they ignore us, unless we report them to the SRC or to people in higher positions.

Referring to an incident of conflict between a member of the SRC and a university official, participant AU4 said:

My concern was that if these things were able to make an SRC member cry, what about ordinary students.

Participant AU5, who happened to be an SRC member, added:

I think it is safe to say that [name of department] is a dismal failure of the university, even the people who are leading. It's frustrations after frustrations. You see, now. I was having meetings before coming here. Also, the meeting with the [redacted] manager and also the administration. Now, they are refusing to give to students' aid they promised.

As can be discerned, the preceding data are a combination of ordinary students and SRC members who took part in the study, but the significance of it is that there is a pattern of frustrations in terms of engagement with the university. Such frustrations often lead to emergent strategic changes in a university, precipitated by student protests. At an abstract level, the observation is that the nature of engagements can be a determining factor of change and value emanating from such interactions.

4.3.3.2.3 Student participants' data for Theme 2 at University B

Data from student participants at University B had pockets of similarities that compared with University A student participants' views but did not form a strong pattern.

Table 4.8: Theme 2 attributes from student participants' data at University B.

Attributes related to concepts from students at University B
• Engage with various offices
• Need for human interaction
• They respond well to crisis
• Hostility between student leaders and university management
• Student-led media

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

Participant BU1's data suggested that some of the strategic alternatives taken by Student Affairs management in terms of outsourcing services had inherent risks but indicated more engagements. Narrating their (gender of participant deliberately concealed) experience in an outsourced (leased) residence, the participant spoke about the interaction they had with an outsourced residence manager and said:

> *I couldn't understand it because on his side he lacked accountability, like if you are the residence manager, you manage [with emphasis] the residence and you're telling us that the reason why you are not supposed to give us answers, why is there no WiFi? What is happening and you tell us, "I was not here", or "I didn't know".*

The participant further explained that lack of accountability and communication led to frustrations on students, but concluded that the problem:

> *…was resolved though only after protests.*

This resonates with another participant (BU2), who was one of the former #FeesMustFall student movement leaders, who said:

> *… you have to be bold in what you need. You really need to push. The higher up you go, the more dismissive staff can be. I've had a lot of admin issues with [name of university]. How can I say, whenever I needed to knock down doors. …it's about being stubborn about what your interest is.*

This participant went on to narrate how they heard that they (gender of participant deliberately concealed) had been identified by the institution as *militant and* felt that they were *under a microscope.* When asked about their experience in engaging the university, participant BU2 commented also positively and said that:

> *I feel like I am given a voice because I can approach my SRC about any problem that I have and then they are able to take it further.*

So, the SRC was seen by students as an engagement structure that provided a platform for their issues. However, participant BU3 who happened to be an international student, complained that:

…the SRC for me. You know what I'm not really interested in the [name of university] SRC, to be specific, I kind of feel they do not address issues that foreign students face. There's a disconnect, I think for me I kind of feel like they may address issues that concerns South African students. I feel like we are like, abandoned.

A different student participant (BU4) argued that the SRC:

can do the movements [protests & campaigns], but not individual cases [of students].

A different student participant (BU5) who was in the faculty Student Representative structure, concurred with the view of the previous participant, that:

international students felt that they were left out.

This participant further explained their role whereby they had:

…to engage with various offices that we needed. We needed to reach out to, because of what the students requested.

As a sign of existence of partnership-building and engagement platforms, participant BU6 suggested that they:

…need more platforms that are led by students and that makes a huge a difference. You know what's been very effective in the past couple of years, has been social media pages, that are [university acronym-led] but are not run (with emphasis) by [name of the university]

A different student participant (BU7) said that:

I compliment that service of the orientation leaders and orientation week in general. At the residences, we got our mentors, each first-year student was assigned to a mentor. I think they make my academic life as a student simpler and more productive. I don't know what I would have done if those services were not there.

The pattern on these data for student participants at University B, shows the tension of engagement on the one hand, while revealing various positive value-cocreating interventions.

4.3.3.2.4 Theme 2 from student participants' data at University C:

Data from University C's student participants indicated a stabilising code template, with data, as shown below (Table 4.9) forming a stronger pattern of the insights from University A and University B. Theme 2 is named "**Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement**".

Table 4.9: Engagement construct: data from student participants at University

Attributes of the engagement constructs from students' data at University C
• Engagements provided growth in leadership
• Delivering services through students
• They give the training to us to populate to other students as we relate to the students on their level
• Hostile engagement: Protesting for service delivery, no collaboration. Hostilities
• Collaboration and support
• Sense of fear and distrust

Source: Own compilation

The first participant (CU1) was appreciative of the role that the SRC plays in leadership and engagement. The participant commented as follows:

> *The very important support service in our universities, I would say is the SRC, because they play a very vital role in our lives, because in most cases, universities objectify people, they don't deal with us as humans, they see some sort of commodity, not people.*

The participant further believes that the university is not consultative and adding to sentiments of the former #FeesMustFall student movement leader of the previous case (University B) who believed that "you have to be bold in order to get what you want" and "kick down doors". Participant CU1 remarked that:

> *They work with themselves. The only time you see a student included, just know that, that student forced himself or herself to be in their business. We have to fight, we have to strike, there's no collaboration between students and*

the university. And then we have to fight, we have to strike with the extension and that's when they will open and extend their registration period. It's a matter of student against the staff, they have never been collaborative engagement. We are enemies. We have to fight for the services to be delivered.

There was a strong pattern showing leadership and engagement tensions, hostilities and distrust, from these data. The participant painted a scenario of the tensions and power struggles on campus and said:

Every time we have a crisis going on or misunderstanding going on, there are just huge people present and campus will be so cold, they bring that thing of, we will show you who is in power, [and yet], we are just trying to bring balance and understanding between the students and the institutions.

The participant however, commended some of the support services programmes and said:

The critical service, I'd say, you see during orientation period for particularly first years. I'd say [name of university] is really trying to close the gap between high school and university and bearing in mind that we are from different backgrounds.

Participant CU2 suggested that they benefit from the battles carried out by the SRCs and student movements, by making an example and said:

…in my first year I was paying cash but then in my second year after a big strike [#FeesMustFall]. I think it was a national strike against the cost of funding and whatnot. So that is how a majority of us on campus were able to get the NSFAS funding.

A different student participant (CU3) also shared her views on the SRC leadership role and said:

the SRC, they really deal with students' issues and things that students need.

When talking about collaborations between students and management on programmes, the same participant added the importance of students' role that:

I think their programme or whatever support that they giving us will be more efficient, because now it does not even come from them. It comes from us, who are the beneficiaries.

Data indicating concomitant existence of positive engagements came from a different student participant (CU4), also talking about partnerships and collaborations:

…when I was launching the structure on campus, I was greatly supported by the management. I had good relations with them, which helped me to grow the structure and also [getting it] publicised on campus. It was a student-led structure.

When talking about the effect of the engagements and training, the same participant said that:

Those engagements with support services on campus helped me in that, I was developed as a leader. I also got to be aware of my emotional and personal wellbeing. We also are peer advisors and there's a training that's really seen as peer educators, peer tutors in terms of how we deal with because we are young people and students are young people, so, sometimes they relate better to us in terms of the students to come to you and tell you this big secret that they are fighting in their lives. They give the training to us to populate to other students as we relate to the students on their level.

The participant concluded that:

…the tutorial programme is the biggest asset that the university has, …because the tutorial programme is the reason why I also became a tutor myself, it's because I saw that my tutors were more than tutors to me because lecturers would just come to the lecture hall and teach.

A different student participant (CU5) expressed appreciation of orientation of new students including postgraduate students,

So, I met another student who said she was doing her master's as well as at our university. But she's, even though she's doing her Master', she's kind of a first year so, she knows nothing about the university.

The participant also spoke of the student structures and felt they create a sense of belonging. Speaking about the residence student structures, the participant said that:

> *I was part of, when I was living at residence. I was part of the subcommittee. So, every subcommittee had the event, which, you know, made me come to meeting new people, you know, interacting with more people.*

Participant CU6 who was already doing a PhD, but still remembered that:

> *The orientation was marvellous. They were trying to give us everything and anything that we may need in our journey.*

The participant concluded by saying:

> *…now I'm more independent. I can run around and go around the university on my own.*

Data from student participants at University C supported Theme 2 and showed a connection with the pattern of concepts from University A and University B.

4.3.3.2.5 Theme 2 from student participants' data at University D:

Data from University D's student participants indicated a stabilising code template, with data, as shown below (Table 4.10) continuing to show a pattern of the insights from University A, University B and University C. Theme 2 was named "**Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement**".

Table 4.10: Engagement construct: data from student participants at University D

Attributes for engagement construct from students' data at University D
• Importance of orientation
• Collaboration through structures (SRC and House committees)
• Gathering student needs through student structures
• We are not equal partners
• Student orientation
• The Executive engages with SRC

Source: Own compilation from transcripts

The first participant's (DU1) data continued the pattern on the role of the SRC leadership and engagement in service delivery. The participant said:

I was having problems with my NSFAS and I was not attended to, my concerns were not attended. I was not being listened to, so, I brought a representative, SRC representative and that is when they decided to help me.

Participant DU2, who was a first-year student at the time of the interview, but could not attend university orientation, spoke about their first-time experience and said:

…the campus is so big, so I got lost so many times. Yeah, but then it was strange like that, the feeling of being in a university like it's nice, it was nice, but at the same time, it was terrifying. Terrifying, like, okay, I'm here. I have to study. I have to pass and all that. So, it was a bit of both nje, it was great but at same time terrifying. When they did the orientation I, okay, we had this problem of NSFAS and then we had to get our own registration money so, I wasn't registered by then.

The purpose of the above data evidence is to show the relevance of student orientation, which it is argued in this thesis, is empowering for students and hence the current theme. Another student participant (DU3) who was also a first-year and registered late, had to adjust to online learning, but had not attended orientation, said:

…my first day was very tough because [name of university], they reopened I think on the 8th of March and by that time, I registered later and I was under pressure. It was very confusing because like we were still adjusting and getting information about the university, things like Blackboard and how are modules.

In terms of collaboration with student structures, participant DU3 confirmed that:

Yeah, they do collaborate because there's SRC and House Comms. Yeah, so they must inform them, even in class there are Class Reps.

Another student participant (DU4) concurs with the views of the first participant (DU1), in terms of dynamics in support service delivery. The participant felt that:

…when they turn a blind eye on student needs, there's always protests. They can't deliver those needs as we want them.

Engagement and assessment of student needs through student structures is also confirmed by a different student participant (DU5), who said:

> *…there are student organisations where basically they can voice their opinions. Yes, they do? I remember I used to, we were working as an organisation in order to provide some food for students who were in need. They use the SRC mainly in order to find out the needs of students. Student organisations also detect what our students are facing.*

Another student participant (DU6) commented about the importance of orientation for first-year students and the role of organised structures in orientation and said:

> *…as a first-year student you know, they kind of hold you by the hand, trying to support you and guide you because you're transitioning to university. So, I think they play a vital role.*

The same participant concluded by further emphasising the role of the SRC as a voice for students.

The participant said:

> *We are not equal partners. They are above us. So, they partly collaborate with us, [but] it depends on the service that you want to access, you know. Things like your fees and things like your Res life, I think those, to be honest, you need the support of the SRC. You need the support of the SRC because they have a voice. The executive [management] engage with SRC.*

Data from student participants at University D, reached theoretical saturation on the current theme, specifically on issues of "student orientation and training", "engagement through structures", "hostile engagements", "service delivery through student structures" and the "role of the SRC" in engagements.

4.3.3.2.6 Theme 2 summary

In essence, data from student participants corroborated some of the aspects of the theme such as engagements through structures, training and orientation, but did not have firm support for other elements of the theme, such as management collaborations with student structures.

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Financial and internet connectivity "biopower"

At the data collection (interviews with staff participants) process in all four universities, Theme 3 was named "information technology and finance", until a student research participant at one of the research sites, metaphorically commented as follows:

> So, for me, WiFi is a form of biopower because it controls the little spheres of my life. If I don't have access to internet, I basically can't do anything, I become non- existent at [name of the university].

This statement spawned new thinking in the researcher's theorising about theme 3. The researcher had to go back and review the scripts and code templates. In the initial student participants' aggregate code template, this theme was named "Information, network connectivity, equipment and communication", based on patterns observed in data as well as the interpretation of the clustering codes, juxtaposed with empirical data. In the student participants' data, there was no salient concept referring to finance per se (other than reference to NSFAS), but in staff participants' data, reference to finance was ubiquitous as presented below. The evolving theme was revised to "**Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower'**". Finance is a somewhat independent concept, but it has interconnections with many other concepts in all four themes. So, it could have been paired with any of the thematic concepts.

The researcher had not been closely familiar with the term 'biopower' before the research field work and upon reading literature, he found it to be an essential hermeneutic heuristic in interpreting the current theme. Biopower is a term associated with Foucault's work on 'biopolitics'. Nail (2016:249-250) cites Foucault (1990) as having defined the term biopower as "political power [that] had assigned itself the task of administering life". It has been used in studies to explain various phenomena (see for example, Perron, Flute and Holmes, 2004). In interpreting data to further explicate the current theme, the researcher applied the lens of biopower with its complementary term "control", as postulated by Nail (2016). Nail (2016:249) noted that "control" is "defined by explicitly economic and informational content" and Koopman (2014:101) observed that in "Foucault's work, we can see how there is already an incipient idea of power of information present".

Perron, et al. (2004:538) postulated that "[b]io-power embraces all aspects of life such as demographic parameters of a population, health and security matters and education". Koopman, (2014:90) argued that "biopower, in the early twenty first century, is an assemblage that includes….dense global communication". "Biopower is *primarily* about the regulation of populations" (ibid: 103). (Emphasis in the original). In his book, Heraclous (2003) has shown how social theoretical lenses help in strategy research. In assessing data under the current theme, one salient point that became clear was that "finance" was viewed as a "controlling" resource for Student Affairs service offerings and that information technology and connectivity were fundamentally driving how the support services were being delivered and used as a valuable resource or in ways that created sources of value. Furthermore, data indicated that information technology and connectivity defined the students' existential experience. So, while the concept of biopower was developed to theoretically explain the control of populations, including matters of life and death, in the current theme, it is modelled to provide a deeper interpretation of data that, on the surface, initially appeared mundane.

4.3.3.3.1 Theme 3 at the various cases (research sites)

University A case:

Staff participants' data at University A, developed a pattern that contributed to the evolution of the current theme **(Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower')**. In brief, using the power of 'biopower', the thematic concepts such as finance and budgets seemed to be a central concept for, autonomy, control and accountability aspects. When analytically converted from familiar to strange status using the biopower lens, these central concepts of the current theme reveal the tentacles controlling the use, provision and creation of value and or new resources.

In relation to the current theme, data from participant AF1 indicated that autonomy could be allowed freely for Heads of Units, but when it comes to the financial resources, the participant emphasised autonomy with accountability and said:

> *There's no one person that can provide everything. It is the contribution of the team. Yes, there will be the leader, that's going to eventually have to make certain decisions, etc. But for me, it is based on, if you are the senior*

[redacted], even though I'm a [redacted] by training, if you are a senior [redacted], I would listen to you and what you think is best in your unit. If you are the [redacted] manager. Similarly, a Chief professional [redacted], because you are the one that is operational. Obviously there are issues around budgeting and policy and those issues are firmly within my domain.

As in the literature, empirically, 'finance' was reported to be a critical resource for support services, but it appears to be a controlling (or restraining) resource as well. When asked about how they acquired critical resources, participant AF1 explained that acquiring resources depends on financial resources. The participant spoke about the finances and then brought the element of information technology and said:

You see a lot of it is dependent upon the funding, you know, we get an operational budget every year, which is fine, [it] helps pay for our running costs, so to speak, you know, [redacted], etc. But we've been receiving Capex [capital budget] for the last few years. Okay, the university has been giving us Capex so, from here we've bought things. And now last year because of COVID we have moved, you know, everybody had desktops in the office, we moved to purchasing laptops, so that they're able to work from home.

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown precipitated dependence on information technology and connectivity, especially in years 2020 and 2021. But of course, in 2019, when people were budgeting for 2020 financial year, the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for heavy reliance on technology and connectivity was not a budgetary factor.

When asked about critical resources and capabilities, participant AF2, without hesitating, said:

I would say finance here. It's a key resource and it's always not enough and I would say, not per se, manpower, because from time to time we have interns [internship students]. We can also hire contract staff as per the need.

So 'finance' is viewed as a limited key resource that controls the availability or the acquisition of other resources. Going to the extent of considering financial resources as an impetus that provided links between their department's success and the alignment with university goals, the participant explained that:

…the more we hire people that give us success, obviously, [redacted] to us I would say, it was money well spent. …to us when we recruit [redacted], we're trying to get the best [redacted], so, we can get aligned. So, when the university is on the map for research in particular in this case, governments and again, our side will also need to do well in terms of [type of service] performance.

It also appears that 'finance' is not only a source or leverage for obtaining other resources, but it also determines the value (calibre) of acquired new resources. Furthermore, the ability to develop strategies that align to institutional strategy seems to depend on the availability of funds.

Participant AF3 illustrates that hiring the best (which is dependent on availability of finances) is aligned to the overall strategic theme of the university and he said:

…ensuring that all the divisions make quality appointments at various levels. Effectively say, right people are sitting on the right seats. There's a lot of premium that is placed on people. Our previous vision was the so-called student-centred and that we've broadened the latest one. So, it's not only student-centred but people centred. That's one unique aspect about the institution.

The developing pattern in these data also pointed to the links with theme 1 and thus suggested that there was a possible theoretical explanation building up. Participant AF3 continued to discuss their plight of limited resources but pointing out the influence of other resources to create financial resources and they said:

…the main challenge would be, we are competing for limited resources. We also lease out our residences to the tourists and then try and generate some income and those funds are used to fund our student development programmes in residences.

Moving on to the internet connectivity aspect of the current theme, data from participant AF4 explained how student support services migrated from the conventional face-to-face and email interactions with students, to new online interactive platforms and said:

So, now we are giving them a separate platform to say if you think writing an email to us is not sufficient, you want to talk to somebody, then you're able to go into this platform, book a session with somebody and somebody will then be talking to you online over Teams [MS Teams]. It can sort of replace the physical interaction with the student.

Online interaction systems were not just the only strategic change they adopted, but they also collect data from student online social media. So, internet connectivity creates a virtual world where people interact in service exchange and also conduct unobtrusive data collection.

Participant AF5 made the following comment:

And we also pay attention to the emails, or even now social media tells you what is happening in the atmosphere. So, we also read what they write about. And, again, it serves as an early warning sign, giving access to students' minds or thinking.

Participant AF6 also spoke about connectivity and added the element of mobility of students with the omnipresence of connectivity, as well as the added value it created for students:

…buses [have] Wi Fi, so, it gives students who come to campus to have access to the classes so, the value of that resource is very important, because it allows students to do more than just travelling to campus. They travel, but at the same time they can have the access to their entire university resources and interact with the academics.

This last participant highlighted a unique and valuable support service (of connectivity on student transport), which was not reported at other research sites. If biopower is about the regulation of populations (Koopman, 2014), at University A, data indicated that on one level COVID-19 was an exogenous controlling force that ephemerally changed the landscape of Student Affairs and the general student experience. At another level, 'finance and internet connectivity' was the micro-biopower force and or endogenous force regulating the routines of Student Affairs in creating and acquiring certain critical resources, while at the same time, some resources were dialectically enablers of financial resources.

University B case:

A code template from the previous case, was tested on Theme 3 **(Financial and internet connectivity "biopower")**, tracking the pattern within the case.

Participant BF1, rejected the control of people by technology and commented as follows:

> *I'm not worried about the 4IR [Fourth Industrial Revolution], because they might use that, even the technology must fit the human aspect so, we can have a technology that can be used.*

Further discounting the financial control in the creation of resources, the participant then concludes with passion that:

> *…even if you give them [people] a lot of money. But if you don't treat them well, people won't move an inch. Are you with me?* [Challenging the researcher]

What emerged from the observation (or interpretation of these data) was that "finance and internet connectivity" have limited control. In the previous case, we noted that some resources can be used to create finance reciprocally, so, the current data suggested that financial resources did not guarantee value in people and that technology also has limited control of people.

Data from participant BF2 stabilised the data analysis code template of the current theme on the concepts of technology and finance and corroborated the observation of an exogenous biopower and said:

> *COVID hit us in the first year. And our objective was to go online and to streamline and go paperless, so, we were forced into a paperless environment.*

Adding the financial resource challenge, the participant went on to say:

> *We find that our resources are very limited. We had lost quite a bit of funds in 2020. All our residences were closed and students were sent back home and the occupancy rates were very low. But, of course, not using double rooms again has an impact on the budget.*

It does seem that power of technology and connectivity had been gradually institutionalised in the functions of staff in a specific area, but COVID-19 temporarily eliminated the conventional option of the face-to-face service exchange. This is evident in participant BF2's statement when she said:

> One of the parts of the job description is to work online with students to utilise technology to be able to leverage development.

So, the power of technology is not a one-way controlling force, but staff also maximise its use to create value, for example, Participant BF2 said:

> So, we tried to change the modality to create greater participation. Webinars have also become a huge thing in the online environment, so, there is a successful programme with regards to that.

Participant BF3 concurs with participant BF2 on how technology as a resource is leveraged to create value and they said;

> Our biggest method of engaging students is through social media. And we have an Instagram page that's run by our peer counsellors. We find that it's easier to reach more groups of students, because students don't really want to read these campus notices that we write into a Word document. Yes. Facebook as well so that's social media we tend to run sub-campaigns and hype through that method.

Data from participant BF4 also stabilised the code template, around the influence of finance and internet connectivity, when speaking about previous strategic changes by a former leader in their department, her observation was that:

> What [the leader] really wanted to do, was for the change not only be driven by the finances, but more by what is the strategy and how to bring about a more student centred approach. …ultimately, the model ended up costing a lot more than what I think they expected, I mean [the leader] had to fight hard even for our jobs.

These data pointed to the biopower situation where the finance element was an existential threat where jobs were on the brink of elimination. However, the

ostensible streamlined structure had some positive effects at that time, as the participant explained:

> *But at the end of the day, when I look back now I'm sure there is relief, especially after "fees must fall".*

The power of financial resources however seems unrelenting and continuously controlling the availability of other resources. Data from participant BF4 also show this biopower element of financial resources similar to the previous case of University A and commented as follows:

> *…some of these areas are under-resourced and I've been chronically under-resourced for a while. And so, in asking for more funding that is the battle that is probably going to come up again. …just after or during the fees must fall, we had this whole austerity process. We are, in this budgeting space we are not allowed to make new posts, etc.*

In conclusion, participant BF4, pointed out that finance and employees were critical resources, but also hinted at breaking away from the control tentacles of finance biopower, by mentioning that they had the liberty to also create financial resources. The participant said:

> *Okay, so, the budget is the one resource. Moving on to the next one is, I would say, obviously the staffing. You know when we can say the budget is never enough but I think there are opportunities here and there to try to, you know the university is not giving them, but we will obviously have to develop those partnerships outside of the university and fundraising.*

Data from University B provided a picture of financial resources being critical and limiting at the same time, but data suggested that plans could be implemented to partially breakaway from the status-quo of financial constraints. Technology and internet connectivity constraints were challenged by one research participant, as a controlling resource, while some participants found it to be a critical element of resource bundles for delivering services and engaging students through social media.

University C case:

The pattern of Theme 3 **(Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower')** continued to resonate in data at University C, with various sets of data from staff participants in leadership positions pointing to the power of financial resources, but also reciprocally using one set of resources and capabilities to generate other resources. Furthermore, internet connectivity also continued to be a key resource element, starting from its being an imposed means of communication to its being seen as a valuable resource for achieving economies of scale in delivering support service programmes for students.

Data from participant CF1 indicated the elements of theme 3 and made connections between institution's investment in support services and stability on campus. This is what participant CF1 said:

> *…like all institutions we do get protests to a certain degree, but [what] I've come to realise is, where there's investment in support services, there is more stability, than at institutions that invest less.*

Participant (CF1) further illustrated how they use other resources of partnerships and networking to create other resources without using their finances:

> *the biggest one, it will be the "No student hungry" campaign, because we do not only assist in terms of sponsorship and contributing to the cause, but also reaching out to external stakeholders outside the university, in terms of funding itself and adding to the drive.*

The participant then went on to speak about internet connectivity (power and leverage) and said:

> *…in many institutions, we're trying to move towards SRC elections online. But now, with COVID, having happened, we are now in with our second online elections. It then became an imperative, it was no longer an option and I don't foresee a situation where we will say no, no, now that the epidemic is over we're going back to the physical elections where people come on campus and there are long queues to vote for the SRC. So, through this pandemic, the*

nature of the space has evolved and that also prompted us as Student Affairs
practitioners to evolve with the changes.

The participant concluded by further pointing out how internet connectivity had been
leveraged to their advantage and said:

…in [name of] campus last year, we did a woman leadership seminar series
and we had speakers who, I mean [name of a celebrity] was talking to us
while she was in England. And I think this is the opportunity that comes with
the virtual platform. People that you would really have a problem getting a
hold of, because they would have to travel to the [name of city]. Now we don't
have a problem.

Data from this participant connected the codes from the previous sites (University A
and University B) and the thread was that financial resources were critical but could
restrict service delivery. However, practitioners are able to creatively generate other
resources using their capabilities. Secondly, the migration to online operations
(internet connectivity) was initially seen with scepticism but later embraced as a
valuable resource. The rest of the data from this research site revealed other
aspects relating to finances.

Participant CF2 explained that they allow some level of autonomy on their units and
that control measures in financial resources are there for accountability. Good
corporate governance requires accountability, but as the previous participant
mentioned, investment in Student Affairs has some connections to campus stability,
so, it's a balancing act, in terms of strategic decision-making. This is what participant
CF2 said:

So, we've got departmental budgets that people submit to us on an annual
basis to tell us what they need. And then as far as possible we try to meet
those budgets. We also give opportunities where people can submit requests
for additional budgets, or if they need special projects. But I don't
micromanage entities. We've got certain principles and protocols in terms of
ethics that we need to uphold in expenses and we're very strict on that. All
right, very, very strict, you can't deviate from that. So, we deal with non-
compliance, you know, we address it straightforward. There's always

accountability so that you spend your funds in a way that make you achieve your objectives in serving students right, that's the first question. The second question is, did you spend it in a way that's ethical and that's aligned with financial protocols and rules and principles. Those are the parameters. But I allow lot of autonomy in the way in which departmental heads spend their funds to achieve the goals. We've got a Finance Committee that sit and look at the expenses and so, on a monthly basis, you know we track expenses.

These data showed that universities have certain financial controls.These included line management accountability, committee checks and balances, and what is known 'management by objectives' (Greenwood, 1981). This fits within the realm of institutional power in the 'habitus' of the accounting fraternity.

Participant CF2 spoke about the advantage of virtual platforms but also points out the negative aspect of it:

I think what we've lost is the personal face-to-face in-person engagement with students. I think that's something that we lost. And that hopefully, in some form, we will be able to regain. But what we have gained in the COVID situation, especially through the dialogue is to expand, you know to use virtual platforms to engage students, so, suddenly your reach is much wider with virtual platforms.

The within-case pattern of internet connectivity as an indispensable but imposed tool providing value on support service routines continued to emerge.

The social 'habitus' (Dreher, 2016) of the accounting fraternity controls the behaviour of individuals and participant CF3 shares their (gender deliberately concealed) personal experience as follows:

I come from a finance background, so, I didn't like change, systems are like this and this is how systems are set up. So, my first year in Student Affairs, I found it very challenging. So, when I came to Student Affairs, I was like no, we're not budgeting on this, it's a wasteful expenditure. So, I was strict with finances.

The participant defined resources and continued to explain how financial resources were essential in developing resource attributes in employees:

I think for me a resource is something that will allow us to deliver our mandate and our vision. So, for me, those are the resources that have to do with finances, support and just, if we have to develop people. So, for me, developing people is also a resource.

On the internet connectivity construct, the participant acknowledged that technology was at the back of their minds, but they did not explore it actively until it was imposed by exogenous events. They narrated this as follows:

Now we've been looking at technologies [but] we didn't do anything, we waited until COVID happened, then we realised, oh we actually need certain technologies in our space as [type of support service], so that's the way change forces us to think.

Participant CF4's data showed a strong pattern about 'people' being regarded as resources but contradicted the position of participant BF1 in the previous case of finances having no impact on employees. Participant CF4 added the element of finances (or salaries) in keeping people with valuable skills. The participant said that:

Yeah, it will always also be people, so, people are good resources. And finances, I think I've only been [job title] and looking at the finances for a short period of time. But I think that our most difficult challenge at our university for our staff is salary wise. It does not compare to others. So, we are losing staff members based on that as well.

So, based on these extracts, it would appear that managers felt constrained by a lack of financial resources in order to acquire and maintain other resources for delivering value. Continuing with the pattern of exogenous change that managers had to embrace, the participant explained that:

We never used to present workshops online, which we did since last year. So, now I mean, there's thousands of students that we could reach with that. …we have online resources that obviously COVID also helped us with a lot. So, we

were forced to create, we had already in 2019 online toolkit, but then we recreated a lot more in 2020.

The theme trajectory appearing in data continued to show how managers initially felt threatened by the exogenous change but, in the end, leveraged valuable resource attributes from it, as the participant concluded:

And that's a thing with COVID, It was super scary. How will we be able to perform our work from home etc.? But once we start looking for the opportunities now we're like, it gave us so many new skills and so many new resources.

Participant CF5 spoke about finances and emphasised that since financial resources were limited, staff needed to work smart, creatively and use other resources to generate financial resources. The participant said:

We are managing our own finances. The university doesn't support us financially, we're responsible for our own income. I've convinced my colleagues as well. Work smart, in the way that we are managing our finances and they bought into it, so not everything is about money. We are also providing conference accommodation and those services as well.

The participant further explains that:

Human capital is one of your very most important things. Secondly, you need to be very aware of your budget.

Participant CF6 also paired human capital with financial resources as critical in Student Affairs:

So, within a space, there's human capital, you must employ it because if you don't, you've lost an opportunity. So, for me, I make sure that I tap into a resource and I'm not thick-headed that I am a [job title]. I use them to look good, because that's a resource at my disposal. And the other resource that I think is helpful is, finances. So, I think I can maybe mention those two; human resources and financial resources.

University C provided data that further stabilised the code template, supporting the current theme. While exogenous events precipitated the sole use of technology in delivering services, internet connectivity was also leveraged to create value in a form of providing engagement platforms with wider reach to students, providing new skills and even facilitating student governance processes such as the SRC elections. Financially, control was self-imposed by managers controlling other managers through budgets and accountability processes. Furthermore, it would appear that managers felt constrained by lack of financial resources in order to acquire and maintain other resources for delivering value.

University D case:

The pattern of theme 3 **(Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower')** continued to resonate and stabilised in data at University D, with various sets of data from staff participants in various leadership positions pointing to the power of financial resources, in terms of acquiring other resources. In this case (University D) there was an interesting and unique element on fundraising (creating financial resources) as well as marketing of a specific support service offering. Furthermore, internet connectivity also continued to be a key resource element, starting from it being an imposed means of communication and operation to the need to train employees.

Data from participant DF1 indicated the elements of theme 3 and highlights the criticality of financial resources. This is what participant DF1 said:

> *…to make sure that you can get the financial resources allocated to us, based on what we we're looking at, so finance also comes in, big time. But at my level, it's a matter of making sure that I make an assessment for me to motivate for finances.*

Then the participant indicated how the structure acts as a leverage for senior management support as a source of financial and non-financial resources and this was explained as follows:

> *Yeah, look, someone from management is key. I must say that at [name of university] we have the [senior management offices] working closely, so, I've got the support from the [senior management offices] I can tell you, they make my life easy. And I also think being in each other spaces longer, we know*

each other, so, it's at a point where I say, I need this, you know, I don't struggle. There's a resource I need, the two colleagues know that by now if the [job title] says I need this, [participant] must have done the correct dotting of the "i's" and crossing of the "t's" to make this happen. So, it is supported…

The latter data indicate that the financial resource controlling force is contextually relative, in that middle managers in support services leverage senior management support to mitigate the resource-creation restraining force. The participant concludes by further making examples of how the financial resource constraints impact on other resources. The participant said:

…particularly when thinking of other departments with posts being frozen, because there isn't finances that are sustaining those positions. So, look, I do not generate any income, I don't charge people fees so, I do not have money coming back in, but I value what I bring in.

So, finance has the biopower to control the existence of posts in departments. That is how life works anywhere. However, what these data indicated was that some managers were able to leverage the support from senior management to get more resources, as opposed to those managers who did not have support and ended up with smaller teams. Participant DF2 also acknowledged the practice of creating financial resources through fundraising, but he also pointed out the challenge of COVID-19 pandemic constraints and said that:

It's not easy. It's not like previous years. You can't even host like external events. And you know, we need to raise funds, so, it's difficult now to raise funds, due to COVID-19 restrictions. So, it's a challenge, especially when it comes to raising funds.

Participant DF2 brought the question of technology and internet connectivity, which was mentioned as a critical resource for staff members. The participant said:

Yeah, let's say for my team because now we are using a lot of laptops. We need data, because now we're not using Wifi. Yeah, there's lot of things you can achieve, if you have enough money, [or] enough resources.

Participant DF3 spoke about innovativeness in developing various e-services (or electronic/online services) but presenting them here will compromise the participant's identity. Data from this participant showed unique ways of generating financial resources. The participant narrated that:

> *…it's a combination. We get funded by the university as part of the requirements, whatever the university gives us, it's my KPA [key performance area]. Whatever the university gives me, I have to raise [a certain percent] of that. So, if the university gives me R50 million to go and find [a certain percentage] of that, so it actually balances out because it requires every one of us in the ecosystem from myself as a [job title] to my team to find ways and means of raising funds. And we don't only look at cash, but we also look at [non-monetary donations] in kind.*

As the participant concluded on this aspect, they (gender deliberately concealed) said:

> *We've gone out to raise funds for bursaries and even now I think as a [redacted] division, I think I'm one of the few that gets a huge budget for [redacted] scholarships. The university sees [type of support service] as a marketing tool, but it is also seen as a contributor towards the welfare and wellbeing of both staff and students.*

Data from this participant revealed a managerial practice for creation of resources using stakeholders and fundraising skills. Furthermore, data reveal a unique role of a support service department that partners with other university stakeholders in recruitment of students as well as offering scholarships to students.

What follows now is the presentation of results of theme 3 from the student participants' data of the four research sites. From the student participants' aggregate code template, this theme was initially named "Information, IT connectivity, equipment and communication", based on patterns observed in data as well as the interpretation of the clustering codes juxtaposed with empirical data. In the student participants' data, there was no salient concept referring to finance per se (other than NSFAS), so, the concept of finance was only prevalent in staff participants' data.

4.3.3.3.2 Student participants' data at University A for Theme 3

Data from University A's student participants clustered around "Information technology network resources" which connects to theme 3. Data from this cohort of research participants, developed a pattern and shed some light on the indispensable need for information technology and internet connectivity and how these resources have an existential biopower on the student social and academic experience.

Participant AU1 showed frustration about the insufficient supply of technological equipment that they need as students and he summarised their needs as follows:

> *The resources that are most important, are: printing, scanners, [and] computers. If you go to the [name of department] and I only just want to print something, but they would refuse and tell me it's only for the offices and I don't understand why because if resources are there, they are for us to use.*

Participant AU2 spoke about the internet in the context of online learning and online services and he made the following opinion:

> *I think online learning alone will result in the quantity of qualified students rather than the quality of qualified students.*

Data from participants AU3 and AU4 did not show any reference to the information technology and internet. Participant AU5 echoed the sentiments of participant AU2, but also pointed out their total dependence on network connectivity, which can be a serious challenge in the villages and rural areas of the country. The participant said that:

> *Online learning is a bit challenging, because of poor network at our homes and others don't have it all, so you will miss classes and the online classes, there is no one explaining step by step, you know.*

Participant AU6 did not share any thoughts and experiences on the concepts of information technology and connectivity. This is how participant AU7 shared their experience with regards to connectivity (including connection challenges during this research interview):

We have frustration. I just told you now that I have a connection problem, but we do have the WiFi in this residence. It's just that it's very weak. We're experiencing challenges.

When discussing his opinion and experiences on the effectiveness of online support services, participant AU7 said:

I disagree with the online [support service] session, it won't be as effective. I think if one is having an online session, we're like talking over the phone, I think, counselling a student is beyond that. There should be emotions involved, I don't think you can have an emotional conversation over the phone, because the issue of depression is serious, especially at a university level and I don't think that it can be championed through phones or laptops.

Some participants at University C also expressed reservations about the effectiveness of a non-face to face counselling services – because, as they argued, they want to see sincerity in the support service employees. And when they see sincerity they become confident that whatever elements of service they absorb, will have a solution effect on their challenges. Participant AU8 did not venture into the concepts of the current theme.

Data from student participants of University A did not support the whole theme but had sufficient data attributes connecting to the concept of information technology and internet connectivity, as a valuable resource for support services. Data indicated that there was heavy dependence on the internet connectivity, while other pointers were that information technology does not sufficiently address the intimate support service needs (e.g., there is insufficient human connection to human problems).

4.3.3.3.3 Student participants' data at University B for Theme 3:

The theoretical sampling of the concepts under theme 3, from University A, continued with the template still developing, but the main issues from data were circling around information technology and internet connectivity.

Participant BU1 spoke about the potential benefit of using the information technology to provide confidential feedback to the university and this is what they said:

I would say, if there's a platform like an anonymous platform where people can speak their opinions without [being identified]… I don't trust this institution. If there's a platform like that, I can air my opinions about maybe not receiving support, then I'll be happy to be part of that platform, but in the absence of such a platform, <u>I don't think, personally, I"ll be able to speak about these issues because I"m scared to be victimised</u>.

These data indicate that without the availability of a platform to air the student voices, they feel trapped in a circle of frustrations.

Without the option of in-person communication and conventional learning, during the COVID-19 lockdowns in South Africa, the poor state of the electricity and mobile network infrastructure heightened the level of frustrations and showing the inter-dependence of technology and human action.

Participant BU2 explained it as follows:

…though they went online, there was lots of load-shedding. I remember with myself, I registered, but I couldn"t get hold of anybody. You place a call and 72 hours later, you are not heard. It was so frustrating and some students just said we gave up, we can't focus, we can't work like this. We can't keep on placing calls and then they'll say the person is not available. And I remember when I look at the strings of emails that I've sent to admin. Ah man.

In the reported absence of a trusted reporting platform, students resort to (or only have) social platforms to voice out their frustrations and participant BU3 commented as follows:

You know what's been very effective in the past couple of years, has been social media pages, that are [University B-led] but are not run [with emphasis] by [University B]. Those ones are exceptional because they speak out against the university when there are instances of injustice. They speak out when there's just random incidents that the university really doesn't care about.

Likewise, data from participant BU4 reveal that non-availability of internet connectivity leads to student protests. The participant narrated this as follows:

…we also had a protest in my residence a few weeks ago and WiFi was a very big issue. WiFi was, it was like, you would be in the middle of a test, it would just go off. It was resolved though only after protests.

The internet connectivity as a resource has an existential value, in the context of access and use of support services (i.e., online counselling, health service bookings, etc.), academic learning, communication, commercial transactions, socialisation, voting for the SRC, etc. Even for basic necessities that may be taken for granted such as booking a meal *(food)* in a residence dining hall, applying for a residence (*shelter*), or contacting and requesting security services *(safety)* in case of emergency. When asked about the value of internet connectivity, Participant BU4 responds profoundly and says:

So, for me, WiFi is a form of biopower because it controls the little spheres of my life. If I don't have access to internet, I basically can't do anything, I become nonexistent at [University B].

The statement by participant BU4 became a game-changer in how the current theme with respect to the value of internet connectivity is further interpreted, as a critical resource for support services in particular and as a resource in general for various spheres of university life of research participants. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way we all do things, in a sense, making staff and students totally dependent on the internet connectivity for all their spheres of university life.

Internet connectivity replaced the physical human interaction and it was frustrating for Participant BU5:

This online experience, diverted from my own expectations. I expected to go to campus, even during the O-week [orientation week] I wanted to go there, meet people, make friends with people and things like that. And that didn't happen.

So, data from University B, indicate that students generally felt some kind of a 'biopower' control or total dependence on the internet connectivity, such that, without it, they either felt nonexistent as students, or they stage a protest to reclaim their existence as students. However, as was the case with the "finance" element on staff,

some student participants felt the internet connectivity cannot be a substitute for physical human interaction and this was reported on University A as well in terms of emotional support services.

4.3.3.3.4 Student participants' data at University C for Theme 3

In the previous case of University B, the element of physical human interaction became prominent as a critical factor amidst online activities, but data from previous themes (i.e., theme 1), specifically sub-theme "service exchange value and ethics" of theme 1 suggested that value is in *how* the service exchange is conducted. So, even though University C had made the online consultation available to students, participant CU1, points out that the "how" part of service exchange can be a deciding factor on whether services can be used or not and this is what she said:

> *I always knew that we have a [name of support service department] on campus. I tried them at one time, I called and asked the lady if the line is free, or is it charged because I had little airtime with me so, I wanted to know, can I proceed with my story, Or is it gonna cut any time, she was like, it's charged and that was it. So, I consulted the other department, which is not related to the university. And that lady referred me back to the university, she said our offices are far. Can you please consult with the one on campus and I didn't even bother because of the atmosphere in the way I was welcomed the first time I called.*

Indicating heavy dependence on the internet connectivity on a constant basis, participant CU2, admits that; *I'm always on my phone.* The participant further pointed to other communication media that are prevalent at University C and said:

> *To communicate, they use Blackboard, they use our [name of university] student email addresses. They also use the PeopleSoft [system], like when you go into your PeopleSoft app, you want to check your statement, or your profile, you can go to announcement and then you're going to get all the stuff or whatever that is happening, current events, future events, past events where you actually get the link, we can actually get the information.*

Participant CU3 had a responsibility of running a student leadership structure, so, she made reference to financial resources and said:

What comes to mind when you mentioned the word resources in relation to Student Affairs. Um, physical resources the campus resources that are available for structures and also some funding because I'm not sure how but I knew that student structures could apply for extended funding. But I knew that there was this support that is available. So, it's just like the physical resources that are available on campus and also the financial resources that are available for student structures.

Data from participant CU4 also connects to the 'push-back' element on internet connectivity, in that physical human interaction is equally important and this is what she said:

I'll be honest that for me, it's better to go see someone face to face. Maybe it's a [redacted] thing, but to read their face and see if they're actually sincere in helping you, so, it wouldn't really be the best thing for students if they weren't on campus. Definitely, it is good that they have both the online platform where they use emails and telephone and so on, but it is really also preferred, for those who can obviously in proximity of the university, to actually have that face-to-face.

Similar to the previous participant (CU2), participant CU4 also spoke about various online platforms and said:

So, we use Blackboard. They send out quite a lot of awareness, you know, processes and things and let students know when there are activities or when there are webinars or such things going on, on campus. So, they do use that platform quite a lot, they do use emails.

Participant CU5 repeated the sentiments of participant in the previous case (University B), in terms of suggesting some anonymous feedback system on support services and this is what she said when she was speaking about her negative experiences at the university:

So, I was asking myself that what exactly should I do, because if I go there to Student Affairs and report, it's not going to be a matter of just maybe taking it light or what, maybe they're going to take action and can you imagine if they take action, maybe the [redacted] is being punished or whatever. What is

going to happen, there were many questions, so, I ended up saying that, but why don't they maybe have some tools. That's what came in my mind and this tool is like a questionnaire where they evaluate what they went over, maybe after three months or after a semester.

This participant further mentioned that the other reason she wanted to participate in the current research was that she wanted to get an opportunity to also speak about their specific service and academic experience – details of which cannot be published. Data from participant CU6 show that the participant felt that they unwillingly had to surrender to a non-human interaction of a university life when COVID-19 pandemic hit the country and only online communication was available. The participant felt controlled and trapped by the virtual world of internet and he expressed this as follows:

…it's hectic, it's only emails with a supervisor. Emails with the department. So, I cannot even access the books right now. It is not easy to get the books. So, this is quite hectic, working from a distance, but life goes on. There's nothing I can do. Tomorrow I'm defending my proposal virtually, nothing I can do about it, life goes on. I'm only using online material. Secondly, I couldn't meet my supervisor, we had to do it virtually. I'm missing the campus itself, you know, being on campus chilling. So, yeah, a lot of disruptions.

Data from University C provided evidence on the thematic construct "internet connectivity" from theme 3 of the study. What it indicated is the value of the construct as a support service resource, but most importantly the shortfalls of internet connectivity that Student Affairs practitioners and those in the service exchange sector can explore further for value co-creation. The code template got stable, but in the next site (University D), it was further tested for possible theoretical saturation.

4.3.3.3.5 Student participants' data at University D for Theme 3:

At University D, a first-year student participant (Participant DU1) who had not attended the university orientation due to registration delays, pointed out that they had to rely on the guidance and information from a university App (Application software). Participant DU1 explained the uses of the online technology and said:

You are able to send an email to request to interact with your lecturer. But also, we are using the Blackboard App. So, there is also a certain platform called [redacted]. So, you're able to, it's either you're talking to your laptop, or you're talking to your tutor.

Participant DU2 who was also a first-year student indicated a sense of not being connected or belonging to a university campus and went to say that:

It was very confusing because like we were still adjusting and getting information about the university, things like Blackboard and how are modules. We communicated via email. We also have WhatsApp groups where we can communicate with some of our tutors and some of our lecturers.

As in the previous cases, data continue to show that while the internet connectivity is critical, but it has limitations and participant DU2 had this to add:

I prefer face to face lecturing than online. Online learning there are lots of challenges. With online we experience network problems and you find out that the lecturer is not recording the session and when you write online tests, you can also experience online problems. And that's going to affect you bad because the timing doesn't also stop and some of the lecturers they don't give added time.

While the participant referred more to academic service, but the gist of the sentiments is similar to participants in case 1 (or University A) and case 3 (or University C).

The experiences and preferences varied among research participants. Participant DU3 for example had this to say about online interactions:

It was challenging because we had to adapt, so, those first weeks, it was not easy because we struggled academically because even our performances were down so, to adjust how to write online how to submit, so, it was quite challenging but when we got used to it, it was a bit friendly because when you are learning online, you don't have to travel to campus.

This participant also emphasised the indispensability of technology which seemed like a determining factor whether they can engage in studying or not and he emphatically said;

> …as a student I need a laptop, so that I can be able to access the class, …they teach us about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and everything about technology.

Participant DU4 corroborated the previous evidence around the importance of technology if one is to be a student at a university and he said:

> So, it's quite hard because I didn't have a laptop, so, for the four classes I had to use my cell phone. The cell phone is quite small and you can't see everything in the slides so that was another problem in the first week.

As they spoke about the Student Affairs, participant DU4 brought in the angle of social media and the influence on students in making use of the support services and this is what he said:

> I've never been to [name of support service department] because on the social media platform, I saw people saying that may be they are incompetent at [name of support service department].

These data indicate that the internet influence the decisions of service users. When reflecting on the national lockdown-rush in March/April 2020 due the COVID-19 pandemic, participant DU5 narrated it as follows:

> I will say it was a very emotional thing for everyone. I was scared, I was wondering how things are going to be but at the end of the day, things worked out, we have student support, they gave us lessons online on how to navigate through this new normal. So, but for my side because I had a laptop, so, [University D] managed to provide some data for us.

The participant spoke about the apprehension and anxiety on everyone, the online interventions, but hastened to indicate a sense of relief about the possession of technology. Participant DU5 continued and said:

I think on [University D] portal there, you will see everything. You'll see a detailed proposal of the day. They'll send that information on our emails, I think each and every student email and they send every information regarding everything in support services and it was a matter of us students taking up the information and everything.

Participant DU6 spoke about the main mode of communication that the student support service departments use and said:

Usually, they communicate via email to inform us about their upcoming events. Maybe during exams, you know, the [type of support service], where they say you can check in with us, you know. The SRCs tried to engage with management to cater for data.

Data from University D from student research participants showed strong link to the theme with regards to internet and connectivity 'biopower'. Participants spoke about the importance of internet and connectivity to carry out their critical daily activities as students. The code template produced the same results as in the previous sites, with participants speaking about their reliance on this type of a resource, while others saying; *I"ll be honest that for me, it's better to go see someone face to face,* because they want to see sincerity which is a critical element of support services exchange.

4.3.3.3.6 Theme 3 Summary:

Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower' is a theme that resulted from a culmination of the observations of data that point to "financial resources" being enabling and inhibiting at the same time, for support service strategy. This was expected, but it contributes to explaining the phenomenon of instabilities in Student Affairs or higher education which remains under-researched. Data suggested that managers can actually ameliorate the financial predicaments, through leveraging senior management support as also noted by van Niekerk's (2018) findings, as well as through conducting fundraising initiatives. Internet connectivity appeared in the data, as a critical resource for support services from both staff and student research participants. Managers indicated that they had to arrange for training on new skills and that they gained economies of scale when it came to engaging students on

online platforms. Students found it to be sine qua non for their social and academic lives, while they also lamented the loss of a human interaction of support services.

4.3.3.4 Theme 4: Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level

In her context, studying the 'strategising' of support service managers at a South African university, van Niekerk (2018:vii), defined middle managers, as those "[M]anagers [who] report to managers at a more senior level and have managers reporting to them". Middle managers are essential actors in strategic renewal. Their unique positions offer insights into operations alongside knowledge of strategy (Tarakci, Ates, Floyd, Ahn and Wooldridge, 2018). Citing Mintzberg (1989), Gjerde and Alvesson (2020), noted that 'middle managers play an important part in organisational hierarchies from their position placed between the operating core and the apex'. In the context of the present study, the brief aforementioned literature indirectly describes the position of Student Affairs in higher education structure, especially when it comes to strategy influence and interpretation. To this end what came out as a theme (Theme 4) was termed 'strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation'. The theme is described as a state whereby support service middle managers use the emergent patterns from service exchange and engagement dynamics to influence higher level strategic goals, as well as enacting their own visions while interpreting high level objectives to functional plans.

This is the only theme that did not appear from the student participants' data, save to say that on the final code template for the student participants aggregated concepts, there are codes (i.e., support service delivery through students and student structures) and interpretive sub-theme (i.e., collaborative support service delivery). The relevant extract (from student participants' data) of concepts, codes and sub-themes from the final template is depicted below:
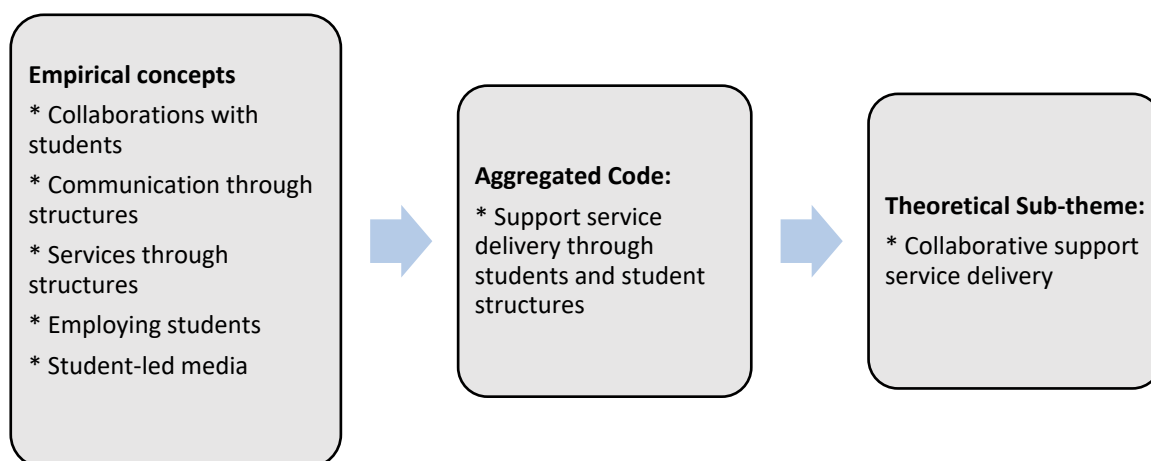
Figure 4.5: Collaborative support service delivery sub-theme

Source: Researcher-compiled

This code and sub-theme describe a process whereby Student Affairs interpret strategic activities to student leaders and hence one staff research participant at University A described an approach where strategy is infused in the student leadership/governance programmes. This sub-theme was incorporated under theme 4 but also has links to theme 2. What follows now is the presentation of data that built theme 4, emanating from the analysis and interpretation of staff research participants' data.

4.3.3.4.1 Theme 4 at the various cases (research sites)

University A case

At a broader strategic view, participants at University A described their mission as providing outside-classroom services and the services were in support of University A's vision, but also providing semi-independent services such as 'accredited training of students', which is a unique finding in the present study. In explaining how they support and influence the university strategy, participant AF1 said:

> *We are co-curricular because the university has a programme called general education for first years, where you teach things like study skills, awareness around different issues, basic computer skills, things like citizenship and all of those things. We are also involved in doing lecturing for certain faculties. In addition, there are, for example, some of our departments get external*

funding, say from a SETA, for student support training on things like dealing with anxiety, coping with stress, making the transition to university, etc.

The strategic influence is in providing academic engagement skills to first years and other students, and thus drawing the attention of the university to the importance of co-curricular programmes. This is further unpacked by participant AF5 later. The current participant continues to speak on how they support what is known as the university's core business:

We also would provide guidance, on how to identify students at risk and to make referrals to our academic staff.

So, they also assist in propping up the academic project to achieve its goals (i.e., student success). This is done through gauging academic engagements and the general wellbeing of students on the ground and feed this back to the mainstream academic project.

Data that serve as practical examples from participant AF1, on how they as student support service, put strategic synergy into what they do, is included the following statements:

We, in [name of department], have a seat at the academic boards and the faculty boards. We collect data, then we will say, what are the trends you notice, what are the things that are of particular significance? What are areas where we think there needs to be interventions? And that you can only get that from stats. So, you go to the faculty boards with sanitised stats with no names. So, we go there and we'll say faculty X, Y and Z., in the last quarter we noticed that a lot of your students came to us because they're having learning issues or difficulty relating to your lecturers, or there's a lot of people coming with [redacted] and [redacted]. We're seeing an increase in whatever. So, the faculty says, okay, we need to implement some programmes. And the thing is, it's closing the loop, collecting information and sharing that information.

At a different level of strategy influence and enactment, participant AF1 elaborates as follows:

So, we are accredited by HPCSA as a [type of profession] internship site. It is a programme we're very proud of. We have received good review reports from them when they came to audit us. We draw from universities across the country, we have interns from, this year for example we've got one from Pretoria University, from UFS and of course, our local collaborating one is [name of another university]. So, those are doing the registered Intern training. But in addition to that, we also have a service level agreement, which is formally signed with [name of another university], where they come to us one day a week and with their M1 [redacted] interns.

Data from participant AF1 provided an explanation of how strategy influence and interpretation is conducted, in this context, including upward influence through propping the academic project. Interventions included training students on study skills, etc., assessing students at risk and providing statistical data to faculties on negative academic performance trajectories. On the other hand, providing independent accredited training to a certain profession, which also enhance the reputation of University A within the higher education sector.

Participant AF2 shared their plans that suggested how his department's activities contribute strategically by putting their institution 'on the map' at a national level in higher education and this is what he said:

We organise competitions between campuses. Normally set at the beginning of the year where all first years at [name of campus] play against first years of [name of campus] and then later in August we'll have a [redacted] Cup, where selected teams from [name of campus] play against selected teams from [name of campus]. Then, obviously, the clubs in the local leagues, play in different competitions, or national competitions with other universities.

This kind of a programme has a potential, if run successfully, to boost the reputation of the institution and thus attract students and external funders – which is a strategic contribution. The participant further clarifies how they influence strategy through quality employee appointments:

…when we recruit [redacted], we're trying to get the best [redacted], so, we can get aligned. So, when the university is on the map for research, our side will also need to do well in terms of [name of department] performance.

Further contribution to position the university strategically, the participant shared that:

We are currently developing a [redacted] bursary policy that we will be putting through different levels for approval.

Data from participant AF3 show how one of the departments under Student Affairs/Student Support Services play a strategic role for the university in managing funds from government and other external funders, directed at students. The participant said:

Our main funder is the [name of external entity]. And then you've got a whole lot of other funders and sponsors who will either come through on a yearly basis, with the requirements and then they would entrust this office to do the selection from a pool of students that are going to meet their requirements.

Similar to participant AF1, data from participant AF4 clarifies the Student Affairs distinct strategic role at University A. Participant AF4 said:

We focus more on co-curricular; we focus more on the things that don't happen in the the lecture halls. We are more on holistic or, holistic support or holistic wellness of the students rather than your academics.

So, while the fundamental university mission is teaching and research, the research data suggest that the support wing of a university influences strategy on the activities that don't happen in the lecture halls and laboratories. Participant AF4 provides practical details on how they interpret the university strategy and further infuse it into student activities and this is what the participant said:

The university has the strategy. So, whatever we do we make sure we keep in our thinking the university strategic goals and try to make sure that students are the champions of strategy. For example, two weeks ago we looked at the strategy of [name of university] which is, [redacted], so, we developed a programme to educate student leaders to infuse this strategy in their everyday

activities. In terms of how well they are developed to be thought leaders, you know and, also to channel their thinking to long-term direction and how they can make impact in their communities, because universities are an extension of communities.

Similar to participant AF1 on strategically supporting the university's core business, participant AF5 discussed the programme they implement to support students academically in order to bolster academic success. Participant AF5 explained their strategic intervention as follows:

When it comes to issues of wellness and academic challenges, we have a tutorial programme, [which] is one of the services that we offer. It's called [redacted acronym] and we do it in collaboration with the [redacted] Teaching and Learning. They convene the mentorship programme, they train the tutors and allocate tutors to respective [redated], for academic programmes that have been flagged such as engineering and other critical courses.

Corroborating data from participant AF4 on Student Affairs strategic interventions going beyond the university life of a student, participant AF5 spoke about their strategic role for the university and said:

…students should have a broad overview of what is happening in the communities and the community being part of [name of university], the City, nationally, internationally. All those kinds of things have to do with the holistic development so that you don't just have a graduate with a qualification but who doesn't know what's happening and who cannot survive after graduating.

Participant AF5 also reflected on how they interpret and enact the university strategy down through various units of support services and this is what he said:

The other thing is that there is a new strategy and each unit must demonstrate how they are contributing towards the achievement of it. So, as a result now when you do your performance management system, it must reflect it [the new strategy].

Further corroborative data between participants AF4 and AF5 is also tabled below, as an extract from participant's AF6 input:

…what we have done for instance, last year when the new [university's] strategy came into place we sat down, we looked at different areas in terms of what the strategy is talking in terms of our own[support service department] areas, so, if you speak about systems and processes for instance is one of the elements of the new strategy so, with us, we'll unpack our programmes and try to align them with the university strategy in all areas, be it in [one functional area], or [another functional area] and we send our [redacted] to discuss with students.

Data from participant AF6 concretise the corroboration of the data evidence on this case for theme 4, in terms of how Student Affairs strategically contribute to university goals and in a sense influence how these goals are achieved. For example, helping in producing a well-rounded graduate, or producing strategic thinking student leaders, or contributing to tackling academic dropout rate (through tutorial and mentorship programmes). Also, tapping into data from participant AF1 and thus stabilising the code template, participant AF6 shared their experience like this:

You identify those high-risk courses because then, students enrolled for those courses are at high risk of not being able to complete their work, but also that they are at risk of dropping out, so, you"ve got to put in support systems that actually reduce dropout rates and improve throughput rate and graduation.

You then bring in the notion of holistic student support, so that you address what we call, those students who are in the middle, who are stuck between various levels and therefore experience challenges in terms of successfully completing their qualifications and you need to provide the kind of academic support programmes, which include; your residence tutorial programme, your supplemental instruction and so, forth.

As if summarising the whole theme 4, in terms of how Student Affairs influence and interpret strategy, participant AF6 concluded as follows:

Every year the university draws up what's called an annual performance plan. And then, that is now for the purpose of compliance with DHET reporting requirements, but for our own internal purpose we then translate the annual performance plan, to an extended annual performance plan, which must then

speak to the university's strategy, which is then further broken down and cascaded to individual departments, up to individual staff members, by way of your performance agreements, where you will then contract, to say the university aspires to achieve one, two and three, for this year and this is how I am going to contribute to that, which is why most divisions are coming with new innovations, things that were not there in the past, in order to ensure that we support the vision.

Data from University A demonstrated support for theme 4, in shedding some light on how Student Affairs leaders influence, enact, interpret and support the university strategy. This is achieved in varying ways of resource leveraging, in a form of their training capabilities, student engagement capabilities, collaborations and their accredited skills. Furthermore, data show nuanced ways of how support service strategy dovetails with an organisational goal and thus add a difference.

University B case:

Theme 4 is now assessed against University B, on whether empirical data interrupted or replicated the pattern from the previous case (University A).

When discussing structural changes in their Division of Student Affairs participant BF1 indicates that change was centred on a certain strategic thinking for the division and this is what they said:

What she [leader] really wanted to do, was for the change not only be driven by the finances, but more by what is the strategy and how to bring about a more student centred approach.

Emphasising the strategic role, especially that of student support and engagement of student leadership, the participant says:

After "fees must fall" I think people really saw our value. And we dealing with many issues, crisis after crisis, it's always Student Affairs that has to come to the fore. I think that question always comes up as we always have to fight for our existence, but we know if we have to take out Student Affairs, the institution will be in a crisis.

Participant BF1 further unpacks their strategic role pertaining to assisting the university in creating partnerships between student leaders and the university at large and this is how she elaborated on this point:

Our model and our intention is really that, we see students as active participants in determining the nature of learning and the experiences, so we really try to work as much as collaboratively and almost in partnership where we can, we also acknowledge and understand that there are times when students exercise their political muscle. And so, there are times when we know we have to deal with contentious politics, so we engage with student leaders. I think the relationship is good, I mean certainly that's why I feel we're gonna have those tough conversations with students and if they protest, we're always pushing the idea that we must bring them back to the table, but we understand that if they protest peacefully its obviously their right. And when things go haywire and you probably can relate to this, you know, during Fees must fall for example, there were times when we had to go and assist or support students who were in jail cells and going to court as a result of the political activism.

Data from participant BF2 continue with the pattern of holistic student development as a central element of how Student Affairs contributes to the university strategy and this is what they said when speaking about their experiences on structural changes in their department:

…so, we had a new [executive leader] that was appointed in I think it was [redacted]. She actually retired in [redacted]. But the changes that she brought about was to look at holistic development of students… optimising the academic success of students and social integration of students became very much a focus in that last decade.

A strong pattern emerges from data on the process and interpretation of strategy for Student Affairs, similar to that of University A. Participant BF2 presented the process as follows:

We would annually present strategic plans. And those strategic plans would cascade down from the university's strategic plan. And so that was quite a

well-established pattern. So, support was there. And there were huge issues, I would then work with the relevant office, which is the office of the [redacted] and if it is a matter of mental health, I will work with colleagues in Student Health. If it's a matter of sport, I will work with Sport and if it's a matter of facilities and environment, I will collaborate, so, our role was very much a generalist role, with connectivity to specialists, yeah, including the faculty.

Similar to University A case, the participant spoke about how they also developed semi-independent strategies that contributed to the overall university goal. Only a short statement from this participant (BF2) is included, where she said; *…we are putting together a leadership academy. It's still in its early stages.* The participant shared a lot of details that cannot be published here for confidentiality and protection of their innovations for their nascent leadership academy. However, other interventions that indicate university strategy interpretation by Student Affairs leadership include practical programmes that have also emerged from the previous case and one example is in what participant BF2 said:

Sifiso, (the researcher), what I'm beginning to see is that my colleagues working in the academic support and tutoring as I said they are trying to align it with what's happening in the faculties. So, the kinds of things that they are doing, the content of their tutoring programme. One of the things that they've also worked on was about a multilingual project. So, again, what we do we try to align very much with where the university is going?

On the strategy sense-making and interpretation, the participant explains it as follows:

What I tend to do Sifiso, is, I tend to be a consultative and collaborative but try to work strictly to vision and strategy. And when there's something that I'm not sure how it aligns to the strategy of course and I consult with my seniors and say, what do you think of this? Would you agree that this is supportive of the strategy?

Data continued to indicate a strong pattern on the emphasis of aligning the university strategic goals and the Student Affairs strategic plans. Participant BF3 explained it like this:

So, there is the university-wide goals that have been structured so, when we do our own strategic planning sessions we make sure that we address the goals and part of those goals is to definitely ensure that we have a diverse team that responds to the diverse needs of our students, as you see, when I first joined [University B], we did not have a black African [profession] in my team. It's also good for students to feel free to express themselves in certain languages. And so, diversifying and meeting the transformation goals of the university. So, certainly we align with the university goals in terms of what we deliver.

In line with the broader aims of a strategy, participant BF3 concludes by discussing how their strategy provides holistic development of students and also goes beyond the confines of the university and this is what they said:

It's not only about the academic project, it's also about the wellbeing of the student in order for them to succeed academically and beyond succeeding academically and having a [name of university] certificate and be that global citizen and graduate with co-resilience for the demands of the world.

Data from participant BF4 summarises the pattern of upward strategy alignment but also concretises the issue of strategy enactment and influence. Participant BF4 started by saying:

We are working on the framework of the department at the moment and we'll be having a strategy plan, actually, at end of the year so, we will now be plotting the strategy plan until [redacted].

In demonstrating that strategic management is not just limited to the private sector or limited to high levels of a university, the participant provided clear indication of Student Affairs role and this is what participant BF4 said:

…my framework and of course as you can hear, the framework of the [University B] is about [redacted] and we're (Student Affairs) talking about [redacted]. So, those two are matching, even though they were developed separately, they are aligned and in fact, every Executive had their initial sort of conceptual development but of course they enter into what they refer to as the lekgotla, which is sort of like the extended Executive [management planning

session]. And when we had a workshop there, you know, given my personality, or how I framed [Name of Student Affairs] so, now it becomes one of the scaffolding legs for the university, you know, so, now the framework that I'm working on is no longer just a [University B] one. This is one of the legs for the university. So, in that way, there is a fit for purpose, so to speak.

The above data actually encompasses how the current theme was conceptualised, except that the current theme was initially developed from the previous case, with a code template tested on the subsequent cases. The participant concluded by venturing into how Student Affairs as a fraternity, has partnered with other bodies in higher education and how they strategically influence national policy and this is what the participant said:

We have made really big strides as SAASSAP. One of the key things we've done now is the social compact, which we had partnered with USAf and SAUS (South African Union of Students, composed of SRCs), right. I mean if you look at the universities now, they have a social compact. Secondly, we have worked on the national student governance framework, which now is before the Minister.

Theme 4 received solid support from University B, with patterned links to evidence at University A. The code template on the current theme got stable at University B. What follows is further test of the code template on the current theme at University C.

University C case:

Participant CF1 begins by spelling out the strategic distinct role of Student Affairs which defines the kind of service that they provide to students and this is what the participant said:

…ours is to take care of students outside the classroom environment. And that is where students basically spend most of their lives at varsity. We are a terrain of development. It's one thing for students to get the qualification that they desire. But if we are to prep our students effectively for the world beyond varsity, you need to build a holistic student.

So, strategically the participant shows that they have a clear mandate to take care of students outside the classroom, but as is the norm with strategy impact, their interventions are aimed at having a far-reaching effect beyond university life of a student.

Closely linked with theme 2, the participant spoke about their strategic role of mediating and he said:

> *We are in the middle ground between the management of the institution and the voices of the students, that balancing act is very important. We are the division that deals again with protests or rather, making sure that we prevent protests in the space, you take us away as the sort of the middle-player in this whole situation, then I can almost guarantee you that there will be protest every second week at almost all our institutions, because in as much as the core of the institution of higher learning is the academic programme, without the social, our social aspect sustaining it, it will collapse. It would definitely collapse.*

Giving a practical example on their role of mediating, including pragmatic sense-making; participant CF1 says:

> *Often when the response is like that we always…[inaudible]…, when you look at responses, we can tell that this will not be accepted by students, because part of what we do is analyse the circumstances, you look at that response and you look at the situation and you know that if I tell students this, it will definitely erupt, so, you escalate it to Executive management. But still, if nothing can be done at that level, we again try to get parties to a compromise because, fortunately and we're fortunate our management does not really have a hard line approach on every issue.*

Participant CF1 explained that the overall mandate is to 'take care of students outside-classroom'. Participant CF2 expands the notion of care, in a way that explains how they interpret the university strategic direction and bring it down to their functional level activities. This is an approach similar to University A, where participant AF2 spoke about making students "champions of strategy". This is how

cross-cases constant comparison was conducted. Participant CF2 explained their strategic interpretation in the following manner:

We also had to look at our sense of care. How do we interpret care, a sense of care, how do we then become inclusive of really embracing them in our spaces in our services, you know, infrastructure and so, I think that element of care and understanding that our demographics as [name of university] is not only at certain point, it's now very inclusive from students who are coming from different social backgrounds. And we are also creating the space for those who really come from a certain background with zero support, so, our orientation programme had to also change.

The participant gives another example of how they employ academic staff on a part time basis (to work after hours) within Student Affairs, in order to ensure that the academic agenda filters through to their student support programmes and this is what they said:

We also have somebody from academics, so, we have a coordinator of [part time] academics, so, we'll reach out to, for instance teaching and learning, to find out the programmes that they are dealing with, even our house comm members that are house comm academics, we are training them, so that our students and our house comm members can understand the academic circle of the university and academic development of a student, so that when students come to them they know which service they will provide, so, we're using a lot of our house committee members. We had to at some point redesign our house comm portfolios to be focusing on support. So that is another vehicle that we have, strategically.

Data from participant CF3 show continuity on University C's strategic direction, when it comes to the notion of 'care' and the participant believes the university strategy aligns with their department. This is what participant CF3 said:

…so, they've added the inspiring excellence, transforming lives. It's now very recent, but in one of them it is that care for our students. So, luckily for us, obviously student wellbeing is our number one priority.

The participant gives an example of how their interventions of student support driven by the university strategic principle of care bear fruits on academic success and this is how she explained it:

> *So, we will get that feedback verbally from students saying, you know what, when I started this programme, like we've got a resilience programme with students, you know, I was really struggling or I didn't believe in my abilities and now I do and now I see the changes in my academics.*

Similar to other cases, Student Affairs practitioners were very clear about their strategic role at University C. Participant CF4 also explained it as follows:

> *Well, I think Student Affairs at large is responsible for certain key roles, over-archingly at the university. I think the first role is to look after the student wellness, that's important. Secondly, is to look at student development, holistically, to, you know, just look at holistic development of students in an integrated way.*

So, in terms of influence the university strategy, data seem to suggest that Student Affairs influence the university strategy by helping to produce a holistically-developed graduate. Participant CF4 narrates how they, as practitioners, align, interpret and infuse their plans with university strategy and this is what he said:

> *So, what we would typically do, we would invite top management people to our strategic sessions to share the vision of the university and we would then intentionally in our strategic plans create the link between our strategic objectives that we collectively created, to the strategic objectives of the university. So, your job as a senior leader is to keep processes together and to continuously bring alignment.*

The pattern of holistically-prepared graduates continues as a strategic influence by Student Affairs and participant CF5 narrated it as follows:

> *One of the pillars of the university is to provide a space for students, where they come in and be a fully prepared graduate, right. If that is what the university thrust is, one of the key things are that Student Affairs must be an enabler for growth of students outside of the classroom, [and] the role as an*

enabler, goes beyond just the psychosocial and physical. It also has to do with co-curricular development outside of class.

Like participant CF1, the current participant (CF5) emphasises the strategic role of engaging students and said:

I'm looking for the expression. "Nothing about us, without us". If you understand that, then you understand student engagement and the reason why it's so important. An engaged student will be more successful in adapting later on in his life.

Participant CF6 also spoke about wellbeing and holistic development, but this participant emphasised that:

Student Affairs also has to contribute towards the university strategy.

On practical activities, participant CF6 mentions the food security initiative that they are driving and believes that a healthy student is likely to succeed academically and this is how he expressed it:

…for me that contributes towards wellbeing of the student and that also has a knock-on effect on student success. A well-fed student would focus on studying. A healthy student would then focus on studying and then success would be guaranteed because you have a student that is taken care of.

Participant CF6 concludes by speaking about how their strategic interventions contributes to the broader society and he said:

The role of Student Affairs is to really calibrate a student leadership that will be globally competitive. Calibrate in the sense that young people are critical for the future. And Student Affairs has got an opportunity to interface with young people.

Data from University C solidified the code template on theme 4, with strong emphasis on how Student Affairs influence and interpret university strategy and how they also seek to contribute to society at large through holistically-developed graduates. Next is University D, which is the final case on the current theme.

University D case:

As a semi-independent support service strategy, participant DF1 explains that they actually contribute to the university marketing strategy through their support services so, the overall university strategy is influenced by their support service. The participant was specific on their strategic contribution but details (marketing strategy) cannot be published here. However, another strategic contribution that the participant shared was the following:

> *…we offer academic support; even psychological support and we offer 100% scholarship for students.*

On how they cascade the university strategic goals down to the junior employees' levels, the participant explained it as follows:

> *…there's a job description. Whatever that you do must be in line with a job description because there's performance reviews that you need to submit mid-year and a year review. So, whatever that you do, you must make sure that you're in line your job description.*

Data from participant DF2 indicate that their planning takes into consideration the global environment as well and then the university strategic goals. This was explained by the participant as follows:

> *…we look at the [redacted] calendar to get to say these are the issues that we're thinking of and some of them would not be based on the [redacted] calendar, that's promulgated by [name of an international organisation] or and each country will align their own calendar and looking at their own challenges.*

The participant mentioned that they actually do what is known as the SWOT analysis in their strategic sessions, so, it seems the external environment has a direct impact on this type of support service, as in many other support services such as mental health, sports, accommodation, transport, etc. Similar to the previous participant (DF1), participant DF2 also explains how they interpret the university strategy and she said:

> *So, we generally plan together and have them on an annual basis. At [name of university] all departments will come and share this kind of an exercise but*

at a strategic level. So, some of the issues that I pick up there, I then bring them down to the level of staff. So, in those sessions I do the [redacted] visits, walk-abouts and after the walk-abouts, I check [redacted/sub-units], you know, the environment of the [redacted/sub-units] and then that's where you share your thoughts and that's when you monitor those agreements that you made a year before.

Participant DF3 explains that they are actually actively involved with the university executive management, in designing the university strategy and this is how the participant explained it:

…there's the revision of the [name of university] vision and mission, which is now going to be looked at towards 2030. I'm part of the Executive Leadership Group and when there's strategy being discussed, [name of support service department/division] is also part of the strategy when we do annual reporting, in the midst of everyone in the institution, from faculties to human resources, [name of support service department] is part of those.

Data on the current theme from University D, suggested that some support service departments contribute directly to the marketing of the university including the issuing of student scholarships. The strategic thinking is done through the traditional SWOT analysis and global factors as well as university environments are considered in carving out the support service strategy. Data also indicate that strategy interpretation is done through inviting senior members of the university to present at the department levels and thereafter plans are developed and become part of individual employee performance. Another important point noted from data is that some senior leaders of Student Affairs form part of the university top management and they directly participate and influence the university strategy with regards to support for students.

4.3.3.4.2 Theme 4 summary

Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation. The theme's description located Student Affairs at a middle-management level and thus influential in galvanising service exchange and engagement strategic feedback for the university, while on the other hand facilitating the interpretation and

institutionalisation of university goals. The key thematic concepts included; strategy influencing and interpretation, strategy ownership and engagement, taking management strategy to staff, sense-making and communication, societal impact, holistic development, marketing tool and scholarships.

A sub-theme based on student participants' data, had thematic constructs that included; support service delivery through students and student structures and collaborative support service delivery. Data indicated that strategy interpretation is done through inviting senior management at the departmental planning sessions, and strategy is enacted through student activities and employee performance management systems. Influencing the university strategy is done through propping the academic project via providing information to faculties and conducting training to students on academic skills. Furthermore, influencing strategy is done through positioning the Student Affairs unique support services as part of student recruitment and offering bursaries. Another way of influencing strategy included the involving of Student Affairs leaders at an executive level of management. These practices are interpreted to be the varying ways of how resources, capabilities and value are generated for support service strategy.

4.3.4 QUALITATIVE RESULTS SUMMARY

The results presentation was discursive, but this summary provides a succinct synthesis. The qualitative results of the research process in the current chapter were presented through four themes. What preceded the presentation of the four themes was; firstly, the broad findings on Student Affairs common strategic mission and common goal. An argument was propounded that contrary to the traditional view, higher education and Student Affairs actively use strategy as a planning and management mechanism. Secondary and primary research data were juxtaposed, to show common patterns emerging from the interpretation of how support services connected to university visions and strategic goals. In addition to the involvement of their executive leaders in the institutional planning, Student Affairs leaders take relevant parts of the university vision statements and strategic objectives, to anchor their own mission. At the end of the analysis, '*Co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience',* emerged as the Student Affairs common mission and common goal*.*

Due to the fact that support service strategy is an under-researched area, empirical data were used to interrogate how support service middle managers carve out strategy. This was done in order to ensure that the end product is contextually resonant, with data-grounded utility for practitioners. The analysis work produced five general principles of how strategy for support services is formulated and they included; (i) Supporting the strategy direction of a university (ii) Strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal) (iii) Strategic changes for composite support services and student-centred approach (iv) Multiple strategic alliances and (v) Strategy contribution to society. Explanations under each principle were given to guide how the process is reified as a systematic support service strategy formulation model.

The intervening strand of results before themes were discussed, was the presentation of empirical definition of support services resources and capabilities and the definition was; *'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of a mission and vision'*. This operational definition connected to the discussion on the mission and common goals, the strategic principles, as well as how themes were interpreted and synthesized.

The results were presented in a narrative format with data evidence clustering around each theme and key thematic concepts also highlighted. The two groups of data were equally represented, with constant comparison carried out on each theme. Data from the two groups were complementary, while at times there would be divergences which were helpful in interpreting the phenomena extensively. What follows now is a summarised version of the resultant support service resources typology, presented through four themes.

Theme 1: Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour:

The thematic analysis and interpretation of data from the empirical investigation of the support service strategy phenomenon, produced patterns of data that culminated into theme 1. The first concept of theme 1 was an aggregated group of constructs and attributes that was categorised as 'employee knowledge'. Strategy thinking, crisis management and communication, were part of the requisite employee knowledge attributes that were salient. Furthermore, since knowledge includes the understanding of the context, attributes such as commitment, creativity, flexibility, responsiveness, were interpreted to form part of theme 1's concept, 'employee

knowledge'. The latter attributes came out strong under a sub-theme 'service exchange value and ethics'. The second key concept of theme 1 was 'special skills', which included attributes; 'qualifications in registered professional bodies' such as medical, 'counselling and nursing qualifications', as well as 'research' and 'fundraising skills'. Employment of qualified employees was another salient construct. The third key component of theme 1 was 'professional behaviour', which emanated from a consistent emphasis for professional service exchange interaction and concepts such as; consistence, care, respect, good manners, friendliness, listening, commitment, putting students first and others, were prevalent. These people-centric resource attributes were found to be critical for support service strategy.

Theme 2: Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement:

Theme 2 was a constellation of mainly three constructs, namely; 'leadership', 'change agency' and 'empowered engagement'. The concept of leadership appeared to have a triad effect, in that Student Affairs leaders had to embrace change and reconfigure how they are organised at functional level, at the same time support and be part of the executive leadership, and also develop and work with student leadership.

Data indicated that the engagement interface framework included; orientation and mentorship of students and leadership training of student leaders – which empowers students and student leaders and thus influencing their agency. When this phenomenon was observed closely, a reciprocal value (for Student Affairs) was suggested to be in a form of service delivery through student structures. A leadership academy was reported to being launched at two research sites, as a more formalised intervention to develop and facilitate growth for students, while on the other hand boosting the support service delivery ecosystem.

The construct of 'empowered engagement' was developed through the interpretation of clustered codes, namely; orientation, leadership training and various types of engagements such as proactive engagement and hostile engagement. Also included were; engagement platforms, committees and structures. Hostile engagement was a construct, centering on negotiations, mediations and protests. This construct

indicated a phenomenon of power dynamics amongst stakeholders who engage and tussle over value co-creation (value in exchange and value-in-use).

Theme 3: Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower':

Finance is a well-known attribute of resources and as expected, research participants strongly identified finance as one of the critical resources for support services. However, borrowing the concept of 'biopower' for analysis, a rigorous assessment and interpretation of data, one salient pattern was that '*finance*' was viewed as a 'controlling' resource for Student Affairs management. On other hand, data also suggested that other resources can be maneuvered to create financial resources. Furthermore, when support services are positioned strategically, they can attract support from executive management, which becomes a gateway to financial resources. Under theme 3, the research results also identified *information technology and connectivity*, as a factor fundamentally driving how the support services were being delivered and used – in ways that create value and or as a valuable resource. Furthermore, data indicated that *information technology and connectivity* defined the student existential experience, while financial resources partly-controlled how Student Affairs is structured (organizationally) and how it delivers services and what services can be delivered. So, while the concept of biopower was theoretically explaining the control of populations, including matters of life and death, in the current theme, it was modelled to provide an interpretation of data that, on the surface initially appeared mundane.

Theme 4: Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation:

Predicated in the field of strategy and framed as a support service strategy phenomenon, the present study provided a corpus amount of data propounding the role of Student Affairs in the strategy process of higher education. Student Affairs leaders are at the support service 'operating core' as Managers/Heads and Directors, as well as connected to 'the apex' of institutions through their executive leaders (Gjerde and Alvesson, 2020). To this end, the research results suggested that Student Affairs leaders are therefore able to influence university strategy and enact it into their own strategy conceptualisation. The first thing that data revealed was that Student Affairs leaders sculptured their unique mission and goals, and this talks to the notion of strategic differentiation. The unique mission and goals are

presented by Student Affairs to the university as their unique strategic contribution and thus justifying their existence. Specific support service activities were identified to influence and or support the academic project. Examples from data included; providing training on study skills, tutorial and mentorship programmes and identifying students at risk of failing or dropping out. Another set of data suggested that Student Affairs leverage their resources and capabilities through running accredited training programmes, including partnering across universities, as well as forming part of a marketing tool for certain university support services.

In terms of enacting and interpreting the university strategy, data from Student Affairs leaders, showed that departments and units, down to individual employees have to align their departments' visions and employee performance deliverables to university strategic goals. The alignment process is also carried out through inviting some members of the executive management to departmental planning sessions.

Data further revealed that Student Affairs strive to make student leaders 'champions of the university strategy' through their student activities. Furthermore, Student Affairs feeds back to the university, information on student needs, emanating from service exchange and engagement encounters. An example is when facilitating engagements between student leaders and university management. Furthermore, information and policies from an institution is interpreted to students through various committees, structures and platforms of engagement.

Table 4.11 below provides a summary of the four themes, their sub-themes and key concepts and constructs that were salient in the empirical data as well as from the second order codes. Many of these thematic concepts and constructs were used in building the quantitative data collection instrument (questionnaire).

Table 4.11: Summary of the four Themes and empirical concepts

Themes & Sub-Themes	Key concepts/constructs (Staff data source)	Key concepts/constructs (Students data source)
Theme 1: **Knowledge, special skills and professional behavior** <u>Sub-themes</u>: • Service exchange value and ethics • Research, fund-raising, creativity and management • Specialization and in-house training academy	• Qualified employees • Hiring the right people • Registered professionals • Crisis management, resource management, and strategy knowledge. • Research and fundraising skills • Communication, and interactive qualities. • Creativity, Professionalism, commitment and care. • Leadership training academy	• Qualified employees • Hiring the right people • Ethical behavior • Respect, listening, care and friendliness • Staff attitudes and availability • Service response and quality • Use of indigenous languages • Open office doors and information notices • Creating a sense of belonging • Cleanliness of facilities • Need for training of staff • Inconsistent staff behavior • Crisis management capabilities
Theme 2: **Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement** <u>Sub-theme:</u> • Collaborative support service delivery	• Training and orientation, peer mentorship. • Risk assessment and accredited education • Change management and service integration • Engagement structures, committees and platforms • Proactive and constructive engagement • Hostile engagement	• Enemies between student leaders and management • Protesting for service delivery • Poor communication • No consultation • Fear and distrust between students and management • SRC is our voice • Being bold in what you need. • Sense of independence • Orientation and training • Services through structures • Employing students • Student-led media • Communication through structures • Collaborating with students
Theme 3: **Finance and internet connectivity 'biopower'**	• Funding and budgets • Fund-raising • Online booking system • Working from home • Online platforms • Online training programmes • Online dialogues • Wider reach through online	• Network connectivity • Network data • Computer labs in residences • Online learning • Need for laptops and printers • E-mail and communication Apps. • Online booking system • Need for face to face interaction
Theme 4: **Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation**	• Presenting a unique mission • Propping the academic project • Students at risk assessment • Participating in Executive management • Involving the Executive management • Getting support from Executive management • Aligning to university strategy • Marketing tool • Students as champions of strategy • Mediation and creating engagement structures • Sensing and interpreting feedback from students.	

Source: Own compilation

The next section of this chapter presents the results of the quantitative research strand, focusing on the support service value constructs and attributes.

4.4 STATISTICAL RESULTS (QUANTITATIVE STRAND)

In this mixed methods research approach, data was collected sequentially, with the qualitative strand being the main research strand following constructivist ontological and epistemological orientations. The quantitative strand of data collection was generally conducted within a descriptive positivist/realist tradition, to objectively measure specific constructs that constitute value attributes for support services. This section provides results of the quantitative data that were collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was confined to student respondents only at the four research sites. The constructs that were tested through the questionnaire scale emanated and related to data from qualitative research results of the student participants' data. The study's sub-questions made a specific reference to students as units of analysis on the concept of perceived value attributes. The sub-questions of the study sought to measure the 'understanding' (RSQ4) and 'perceptions' or the opinions (RSQ5) of students on what represents value attributes in the support services. Thus, the results of the questionnaire are assessed against the research sub-questions (RSQ3, RSQ4 and RSQ5). The questionnaire also measured the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with support services. There was no hypothesis to be tested through the quantitative data, but the study's sub-questions were assessed against the results. As an exploratory research project, the study made propositions concerning the notion of support service value, for example; 'support service activities that do not produce value are not strategic' or 'without 'value' and 'sustainability', the support service outcomes are just mandane and not strategic', and lastly, 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainaible'.The essence of these propositions are captured in the study's conceptual framework.

4.4.1 Presentation of Statistical Results

This section presents the statistical research results, showing the response rate, demographical data, the mean and data dispersion, independent t-tests, effect size and related obeservations. Table 4.12 shows the total of the targeted sample and responses received.

Table 4.12: Quantitative sample results

Targeted sample (*n*)	1200
Total received responses	1066
Incomplete/partial responses	428
Fully completed responses	638
Response rate (fully completed vs total received)	60%

Source: Own compilation from Zoho Survey Software used in the study's survey

Data was exported to MicroSoft Excel and cleaned up, so the 428 partial responses were removed from the data results. Data was then analysed using SPSS statistical analysis software. A statistician assisted with the data analysis. The 638 fully completed responses were taken for the descriptive statistical analysis, and are displayed in tables and graphs with explanations, in the balance of this chapter.

4.4.2 Demographic Distribution

The first part of the data presents the demographics indicating the background of the respondents.

Table 4.13: Place of residence during university term

Variable	No. of responses	Percentage of response
University residence	103	16.1%
University-leased residence	18	2.8%
Accredited residence	184	28.8%
Private apartment / house	154	24.1%
Parents' home	139	21.8%
Relative's home	22	3.4%
Other	17	2.7%
Missing	1	0.2%

Source: Own compilation

Where are you staying during your studies (during the academic term)?
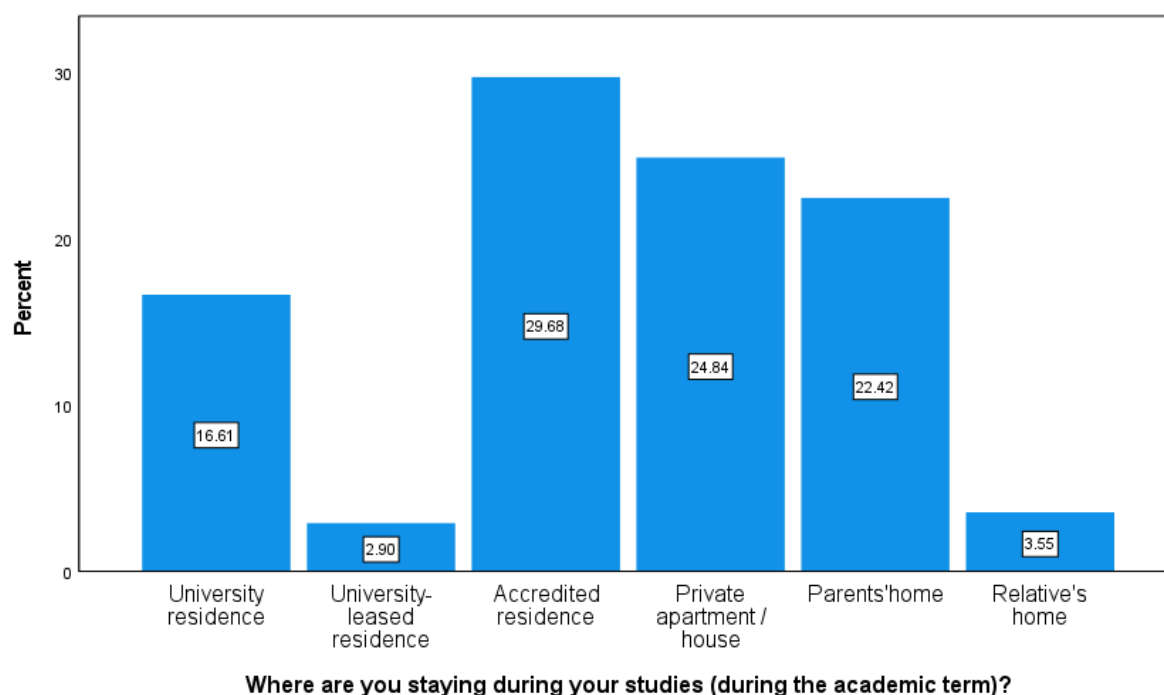
Figure 4.6: Place of residence during university term

Table 4.14 and Figure 4.6 show the various places of residence for respondents, which is an influential component of student support service needs. Those living in accredited residences were in the majority, and this shows the level of multiple stakeholder strategic alliances discussed in the previous findings. Following closely are those in private apartments and homes. The smallest cohort stayed in university-leased residences. The fact that 28% and 16% of respondents were living in a university-attached residence, means that the results has a majority of students who used Student Affairs services.

Table 4.14: Location of respondents' parents' homes

Variable	No. of responses	Percentage of response
Village or rural area	157	24.6%
Township area	215	33.7%
City or urban area	225	35.3%
Outside South Africa	39	6.1%
Missing	2	0.3%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Where is your (parents) home located?

Village or rural area: 24.69
Township area: 33.81
City or urban area: 35.38
Outside South Africa: 6.132
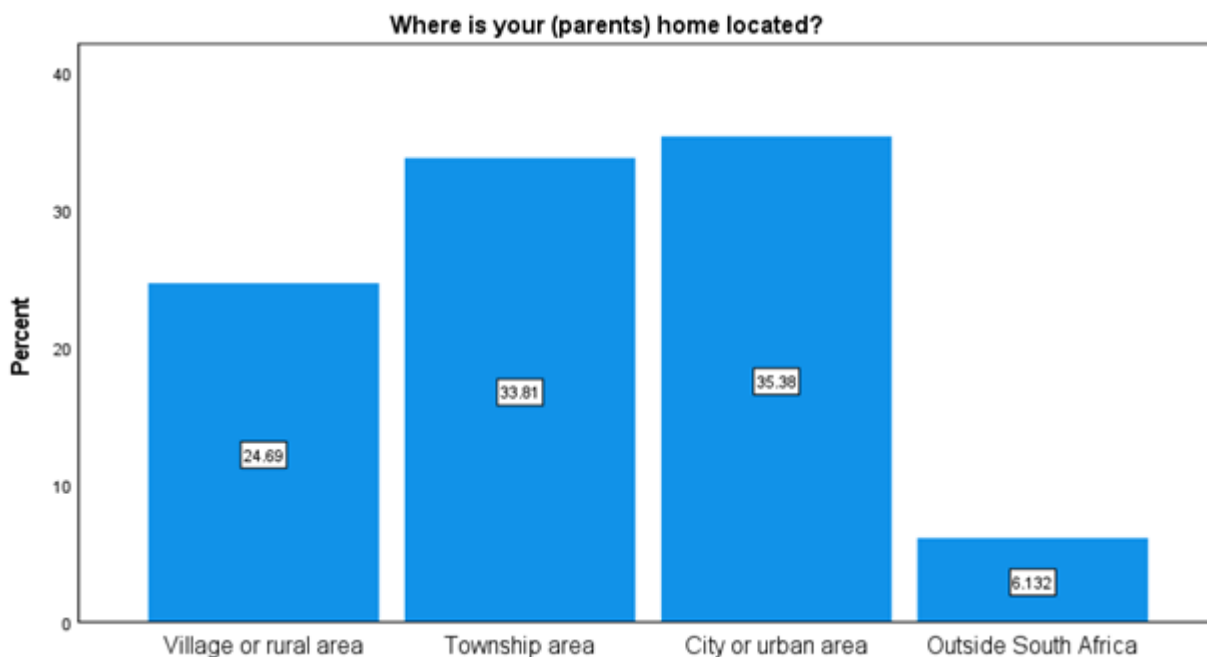
Figure 4.7: Location of homes for respondents' parents

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

In terms of location of respondents' homes where their parents/family lived, the results showed that the majority of respondents (35.38%) came from city or urban areas. The second highest number (33.81%) lived in township areas. A township in this study is a reference to the context of South Africa, where historically black people as a group (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) were located in the areas that were spatially demarcated and named townships and mostly located on the outskirts of the cities. Students from these far-flung areas would have a greater need for nearby or campus accommodation service. For example, 24.69% of respondents hailed from villages and rural areas, which has a direct bearing on the need for near-campus accommodation. Villages and rural areas are even further from cities where most universities in South African are located: all four universities in the present study are located in the cities. A relatively small number (6.1%) were international students. Respondents from townships and rural areas combined constitute over 50% of respondents.

Table 4.15: Gender split

Variable	No. of responses	Percentage of response
Female	399	62.5%
Male	227	35.6%
Prefer not to disclose	12	1.9%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS
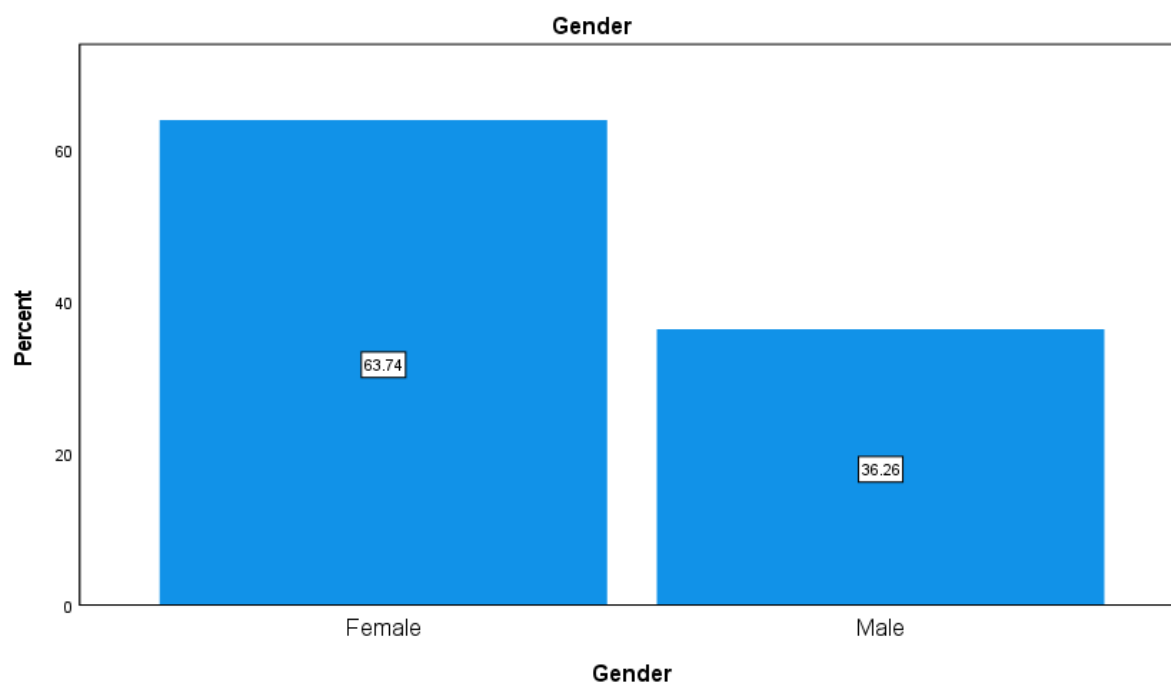
Figure 4.8: Gender split

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.15, and Figure 4.8 show that an overwhelming number of respondents were female students, while 1.9% preferred not to state their gender.

Table 4.16: Age distribution

Variable	No. of responses	Percentage of response
16-19 years	186	29.2%
20-22 years	233	36.5%
23-25 years	91	14.3%
26-30 years	61	9.6%
30 and above	67	10.5%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS
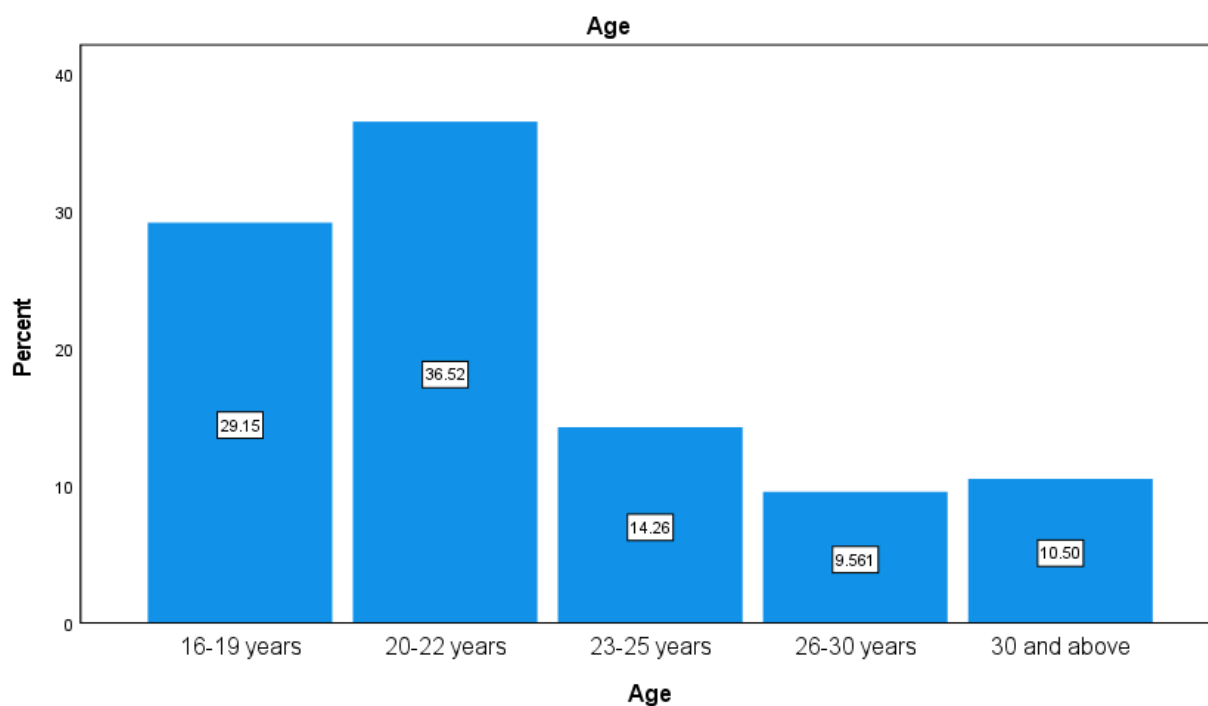
Figure 4.9: Age distribution

Table 4.16 and Figure 4.9 reflected that the majority of respondents are young adults (between the ages of 20 and 22). The second cohort was teenagers (16–19 years old).

Table 4.17: Race distribution

Variable	No. of responses	Percentage of response
African	510	79.9%
Coloured	27	4.2%
Indian	18	2.8%
White	73	11.4%
Prefer not to disclose	10	1.7%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS
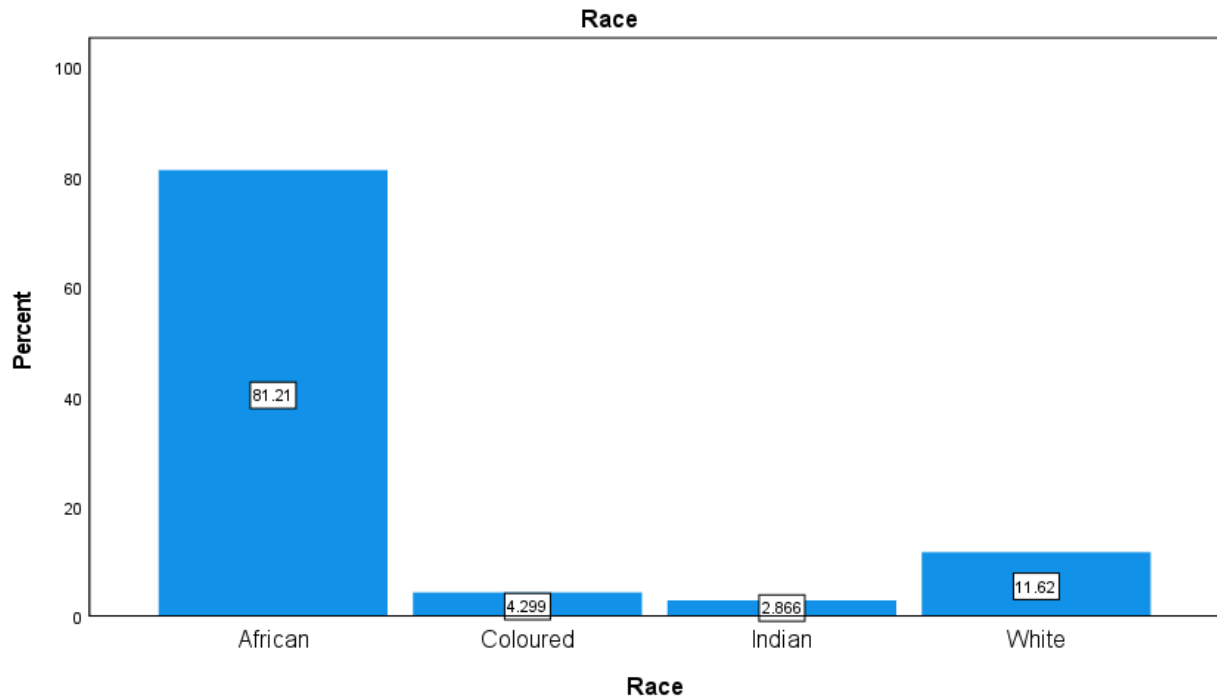
Figure 4.10: Race distribution

Source: Own compilation

Table 4.17 and Figure 4.10 showed that 79.9% of the respondents were African. The graph combined the undisclosed race category into this (African) category. Although not the focus of the study, this distribution is almost reflective of the country's population spread. However, this could be indicating the likely profile of studens that predominantly use the support services. In term of barriers (such as financial obstacles) to student engagement as noted by Garton, et al (2022), these data sensitize practitioners when conceptualising programmes in the context of South Africa. Naik and Wawrzynki's (2018) study also cautioned Student Affairs practitioners on the South African reality in terms of what they called 'non-traditional students'. They recommended further research that will contribute in "understanding of the relationships between student demographics, sense of belonging, students' cocurricular involvement, and learning outcomes" (p.612).

Table 4.18: Level of study

Variable	No. of responses	Percentage of response
First year	202	31.7%
Second year	132	20.7%
Third year	93	14.6%
Fourth year	54	8.5%
Fifth year	7	1.1%
Six year	8	1.3%
Honours or Post grad Diploma	50	7.8%
Masters	67	10%
Doctoral/Phd	25	3.9%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS
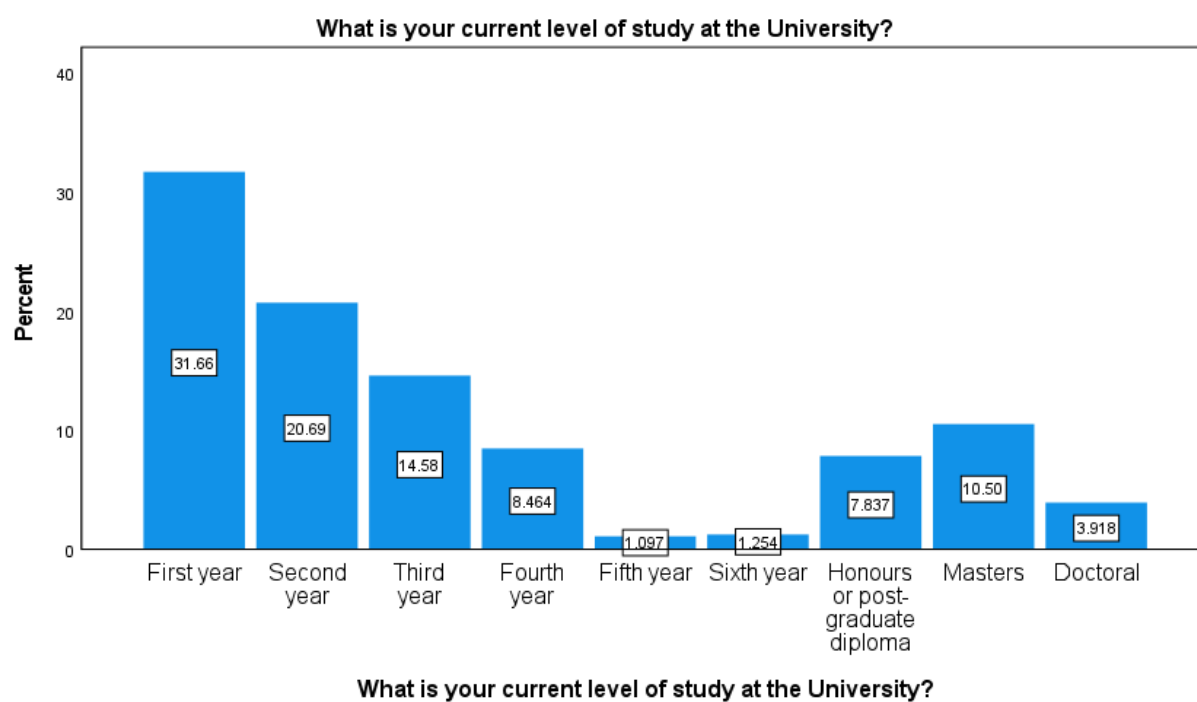
Figure 4.11: Level of study

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.18 and Figure 4.11 show that the majority of respondents were first-year students. This could explain why (shown by a high level of neutrality rating) some did

not know enough about the SRC role and student protests. The qualitative findings included data indicating that first year students had a great need for orientation and the online orientation systems were not adequate.

4.4.3 The results of the Mean and Dispersion of Data

Tables 4.19, 4.20, and 4.21 present the survey results, in terms of how the study's constructs were measured and analysed through central tendency statistics.

Table 4.19: The measurement of the constructs

Variables and measurement items	Central tendency		Percentile				
STUDENT-CENTREDNESS	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Support Services offices serve the interest of students	2.33	0.867	16.30%	42.80%	34.20%	5.00%	1.70%
Support Services staff provide guidance to students	2.34	0.866	15.20%	44.40%	33.10%	5.30%	1.90%
University life would have been difficult if there were no student services offices	2.11	1.008	32.30%	35.10%	23.70%	6.70%	2.20%
Student Affairs offices have played a huge role in my university life	2.95	1.123	10.70%	22.70%	38.20%	17.60%	10.80%
Student support service offices give us a sense of belonging. in this university	2.71	0.991	11.00%	29.80%	40.80%	13.80%	4.70%
In addition to academic development, my university provides a space for development and growth in various other spheres of student life	2.31	1.01	21.00%	42.80%	24.50%	8.00%	3.80%
My academic life would be affected negatively if I did not have access to student support services and support facilities	2.63	1.079	14.40%	33.70%	33.70%	11.30%	6.90%
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICE STAFF COMPETENCES	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Student support services staff need to have the necessary qualifications	1.89	0.919	41.20%	35.00%	18.85	3.90%	1.10%
I expect student support service staff to show commitment when providing the services	1.44	0.623	61.90%	32.95	4.70%	0.20%	0.30%
I expect student support service staff to show care and respect when providing services	1.34	0.577	70.10%	26.00%	3.40%	0.30%	0.20%
Student support service staff need to be able to listen to my issues	1.42	0.626	64.40%	29.30%	6.00%	0.20%	0.20%
I expect student support service staff to have the ability to solve my non-academic problems	2.51	1.052	20.20%	27.90%	35.30%	13.60%	3.00%

VALUE IN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Student support services must be available when we need them. including after hours and weekends (especially for those who live away from their homes)	2.47	1.155	22.90%	33.10%	22.90%	16.10%	5.00%
Instead of sending emails or consulting online, I often need a face-to-face support service interaction in order to get my problems resolved	2.18	1.121	34.50%	30.10%	21.00%	11.30%	3.10%
When I'm stressed I need to talk to a person in their offices, and not through a cellphone or laptop	2.29	1.146	32.10%	26.80%	25.10%	12.40%	3.60%
Support service staff must respond quicker to my emails	2.1	0.94	32.90%	30.30%	31.70%	4.40%	0.80%
If the support service office door is open, I feel welcome	2.05	0.881	29.90%	40.00%	26.00%	3.00%	1.10%
Consultation times and contact details on the student support service office doors provide critical information for me to plan my activities	2.13	0.849	25.90%	39.50%	31.00%	3.10%	0.50%
Added benefits in the support services increase the overall value of these services	2.05	0.795	26.00%	45.30%	27.10%	0.80%	0.80%
Quality support services add value to my student experience	1.95	0.836	32.10%	44.50%	20.10%	2.40%	0.90%
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
They only listen to us when we protest	2.84	1.121	16.10%	17.70%	38.60%	21.50%	6.10%
They only attend to our problems when we bring the SRC	2.69	1.061	16.30%	23.40%	38.90%	17.60%	3.90%
The SRC tries their best to engage the university management	2.34	1.059	24.30%	33.20%	31.70%	6.00%	4.90%
The student structures, committees and forums are helpful in engaging the university on our needs	2.42	1.011	19.60%	34.50%	34.80%	7.10%	4.10%
COLLABORATIONS	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Students have the capacity to assist the university with support services such as student orientation, peer support, mentorship, etc.	1.8	0.761	38.60%	45.10%	14.70%	1.10%	0.50%
As students we have the capacity to promote and facilitate some of the support service programmes and events	1.92	0.818	33.40%	45.30%	17.90%	3.00%	0.50%
As a student I relate better when some of the support services are delivered with students involved	2	0.873	30.90%	43.70%	20.40%	4.10%	0.90%
The university must allow more student-led platforms of information-sharing	1.87	0.824	36.70%	44.20%	15.80%	2.50%	0.80%
As students we contribute to solving crises for the university,	2.13	0.828	24.30%	42.50%	30.10%	2.50%	0.60%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.20: Service satisfaction/dissatisfaction measurement

SERVICE SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION MEASUREMENT							
Support Services	Mean	Standard deviation	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
First year and first time student orientation	2,57	1,144	18.3%	33.4%	28.5%	12.2%	7.5%
Student Funding and NSFAS administrative services	2,96	1,128	10.2%	23.0%	39.7%	15.0%	12.1%
Student accommodation services and facilities	2,94	0,958	6.4%	22.4%	49.8%	13.8%	7.5%
Sport services and facilities	2,68	0,851	7.8%	30.4%	50.2%	8.6%	3.0%
Student governance and leadership offices	2,79	0,796	5.8%	23.4%	59.7%	7.8%	3.3%
Student Counselling services	2,46	0,907	15.5%	33.4%	42.9%	5.6%	2.5%
Student transport services	2,26	1,036	27.6%	31.7%	30.7%	6.95	3.1%
Security services	2,32	1,082	25.1%	35.4%	25.9%	9.2%	4.4%
Campus health/Clinic services	2,41	0,954	20.2%	29.3%	42.6%	5.2%	2.7%

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.19 presents the details of how each construct was measured by each item, with some items receiving as high as 70% (on strongly agree), with the highest on neutral rating on an item being 40.8%. The mean on various constructs was > 2, with staff competences and collaborations constructs receiving a mean of < 2. The standard deviation on most items showed a tightly spread data. Table 4.21 below gives a clearer summary of the patterns. Table 4.20 above formed part of the research questionnaire included to gauge the general opinions on the construct 'support service'. The items represent the various types of support services within the remit of the present study. It is was important that this part of the measure be included because the concept of value and value co-creation is centred on these services.

Table 4.21 below shows the aggregated means for all items per construct and the standard deviation indicating how the responses were spread or clustered around the mean.

Table 4.21: Aggregated means and standard deviations

Descriptive Statistics					
Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student centredness	638	1.00	5.00	2.4600	.73889
Student support staff competencies	638	1.00	5.00	1.7216	.52036
Value in student support services	638	1.00	5.00	2.1536	.60448
Student engagement	638	1.00	5.00	2.5713	.73394
Collaboration	638	1.00	5.00	1.9426	.62146
Satisfaction with general support services	638	1.00	5.00	2.6003	.56029
Valid N (listwise)	638				

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Out of the five constructs, three showed a relatively higher mean, with standard deviations indicating a wider spread of data away from the mean, which is a pattern of diverse opinions and experiences as far as the phenomenon is concerned. Two of the five constructs had means of < 2 and lower standard deviations, which is a sign of pattern convergent shape. Figure 4.12 is a graphical depiction of the mean per construct, showing the shape of the overall mean pattern. Note: 'satisfaction with general support services' is an additional construct.
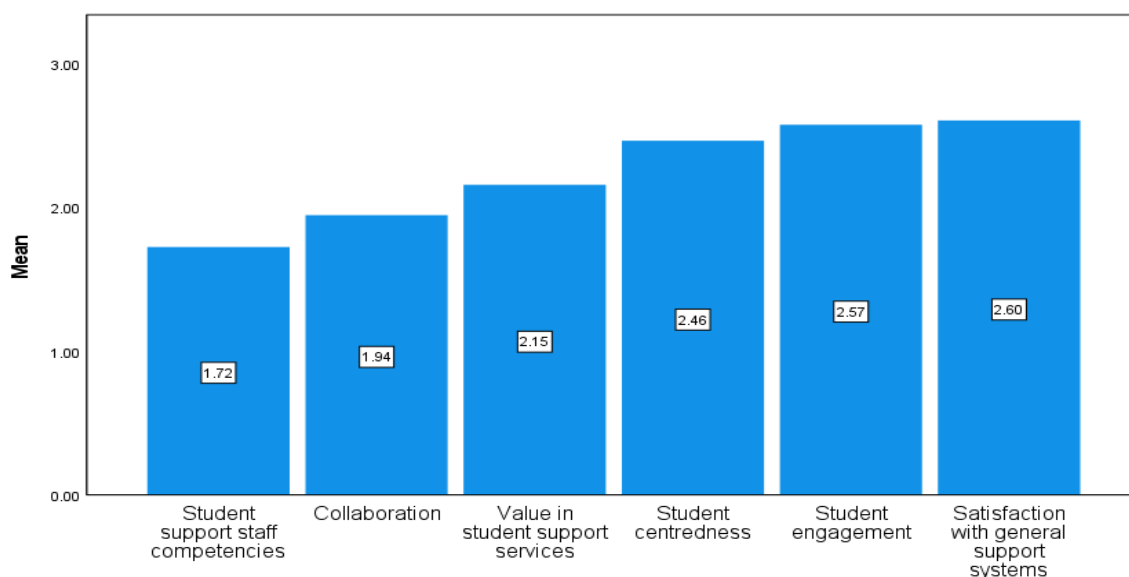
Figure 4.12: A graphical depiction of the variables, in terms of their statistical mean

Source: Own compilation

4.4.4 Subgoups Variances and Effect Sizes

Below are the results of the analysis of variances and effect sizes on subgroups.

Table 4.22: Sub-groups variance (undergraduates vs postgraduates)

Group Statistics					
Year of study		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Student centredness	Undergraduate	496	2,4865	0,72305	0,03247
	Postgraduate	142	2,3675	0,81106	0,07498
Student support staff competencies	Undergraduate	496	1,7468	0,53203	0,02389
	Postgraduate	142	1,6462	0,47950	0,04433
Value in student support services	Undergraduate	496	2,1512	0,60522	0,02718
	Postgraduate	142	2,1485	0,58283	0,05388
Student engagement	Undergraduate	496	2,5176	0,71320	0,03202
	Postgraduate	142	2,6902	0,74903	0,06925
Collaboration	Undergraduate	496	1,9593	0,63465	0,02850
	Postgraduate	142	1,8957	0,57331	0,05300
Satisfaction with general support services	Undergraduate	496	2,5983	0,57909	0,02600
	Postgraduate	142	2,6097	0,50045	0,04627

Source: Own compilation

Table 4.22 shows the effect of the constructs being measured across the two groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The results show that there were more undergraduate respondents (n=496) than postgraduate respondents (n=142), which is normal in higher education, but also it is an indicator of how the results should be read. The mean for most variables is higher for undergraduate respondents and the same trend is noticeable for standard deviations. A relatively small amount of results data was included in the qualitative findings, indicated that even though they reported to be independent, postgraduate students appreciated the support services even in their senior years (i.e. counselling programmes) as well as when they enroll at a different institution as new graduate students. The sub-group analysis indicates a pattern with very close data dispersion on staff competences and collaborations, meaning that, it was on these particular variables where most respondents agreed on them carrying high value attributes for support services. The other variables also received agreement ratings, but there were more variations of opinions, especially on student centredness and student engagement.

Table 4.23: Levene's test for equality of vairiance (undergraduate vs postgraduate sub-groups)

		Test for		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Student centredness	Equal variances assumed	1,201	0,274	1,563	611	0,059	0,119	0,11897	0,07611	-0,0305	0,26845
	Equal variances not assumed			1,456	162,234	0,074	0,147	0,11897	0,08171	-0,04238	0,28032
Student support staff competencies	Equal variances assumed	0,429	0,513	1,874	611	0,031	0,061	0,10062	0,0537	-0,00483	0,20607
	Equal variances not assumed			1,998	189,414	0,024	0,047	0,10062	0,05036	0,00129	0,19995
Value in student support services	Equal variances assumed	0,29	0,59	0,044	611	0,483	0,965	0,00271	0,06177	-0,11861	0,12402
	Equal variances not assumed			0,045	179,791	0,482	0,964	0,00271	0,06035	-0,11638	0,12179
Student engagement	Equal variances assumed	0,286	0,593	-2,33	611	0,01	0,02	-0,17253	0,07401	-0,31788	-0,02718
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,26	169,108	0,013	0,025	-0,17253	0,07629	-0,32314	-0,02192
Collaboration	Equal variances assumed	1,826	0,177	0,992	611	0,161	0,322	0,06355	0,06408	-0,06229	0,18939
	Equal variances not assumed			1,056	189,053	0,146	0,292	0,06355	0,06018	-0,05516	0,18225
Satisfaction with general support systems	Equal variances assumed	3,937	0,048	-0,2	611	0,423	0,845	-0,01134	0,05807	-0,12538	0,10269
	Equal variances not assumed			-0,21	196,259	0,415	0,831	-0,01134	0,05307	-0,11601	0,09332

Independent Samples Test

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.23 reports on Levene's test for the equality of variance between two subgroups of respondents (undergraduate versus postgraduates), showing a larger mean for postgraduate respondents, for the 'student engagement' construct, as well as for the general satisfaction/dissatisfaction. In all other constructs, the mean for postgraduate respondents is lower than that of undergraduate respondents. The independent sample *t*-test, equal variances assumed (> 0.05), indicated (under a two-tailed significance), that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups on how they assess the support service value constructs (student-centredness, staff competences, value and collaborations). Similar patterns appear for the satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment. The statical significance levels in the two groups for the five value constructs for the Levene's test for the equality of variances were > 0.05. However, for the construct 'student engagement' showed a

statistically significance difference (*p*=0.02), suggesting that the two sub-groups differ on how they experience student engagement as a value attribute. First year students being a bigger proportion, explains the differences.

Table 4.24: Point estimate test of construct variances

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Student centredness	Cohen's d	0,74057	0,161	-0,041	0,362
	Hedges' correction	0,74148	0,160	-0,041	0,362
	Glass's delta	0,81106	0,147	-0,056	0,349
Student support staff	Cohen's d	0,52247	0,193	-0,009	0,394
	Hedges' correction	0,52311	0,192	-0,009	0,394
	Glass's delta	0,47950	0,210	0,006	0,413
Value in student support services	Cohen's d	0,60104	0,005	-0,197	0,206
	Hedges' correction	0,60177	0,004	-0,197	0,206
	Glass's delta	0,58283	0,005	-0,197	0,206
Student engagement	Cohen's d	0,72014	-0,240	-0,441	-0,038
	Hedges' correction	0,72102	-0,239	-0,441	-0,038
	Glass's delta	0,74903	-0,230	-0,433	-0,026
Collaboration	Cohen's d	0,62347	0,102	-0,100	0,303
	Hedges' correction	0,62424	0,102	-0,100	0,303
	Glass's delta	0,57331	0,111	-0,091	0,313
Satisfaction with general	Cohen's d	0,56500	-0,020	-0,222	0,181
	Hedges' correction	0,56569	-0,020	-0,221	0,181
	Glass's delta	0,50045	-0,023	-0,224	0,179

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

In order to determine point estimate for the effect size of the two sub-groups displayed in table 4.23 and the *p*=value reported thereof, table 4.24 displays the 'magnitude of difference between the sub-groups' (Sullivan and Feinn, 2012). Using the effect size recommendation by Sawikowski, (2009), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2018), and Miles and Banyard, (2007), the analysis shows a moderate effect size in the subgroups of between 0.52 and 0.74 Cohen's d. The variables 'student centredness' and 'student engagement' were both in the upper margin of the

moderate effect size. So, overall the p=value was not statistically significant and the magnitude of the difference was modest to moderate, thus showing homogeneity in the pattern of experiences generally, on support service value attributes, from the two sub-groups (postgraduates and undergraduates), regardless of their varied charateristics.

Table 4.25: Group statistics for place of residence: University owned residences versus Privately-owned residences:

Group Statistics						
Variables	**Place of Stay**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Student centredness	University owned	305	2,4595	0,76493	0,04380
	Private	315	2,4735	0,70923	0,03996
Student support staff competencies	University owned	305	1,7233	0,56987	0,03263
	Private	315	1,7206	0,47423	0,02672
Value in student support services	University owned	305	2,0775	0,62623	0,03586
	Private	315	2,2294	0,56975	0,03210
Student engagement	University owned	305	2,4598	0,73967	0,04235
	Private	315	2,6690	0,72173	0,04066
Collaboration	University owned	305	1,8885	0,61186	0,03504
	Private	315	1,9867	0,62817	0,03539
Satisfaction with general support systems	University owned	305	2,5115	0,59183	0,03389
	Private	315	2,6670	0,50937	0,02870

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.25 reports on the sub-group between participants from university owned residences versus those from privately-owned residences. The sample sizes of the two sub-groups were almost equal (n=305 and n=315). The means between the sub-groups were very close, in each variable, with 'staff competencies' and 'collaboration' showing even closer dispersions respectively. This indicates a high level of homogeneity of variances, suggesting that opinions and experiences were similar on these sub-groups.

Table 4.26: Levene's test for the equality of variance (place of residence sub-groups)

Independent Samples Test		for Equality of		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df					Lower	Upper
Student centredness	Equal variances assumed	0,932	0,335	-0,238	618	0,406	0,812	-0,01409	0,05922	-0,13038	0,10220
	Equal variances not assumed			-0,238	610,917	0,406	0,812	-0,01409	0,05929	-0,13053	0,10235
Student support staff competencies	Equal variances assumed	3,642	0,057	0,063	618	0,475	0,950	0,00264	0,04205	-0,07994	0,08522
	Equal variances not assumed			0,063	591,072	0,475	0,950	0,00264	0,04217	-0,08019	0,08547
Value in student support services	Equal variances assumed	2,790	0,095	-3,161	618	0,001	0,002	-0,15191	0,04805	-0,24628	-0,05754
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,156	608,282	0,001	0,002	-0,15191	0,04813	-0,24642	-0,05739
Student engagement	Equal variances assumed	0,292	0,589	-3,565	618	0,000	0,000	-0,20921	0,05869	-0,32447	-0,09395
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,563	616,009	0,000	0,000	-0,20921	0,05871	-0,32452	-0,09391
Collaboration	Equal variances assumed	0,019	0,891	-1,970	618	0,025	0,049	-0,09814	0,04982	-0,19598	-0,00030
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,971	617,978	0,025	0,049	-0,09814	0,04980	-0,19594	-0,00034
Satisfaction with general support services	Equal variances assumed	6,168	0,013	-3,511	618	0,000	0,000	-0,15554	0,04430	-0,24254	-0,06854
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,503	598,421	0,000	0,000	-0,15554	0,04441	-0,24276	-0,06833

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

Table 4.26 reports on the variance of analysis between two groups of respondents (those living in university-controlled residences versus those in the private dwellings). The independent sample *t*-test was done, equal variances assumed, and the results showed statistically significant difference (i.e., 0.00, 0.02, 0.04) between the subgroups for constructs 'student engagement', 'value' and 'collaboration', as well as for the general satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Only constructs 'student-centredness' and 'staff competences' had no statistically significant difference.

Table 4.27: Point estimate test of variance (constructs)

Independent Samples Effect Sizes		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Student centredness	Cohen's d	0,73716	-0,019	-0,177	0,138
	Hedges' correction	0,73806	-0,019	-0,176	0,138
	Glass's delta	0,70923	-0,020	-0,177	0,138
Student support staff competences	Cohen's d	0,52346	0,005	-0,152	0,162
	Hedges' correction	0,52410	0,005	-0,152	0,162
	Glass's delta	0,47423	0,006	-0,152	0,163
Value in student support services	Cohen's d	0,59820	-0,254	-0,412	-0,096
	Hedges' correction	0,59892	-0,254	-0,411	-0,096
	Glass's delta	0,56975	-0,267	-0,425	-0,108
Student engagement	Cohen's d	0,73061	-0,286	-0,444	-0,128
	Hedges' correction	0,73150	-0,286	-0,444	-0,128
	Glass's delta	0,72173	-0,290	-0,449	-0,131
Collaboration	Cohen's d	0,62020	-0,158	-0,316	0,000
	Hedges' correction	0,62096	-0,158	-0,315	0,000
	Glass's delta	0,62817	-0,156	-0,314	0,002
Satisfaction with general support systems	Cohen's d	0,55148	-0,282	-0,440	-0,124
	Hedges' correction	0,55215	-0,282	-0,440	-0,124
	Glass's delta	0,50937	-0,305	-0,464	-0,146

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

In order to determine the effect size of the two sub-groups displayed in tables 4.25 and 4.26 and the p=value reported thereof, table 4.27 displays the magnitude of

difference between the sub-groups. The point estimate test for variances showed a moderate effect size between groups of between 0.55 and 0.73 Cohen's d. The variables 'student centredness' and 'student engagement' were both in the upper margin of the moderate effect size. So, while the *t*-test (table 4.26) showed a statistically significant difference of < 0.05 for three variables of this sub-groups, the Cohen's d magnitude of differences on the overall the *p*=value was modest to moderate, and thus not statistically significant. This suggests homogeneity pattern in the experiences of the two sub-groups (Staying in university-owned residences vs university-leased residences), regardless of their varied charateristics.

4.4.5 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS SUMMARY

The second section of the present chapter focused on the results of the quantitative strand of this research project. Existing research indicates that resources (including capabilities) are not valuable on their own, so the study further sought to understand how value is created and how value is perceived by support service users. The latter purpose of the study was the main focus of the quantitative research strand. One of the study's propositions was that, 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainable'. Therefore, in addition to answering the research sub-questions, the support service value attributes were investigated, with statistical results presented on this chapter.

Five constructs were extracted from the qualitative findings to build a quantitative scale, which was also part of the study's objective, since the whole notion of support services strategy is a nascent area of research. A new data collection instrument, called Higher education Support Service Value scale (HedSUSERV) was developed in this research project. The variables of the scale that sought to measure the student support service value attributes, included; 'student-centredness', 'support service staff competence', 'value in support services', 'student engagement' and 'collaboration'. Furthermore, the support services were evaluated in terms of satisfaction/dissatisfaction levels.

The demographic part of the results showed that 35.3% (majority) of respondents came from the city or urban areas, followed by 33% who came from township areas and 25% who came from villages and rural areas. In terms of place of residence during study, the majority (28%) lived in university accredited properties, followed by

24% of those who lived in private flats or homes and 16% who lived in the university residences. In terms of level study, the majority of respondents were first-year students (31%), closely followed by second-year students (20%). On the far end of the spectrum was a group of respondents at master's level (10%) and doctoral level (3.9%). Female respondents constituted 62.5%, with males constituting 35.6%, while 1.9% chose not to disclose their gender.

Each of the questionnaire instrument variables had specific attributes that are central to the service value concept. Data showed that four of the five constructs being measured by the instrument had a positive pattern of support for their being representative of support service value attributes. 'Student centredness', 'collaboration', 'value in support services', and 'staff competences' were the constructs with responses coalescing more on the positive pattern. Data converged more around the mean on 'staff competences' and 'collaboration', which suggests stronger indicator of service value attributes. The construct 'student engagement' received negative results, with a significant number of respondents remaining neutral or not expressing an opinion on the scale items for this construct. The construct received a negative rating from data, with the majority of scores on neutral (i.e., 38%) and 21% in disagreement with one item. The mean was wide (2.5) and the standard deviations for items were >1. The group statistics on the mean and data dispersion showed similar patterns. Value is a well-known key element of theories such as the RBV as well as the SDL. The empirically and theoretically derived constructs' attributes embedded on the items of the instrument sought to measure the nuances of the proposed Higher education support service scale (HedSURSERV).

The general satisfaction/dissatisfaction scale showed that the highest (27%) support service under 'highly satisfied' score was student transport, while first-year orientation, sports, student counselling and security services all received over 30% of those who were 'satisfied'. The support services that received the higher range of dissatisfaction were first orientation (12.2%), NSFAS administrative services (15%) and student accommodation services (13%).

The analysis of variance was conducted and the independent sample t-test, equal variances assumed, indicated under two-tailed significance, that there is no

statistically significant difference between the subgroups (undergraduates and postgraduates) on how they assess the support service value variables. Similar patterns appeared for the satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment. The significance levels in the two groups for the service value variables, based on the Levene's test for the equality of variance analiysis was > 0.05. The propositional assumption had been that undergraduate students have different experiential value compared to postgraduate students. The variance analysis results suggested that there is no statistically significant difference. However, for variable 'student engagement' there was a statistically significant difference (p=0.02). A further analysis of variance was done for a different group of respondents (i.e., those living in university-controlled residences versus those in the private dwellings). The independent sample t-test, equal variances assumed, showed statistically significant difference (i.e., 0.00, 0.02, and 0.04) for variables, 'student engagement', 'value' and 'collaboration', as well as for the general satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Only variables, 'student-centredness' and 'staff competences' had no statistically significant difference. The magnitude (effect size) of the difference in the two sub-groups was modest to moderate, thus showing homogeneity pattern in opinions and experiences on support service value attributes, regardless of their varied charateristics.

4.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the results of the study's research empirical work, structured in the general format of a sequential mixed methods research design. The narrative or textual (qualitative) strand, was followed by the statistical (quantitative) strand.

The qualitative strand presented research results on; the alignment of strategy between Student Affairs and the HEIs. The first part of these results showed the strategic linkages between Student Affairs level and the university-level goals. Through a series of analysis of the research sites' visions and strategic plans, juxtaposed with Student Affairs strategic plans, and empirical data, the results indicated that Student Affairs has adopted the strategic management principles. As shown in the literature chapter, on how government has institutionalised strategic practices through policy in the higher education sector and in Student Affairs, the empirical data corroborated this phenomenon. Ironically, most researchers argue that Student Affairs's sole focus is on student development theory. In acknowledging

this paradox, Nkonoane (2015: 54) explains that "[t]he challenges of working toward the learning and development of college students are so demanding that integration of student affairs management and leadership issues is underemphasized in research". He further argued that "Student Affairs practitioners must be students and masters of management and organizational theory" (ibid: 52). This first part of the findings identified a common mission for Student Affairs as well as five principles that Student Affairs employ in formulating strategic plans. These principles are essential, given the dearth of research on strategy formulation and planning in Student Affairs.

The intermediate findings answered one of the study's research question, that being; 'how do Student Affairs leaders define resources and capabilities'. After a discursive analysis of data the theorised thematic patterns coalesced into defining the support service resources and capabilities as; 'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of a mission and vision'.

The central and largest part of the qualitative results produced a resources typology, presented in a form of four broad themes, namely; (a) Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour; (b) Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement, (c) Financial and internet connectivity biopower, and (d) Strategy influencing, enacting, and functional level interpretation. Since the study's proposition is that 'support service activities that do not produce value are not strategic', the resources typology indicates what resoues and capabilities can be orchestrated to produce strategic value and sustainability.

Scholars (Greer, Lusch and Vargo, 2016: 8) argue that "value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary". Therefore, the statistical strand reported on the results of the support service value attributes. A new data collection instrument, named, 'Higher education Support Service Value scale' (HedSUSERV) was developed in this research project. The variables that measured the student support service value attributes, included; 'student-centredness', 'support service staff competence', 'value in support services', 'student engagement' and 'collaboration'. Service satisfaction/dissatisfaction levels were also meaured.

Data showed that four of the five constructs being measured by the instrument had a positive pattern of support for their being representative of support service value attributes. 'Student centredness', 'collaboration', 'value in support services', and 'staff

competences' were the constructs with responses coalescing more on the positive pattern. Data converged even closer around the mean on 'staff competences' and 'collaboration', which suggests a stronger indicator of service value attributes.

A *t*-test of independent sub-groups of respondents' data were also analysed. The sub-groups were; undergraduates vs postgraduates, as well as those living in university residences vs those living in accredited residences. The analysis of variances using a Levene's test for the equality of variance between the subgroups showed no statistically significant difference. The effect size on point estimate of Cohen's D was > 0.5, which is modest to moderate. This generally indicated a more homogeneity pattern of opinions on the value attributes for support services. This part of the findings was motivated by the study's proposition that says, 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainaible'

In the next chapter, the multidisciplinary repertoire of theoretical lenses is invoked in order to add meaning and illumination of this completed structure, while juxtaposing it against other structures, so as to consequently determine, and put metaphorically, whether this is a multiple storey house or a cruise ship to withstand or navigate the strategic storms.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Acknowledging the gap in literature, Holtzhausen and Wahl (2022) noted that the current body of knowledge in Student Affairs on the African context is inadequate. The present study contributes to the body of knowledge in Student Affairs as a discipline and service strategy as a research strand of strategic management field. Echoing the works of Powell and Rey, (2015), Graham, (2013), Roberts, (2018), van Niekerk, (2018), Msosa, (2019), and Mbhele and Sibanyoni (2022), the present study thus postulates that Student Affairs support services have a strategic influence in HEIs. Assuming that the challenges of resources shortages, conflicts and instabilities, and competition have a strategic impact to HEIs, the present study therefore investigated these perennial phenomena from a support service strategy angle.

In this chapter, the findings are discussed in a manner that shows theoretical contribution underpinned by the resources and capabilities perspective as a novel angle in Student Affairs leadership literature as well as in service strategy research. The findings discuss how the research questions are answered, firstly in the identification of critical resources and capabilities, and secondly in how value is created or co-created, for support services. The resources model provides theoretical typology as well as repertoire for practitioners.

5.2 SECTION A: DISCUSSION OF THE QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The main research question was:

What are the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy in the context of Student Affairs?

Investigating the contribution of professional staff to student retention and student success, Roberts (2018) developed a student life cycle model and postulated that "all staff can contribute and have a positive impact on the student journey" (p.146). Arguing from the service dominant logic, Lusch and Wu (2012:2), explained that "…the instruction itself combined with other supporting services (for example, tutoring, library assistance) constitute the bundle of offerings that make up the

service of education". Roberts (2018:146) cautioned that "there are challenges in the context of constrained funding to HEIs and the ever-increasing need to stretch scarce resources in the provision of services and support for a diverse student body with vastly different needs". But what resources and capabilities do professional support service staff bring to the table, for an institution? The proposed resources model contributes towards resolving this paradox, and answers the main research question. As shown in the findings' themes, especially theme 2 and theme 4, the research question connects the micro-level to macro-level analysis, in that the micro and meso-level resources and capabilities of support services must contribute to the overall (macro-level) strategy of an institution. The support service resources typology model in the present chapter, describes this proposition.

Literature shows that resources and capabilities have to be valuable in order to be considered critical or strategic and therefore creating sustainability. Strategy scholars have established that value is what makes resources to be considered strategic. Therefore the sub-questions that the findings of the present study sought to answer were:

- RSQ1: How do Student Affairs leaders define resources and capabilities?
- RSQ2: How do Student Affairs leaders create value in resources and capabilities?
- RSQ3: Which resources and capabilities attributes create value and sustainability for Student Affairs?
- RSQ4: What do students understand to be the student affairs activities that create value for them?
- RSQ5: What is the support service value, as perceived by students?

One of the fundamental pillars of strategy formulation is the concept of a 'mission'. A mission is usually translated into a written statement that "provide answers to the question: What is our business" (Elhers and Lazenby, 2019:65). As a foundation to the central strategic management question of resources, the present findings therefore identified a common mission and goal of Student affairs support services, which is further discussed below.

Pansiri and Sinkamba (2017) noted that Student Affairs professionals may struggle to articulate the role they play within institutions to those unacquainted with the concept. It was therefore necessary that the core mission of Student Affairs is investigated and reported on, so that there is a clear foundation for where the fraternity is positioned in the landscape of HEIs. Other researchers have also noted that the role of professional staff in higher education is less well defined (Roberts, 2018). Still others like Graham (2013) have recognised the need for a 'full understanding of the work and identities of professional staff in higher education'. To this end, the study's findings on the common mission and goal illuminate the role of Student Affairs in the student life cycle.

The mission and common goal emerged as; **'co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience'.** This was noted to be presented by Student Affairs leaders as a unique contribution to a university's strategic goals. These findings also respond to a call by Porterfield, Roper and Whitt (2011), which was further echoed by Paine (2013), for Student Affairs to redefine their mission if they are to remain relevant.

As an investigation of the support service strategy, the present study assumes that "service is a fundamental basis of exchange" (Greer, Vargo & Lusch, 2016:2) and what is meant by 'support' is described in the above-stated empirically-grounded mission and common goal of Student Affairs. Greer, et al. (2016:2) described service as the; "…the application of resources (primarily knowledge and skills) for the benefit of another individual or organisation (the beneficiary)". According to Lofberg et al. (2015:1189) "lacking service readiness manifests through managers not knowing which activities to perform and by not having a specific structure to deliver those services". These findings on the common mission for support service, suggest a solution for higher education service, because identifying and integrating different organisational units as a key service manoeuvre is critical in service strategy (Lofberg et al. 2015).

Based on the findings of the present study, the support service resources (including capabilities) were empirically defined as **'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of a mission and vision'**.

The four themes from the findings weave together concepts and elements of theoretical perspectives, in order not only for the model to describe critical resources and capabilities, but also to propose how they manifest themselves to be considered as strategic for the support services. The four themes of the findings are discussed in a typological manner, below.

Each of the four themes offers nuanced bundle of resources, capabilities and value attributes. In this study, the reference to "resource type" is just for brevity, but it encompasses both resources and capabilities constructs.

5.2.1 Type 1 Resources: Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour

In the research findings, Type 1 of resources and capabilities culminated into 'employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour'. This type of resources and capabilities came out to be very strong in this research project. In answering the research questions, Type 1 support service resources and capabilities, captures the 'what' and the 'how' parts of the phenomenon. The findings of the present study suggest that it is how scarce resources are managed that often determine and or create their value. From the definition of service by Greer, et al. (2016), the primary resources applied for the benefit of another are 'knowledge and skills. The present study identified an additional construct of 'professional behaviour' from the interpretation of findings. Furthermore, the present study suggests that the support services require 'special skills'.

5.2.1.1 Employee knowledge

The categorised attributes of 'employee knowledge' from the findings were; strategic thinking, crisis management, and communication. So, 'employee knowledge' as a support service resource and capabilities attribute comprises the contextual understanding and capacity for strategic thinking, crisis management and communication. Citing Bell (1999), Tsoukas and Vladimirou (2001) defined knowledge as the capacity to exercise judgement on the part of an individual, which is either based on an appreciation of context or is derived from theory or both. An appreciation of a context has a strategic value. Pappas, Flaherty and Wooldridge (2003) noted that 'research suggests that middle managers' strategic knowledge

includes the knowledge of external environment and knowledge of internal resources and capabilities'. Distinguishing between data and knowledge, Tsoukas and Vladimirou (2001) posited that, data require minimal human judgement, whereas knowledge requires maximum judgement. Other knowledge attributes from the findings include; commitment, creativity, flexibility and responsiveness. Tsoukas and Vladimirou (2001) has observed that knowledge presupposes values and beliefs. Together, these value-type attributes shall be called or summed up as 'commitment and creative agility'. It is therefore postulated that strategic thinking, crisis management, communication, committed and creative agility are necessary knowledge attributes for Type 1 critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. These knowledge attributes often require concomitant application of general and special skills.

5.2.1.2 Special skills

The 'special skills' attributes included; qualifications in registered professional bodies such as medical, counselling and nursing professions, as well as research and fundraising skills. Generally, a skill is understood as something learned through experiential repetitive practice, on the job training, or from formal education where a qualification is conferred. The application of these special skills have a direct impact on the service user and hence their criticality as resources and capabilities. Research skills are elements of special skills in this study. The last element of the special skills is the fundraising skills. Stakeholder relationships and funding obtained from fundraising projects have impactful spinoffs, while they can also have risk (reputation and ethical) implications. Barney (1991) explicated that human capital includes training of managers and workers. Schultz (1961) regard human capital to include skills and he noted that what is immanent in skills is superior techniques and then regarded skills as valuable resources. Muller, Grabsch and More (2018) proposed that Student affairs professionals are expected to possess a wide variety of skills and competencies in order to be effective in their jobs. In their paper on Student Affairs strategic planning, Taylor and Matney (2007:167) noted that human capital is Student Affairs' "strongest asset". It is noted therefore, that qualifications that are registered in professional bodies, research and fundraising skills acquired through formal training and hence immanent with learned superior techniques, form part of the special skills. The latter is therefore regarded as Type 1 critical resources

and capabilities attributes for support service strategy. Special skills often require knowledge of the contextual dynamics in order to be applied effectively and professionally. The present study's findings revealed that lack of professional and ethical behaviour can negatively overshadow the special skills of support service employees.

5.2.1.3 Professional behaviour

'Professional behaviour' emanated from concepts describing the support service employees-service users' interactions, as well as from attributes such as; consistence, care, respect, good manners, friendliness, listening and commitment. The findings suggested that, despite many of the support service employees being skilled and qualified in their respective jobs, service users tended to view negatively and avoided patronising those services if they perceived and detected unprofessional and unethical behaviour on such employees. Unprofessional and unethical behaviour included; negligence, non-responsive, impolite, abusive, lack of empathy, lack of care and being judgemental.

In the present study, the concept 'professional' has three boundary conditions and those are; the support service exchange context being regarded as a professional context. Secondly, it includes the regulatory bodies for various support service professionals such as health professional bodies. Thirdly and related to the first two components, it includes ethical obligations on the part of the support service professionals. Professional behaviour can therefore be described as learned disposition of support service employees which is socially institutionalized by the service contextual rules, professional and ethical obligations. Behaviour of employees is therefore regarded as professional if it complies with the boundary conditions discussed above and thus would be considered valuable for the support service exchange context. These findings contribute to the ongoing research on Student Affairs professionalisation. The findings are an enactment of the call by Ludeman, et al, (2020) who prescribed that "Student affairs functions and services must subscribe to high standards of professional ethical practice and behaviour" (p. 49).

Pansiri and Sinkamba (2017:53) argued that "[t]he title 'student affairs professional' implies that student affairs is a profession". Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) noted that the social dimension embedded in the interaction between service employees and consumers has an influence on the customer experience. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) further posited that research has demonstrated that positive employee interaction influences the consumers' behavioural intentions in terms of future patronage and word of mouth marketing. We saw from the present study's findings, how students avoided certain support services due to the first-time negative experience. Language was also cited as an inhibitor or enabler to service patronage. Other examples in the data included an SRC member who reportedly cried due to the ill-mannered conduct of a support service employee, while another example was service employees who were perceived to be judgemental and led to students avoiding using such support services. The findings on employee skills and professional behaviour supports Nkonoane's (2015) Capacity Building Model for Student Affairs Professional Practice.

The Big "What" question: **What are the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy in the context of Student Affairs?**

In answering the main research question, the findings identified, among other resources types discussed in this chapter, 'employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour', to be one of the bundles of critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. The sub-elements of Type 1 resources (i.e., strategic thinking, communication, crisis management, qualifications, research skills, fundraising skills and behavioural attributes such as care, commitment, responsiveness, friendliness and respect) discussed in this section also answer the **RSQ3: Which resources and capabilities attributes create value and sustainability for Student Affairs?**

These employee-centric resources and capabilities were classified as Type 1, for theoretical demarcation purposes, in that they have 'human capital'. Other resource types discussed here are combinations of human capital, material and social capital. In this study, the concept 'capital' implies an endowment of value in something (Felin, et al, 2020). Type 1 critical resources and capabilities in summary, describes the role of contextual strategic sense-making and understanding, the employment of

special skills and the harnessing of professional behaviour, in order to co-create value in the support services. This one strand of results is in line with Barney's (1991) classification of what he termed 'human capital resources'. However, the present findings add new constructs such as 'special skills' and 'professional behaviour' which are critical in the service exchange processes. Peteraf and Barney, (2003) normatively explicate that, among others, human capital resources enable an organisation to conceive of and implement strategies that improves its efficiency and effectiveness.

Vargo and Lusch (2004:2) made reference to "services as the application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills)". Greer, Vargo and Lusch's (2016) definition of service refers to the application of resources (primarily knowledge and skills). There was a move from 'specialised competences' to 'resources', but both concepts denoting knowledge and skills that are critical in-service strategy, whether from the SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) or servitisation (Vandermerwe and Rada, 1988). Muller, Grabsch & More (2018) emphasised that student affairs professionals are expected to possess a wide variety of skills and competencies in order to be effective in their jobs. So, various scholars from mainly competitive advantage perspective (Barney, 1991), to value and SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016) and to support service (Muller et al., 2018), seem to recognise the importance of knowledge and skills. However, the construct of professional behaviour has not been identified previously, in this bundle of resources attributes. The study findings proffers the constructs of 'special skills' and 'professional behaviour' to the traditional service resources value axioms of knowledge and skills.

Moreku's (2015) study already pointed to the lack of consensus and alliances between university management and student leaders. To address this challenge, Resource Type 1 of the present study proffers 'knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour' as critical resources and capabilities. Specifically, and combined with Resources Type 2 and Type 4, 'strategic thinking' and 'communication' as attributes of Type 1, are critical in strategic consensus and multiple alliances. The latter point of strategic multiple alliances talks to the resources dependence perspective (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), which Barney and Ulrich (1984) described as a theory whereby organisations maximise their power. Some of the study's sub-questions are also addressed by Resource Type 1.

How do student affairs leaders create value in resources and capabilities?

Vargo and Lusch (2017:48) propounded the construct, "operant resources", which they described as resources that include, "knowledge and skills that can act on other resources to create a benefit". Taylor and Machado (2006) posited that knowledge and skills of leaders and managers are important to planning. These scholars of higher education leadership also claimed that the greater challenge in higher education is orchestrating policies, actions and diverse constituencies in ways that produce desired results. So, in the realm of Type 1 resources and capabilities, Student affairs leaders create value through 'operant resources' (employee knowledge and special skills).

The empirical data showed management and students to be insisting that 'when you recruit support service employees, recruit the best, with qualifications'. So, the best employees and qualifications are among attributes of creating value. These findings corroborate Xaba's (2021) study of Student Affairs professionals at six South African universities, which suggested that qualifications are critical for these professionals, especially in co-curricular development and in research. So, in Type 1, value is immanent in formal qualifications and possession of research skills. Taylor and Machado (2006) observed that 'strategic thinking' is a creative imagination that helps to maintain institutional flexibility and adaptability. So, as reported by the findings, attributes such as commitment, creativity, flexibility, responsiveness, as components of Type 1 resources and capabilities, are employed by Student Affairs in creating value. This therefore answers the sub-question (RSQ2).

The findings also produced the construct 'professional behaviour', whose attributes included; consistence, care, respect, good manners, friendliness, listening and commitment. Long (2012) proposed the value of care for Student Affairs professionals, and argued that 'each student deserves attention, respect and fair treatment'. Every interaction with a student should serve the student's best interests. In the present study's findings, unprofessional and unethical behaviour included; negligence, non-responsive, impolite, abusive, lack of empathy, lack of care and being judgemental. These attributes appeared to be the strong hindrances of value in support services. Msosa (2019) recommended that managers of HEIs should offer training to customer-facing employees to enhance their problem-solving, listening,

customer service and communication skills. In creating value in service exchange, the attributes of professional behaviour is moderated by the contextual rules, professional bodies and ethical obligations. Behaviour of employees is therefore regarded as professional and thus valuable if it complies with the boundary conditions discussed above and thus would be considered valuable for the support service exchange context.

5.2.1.4 Summary

The findings, under the employee-centric resource attributes, suggested that the 'employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour' are critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. This employee-centric resource typology answers the main research question and one of the sub-questions. Various scholars (e.g. Barney, 1991; Barney & Peteraf, 2003; Greer et al. 2016; Xaba 2021, etc.), have identified these concepts, but this study adds the constructs of 'special skills' and 'professional behaviour'. Research sub-question one (RSQ1) is addressed by the sub-elements of employee-centric resources attributes (i.e. strategic thinking, communication, crisis management, qualifications, research skills, fundraising skills and behavioural attributes such as care, commitment, responsiveness).

5.2.2 Resource Type 2: Leadership, Change Agency and Empowered Engagement

In the research findings, Type 2 of resources and capabilities culminated into mainly three constructs, namely; 'leadership, change agency and empowered engagement'. In answering the research questions, resource Type 2 support service resources and capabilities, captures the "what" and the "how" parts of the phenomenon. Resource Type 2 is considered to be a 'human and social capital' of critical resources and capabilities for support services.

5.2.2.1 Leadership

'Leadership' as a practice in the context of Student Affairs is critical in deciphering the institutional vision and carving out a functional level service exchange interface framework. It is also a central catalyst for cooperative governance. The concept of leadership is closely related to the construct 'strategic thinking' of Resource Type 1

discussed previously. Type 4 construct on 'strategy influencing' is also related to leadership. The concept of leadership has triad connections in the support service strategy ecosystem. Student Affairs leaders have to embrace change and reconfigure how they are organised at functional level, and that's the first leg of the triad. The second leg is the responsibility to support and be part of the executive leadership. The third leg is to develop, engage and work with students and student leadership. Stakeholder theory puts a premium on relationships and this is one of the ways how this theory has played a role in the analysis, because the theory is understood to be focusing on "sets of relationships among groups that have a stake in the activities that make up an organisation" (Pamar, Freeman and Harrison, 2010:3/4). Its theoretical utility is in how value is created and traded (Pamar, et al. 2010; Freeman, Phillips and Sisodia, 2018). The central admonition of the stakeholder theory, as explained by Phillips, Freeman and Wicks (2003:481), is that "attention must be paid to the interests and wellbeing of *those who can assist or hinder the achievement* of the organisation's objectives". Emphasis added. Resource Type 2, describes how in a support service ecosystem, practitioners derive value from paying attention to the interests of top management on the one hand and nurturing relationships with student leadership on the other hand. Resource Type 2, with the construct of leadership triad, can also be explained through the RDT principle. In terms of latter theory, acquiring external resources needed for an entity, comes by decreasing the entity's dependence on others and/or by increasing others' dependence on it. This means, modifying an entity's power relations with other actors (Barney and Ulrich, 1984). Dependent on top management resource allocation, middle managers also strive to reduce their dependence by modifying power relations with top management, as well as, through empowering service users to co-deliver the support services.

5.2.2.2 Change agency

Juxtaposing Type 2 resources' attributes with literature, the present study notes that scholars who studied leadership in higher education context have provided analogous definitions that are supported by the findings. Morrill (2010:4); Taylor and Machado (2006); Yielder and Codling (2004); Hallinger (2017:364), all have definitions (of leadership) that include concepts such as; 'change and motivation', 'influencing decisions and guiding people', 'orientation towards human relations and

organising people', 'change and influencing other people'. These concepts of leadership connects to the construct of 'change agency', under this Type 2 resources and capabilities. The leadership capability of Student Affairs influences other stakeholders such as students and their leadership, through; service orientation, leadership training, student development programmes, mentorship and wellbeing programmes. Student affairs even formalise their interventions that influence change agency through leadership academy programmes. The value-in-use of this leadership capability enhances and influence agency on students' navigation of the campus life and life beyond university. In this study, change agency is described as a cognitive decision-making ability to cope with emergent and institutionalised change. A student life journey poses changes from pre-enrolment, entering a foreign environment of campus life, moving through the years of study, to graduation.

5.2.2.3 Empowered engagement

At the end of the spectrum of Type 2 resources and capabilities for support services, is the construct termed in this study, 'empowered engagement'. The construct is a product of the first two properties or elements of Type 2 (i.e., leadership and change agency), but was also noted to be providing a reciprocal value co-creation effect to the former properties. Empowered engagement construct is also built from some of Type 1 constructs (i.e., knowledge and special skills).

Kuh's (2009:683) definition of student engagement includes, "*what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities*" (emphasis added). Wawrzynski, Heck and Remley (2014:106) posited that "[a]lthough it is important to examine academic outcomes and their barriers, since the majority of a student's time is spent outside the classroom, it is equally important to explore *how the co-curricular experiences influence student learning outcomes*" (emphasis added). Lester (2013:1) also notes that "[i]ncreasingly, institutions are looking for ways to encourage student engagement in formal curricular and informal co-curricular activities".

In this study, it is proposed that students and their leaders get empowered through a myriad of training and mentorship programmes (Type 2 properties) discussed early. Furthermore, information provided through various media/platforms, in addition to training and mentorship, enhance the agency of students and their leaders. This then culminates into an empowered engagement. This is a value construct, answering the

study's research sub-questions (i.e., RSQ2 and RSQ3). The construct of empowered engagement describes the enhancement of students' agency. Also echoed by Lester (2013), Davis and Murrell's (1993) study already found that the principal determinant of student gains is the effort that students put into their academic and social experiences.

Presented through Archer's (1982) work on morphogenesis and structuration, Student Affairs' student development programmes can be viewed as a "social structure" that influences human agency. Archer (1982: 455) posited that "social structure is ultimately a human product…[and]….this product in turn shapes individuals and influences their interaction". Pratt (2014) even argues that as humans we are born into social structures created by activities of those in the past, so new students at a university enter into social structures. This continuous cycle can be further explained through what Dreher (2015:55), echoing Berger and Luckman, calls "institutionalisation" which is "based on reciprocal typification of habitualised actions by type of actors". Once empowered, students and their student leaders reciprocally train and mentor other students and also provide critical feedback to the support service ecosystem. Secondly, once empowered and or during the process of being empowered, students are able to effectively engage in a myriad of co-curricular activities, as well as play an effective role at the highest level of HEIs governance. They also engage communities, politicians and businesses, effectively. They engage others (student leaders) at local levels and national levels through the SAUS. The type of engagement and relationships between students and management and other stakeholders is what makes the difference. The difference between a mundane engagement and empowered engagement is where the empowered engagement value is hidden. The value tension emanates from mandane engagement and where empowered engagement is not understood and not strategically managed.

Similar to the findings of the present study, other researchers have also noted the hostilities in engagements in higher education. After interviewing Student Representative Council members (SRCs), Moreku's (2014) study reports that, 'serious challenges in the governance of institutions and that these challenges emanate from how leaders of the institutions operated'. Mbhele and Sibanyoni (2022) studied student protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and a

phenomenon of mandane engagements, with value tension manisfesting in a form of hostile and confrontational engagements.

On the score of mediating in engagements, other scholars such as Gaston-Gayes et al. (2005), as well as Long (2012) have already noted the central role of Student Affairs. A scenario where engagements happen sporadically without the morphogenesis process of training and guidance offered by Student Affairs, results in conflicts and anarchy. Jansen's (2017:8) description of a leaderless revolution is an example, where he says Vice-Chancellors "negotiate for hours with one group of students, only for that group to be sidelined and replaced by another group of students, even on the same day of a meeting with management". So, the study's findings on the construct of 'empowered engagement' contributes to describing the nature of campus climate as well as how Student Affairs mitigates the extent of instabilities and related effects including institutional reputation.

Overall Type 2 describes the 'human and social capital' critical resources and capabilities for support services. Leadership concept is the anchor and the starting point in the value creation for this resource type and thereafter a dialective occurs, through a morphogenesis of institutionally habitualised human/social agency, which empowers and reciprocally creates valuable resources and capabilities.

The development of student leaders' agency has also been studied through morphogenesis theoretical lens by Davids and Fataar (2022), within the context of residences at the University of Stellenbosch. These researchers argued that the morphogenesis lens "emphasises the bi-directional force that *agents* and *structure* exert on one another in producing change" (ibid: 78), (emphasis added). Davids and Fataar's (2022) findings suggested that, in terms of agency, students could transform from their primary agency at the start of their university journey into social actors', and that "student leaders thus became change agents in their residences and the broader university" (2022: 90). The latter findings by Davids and Fataar are corroborated by the present study's findings that describe a reciprocal value feedback to the support services ecosystem. This is how Type 2 answered the study's main question as well as sub-questions (RSQ2): How do student affairs leaders create value in resources and capabilities? Furthermore, Type 2 also

answered sub-question (RSQ3): Which resources and capabilities" attributes create value and sustainability for student affairs?

5.2.2.4 Summary

'Leadership' as a practice in the context of student affairs is critical in deciphering the institutional vision and carving out a functional level service exchange interface framework. It is also a necessity for cooperative governance. The concept of leadership is closely related to the construct 'strategic thinking' (resource Type 1 attribute). The concept 'leadership' for resource Type 2, proffers nuances of value co-creation for support services in a form of a triad leadership, a morphogenesis of institutionally habitualised human/social agency, which empowers and reciprocally creates valuable resources and capabilities. The mandane engagements lead to value tension phenomenon, where there are opposing interests. The construct of 'empowered engagement' contributes to describing the nature of campus climate as well as how Student Affairs mitigates the extent of instabilities and related effects. Leadership interventions influence students' agency, and thus transforming them to social actors, who can offer positive resources as agents of change in the broader university.

5.2.3 Resource Type 3: Financial and Internet Connectivity 'Biopower'

In the research findings, resource and capabilities Type 3 culminated into mainly two constructs, namely; 'Financial and internet connectivity biopower'. In answering the research questions, Type 3 support service resources and capabilities, captures the "what", "which" and the "how" parts of the phenomenon.

5.2.3.1 Financial resources

As proposed by Barney (1995:50), "resources and capabilities include all of the *financial*, physical, human and organisational assets used by an organisation to develop and deliver services to its customers". Emphasis added. Resources and capabilities for support services are generally analysed at a micro/meso-level. 'Finance' or 'financial resources' in the present study mainly denote 'budgets' or 'budget allocations' and 'internal or external funding' for the departments in Student Affairs. In the Resource Type 3, the budget is a tightly-controlled resource.

Type 3 resources describe how financial resources act as enablers in the acquisition of other resources (e.g., qualified employees). Financial resource constraints have a direct impact on high staff turnover due to low salaries, and the inability to afford the best professionals, and thus impacting on the realisation of Type 1 resources (special skills). Financial resources are inherently paradoxical and create a state of strategic stagnation. For example, austerity measures associated with financial constraints result in short supply of human resources. There are direct relationships between Resource Type 1 and Type 3. The constraining power of financial resources has a direct impact on the mission of Student Affairs. Conversely, the more financial resources, the likehood of acquiring the sought-after specialists (e.g. doctors for a campus health centre, etc.) Thus, financial resources are both enablers and hindrances in the achievement of the mission and hence the biopower analytical lens.

However, Resource Type 1 (i.e. special skills on fundraising and strategic thinking) can be employed to actually generate financial resources. Strategic thinking (as a knowledge attribute) can also be used to leverage support from senior management, thus yielding more resources in the form of budget allocations. The theoretical element of resource dependence theory is clear in this concept of finance. In a greater skim of things, for example; HEIs in South Africa receive financial resources from government as a stakeholder. RDT focuses on the macro (whole organisation) explanations. However, in the present study, the theory is used to provide an understanding and interpretation of a micro and meso-level of strategising; i.e., individual managers' level and departmental/divisional level. The power of RDT is modelled on a micro-foundation to provide an understanding of how the Student Affairs unit can reduce its dependence on university finances and, in turn, position its services such that the university recruitment processes also (partly) depend on certain support services. Viewed from the premise that "all organisations critically depend on other organisations for the provision of vital resources and that this dependence is often reciprocal" (Drees & Heugens, 2013:1667), this theory does help as an analytic tool. RDT has previously been applied to higher education by researchers such as Powell and Rey (2015), albeit at a macro-level. Nehls (2020) employed the analytical lens of resource dependence when investigating the impact of advisory (external) boards on Student Affairs. Nehls motivated that "advisory

boards are integral to acquiring needed resources because in addition to providing advice and *funding,* they connect universities to external sources" (Emphasis added). Nehls (2020) posited that the "RDT is relevant when thinking about the value of members of the advisory boards, especially in times of budget cuts to public institutions as well the inherent spending reductions in ancillary programmes".

5.2.3.2 Internet connectivity

The second construct for Resource Type 3, is named 'internet connectivity'. The internet is a critical resource for higher education as an information and knowledge hub for human development. By by extension, it is also a critical support service-creation exchange mechanism for Student Affairs. The 'connectivity' element represents the mobility and ubiquity of web interconnections. What amplifies the latter element of this resource type are emergent situations that precipitate distant communication and online service exchanges. Consequently, the creation and delivery of support services, through internet and connectivity has become a normative practice. Even the value of physical support service offerings such as student accommodation are now largely assessed by students in terms of the availability of mobile connectivity (WiFi) in them. Various services can now be booked online and some such as counselling can be delivered online, keeping in mind the need for face to face interactions. The marketing and promotion of support services are also done online. For Student Affairs, internet connectivity has brought efficiency which has a great value and saves time for service users, and also provide economies of scale for service employees.

Students even report that non-availability of WiFi in the residences can be a source of student protests. One participant, who influenced the re-labelling of Resource Type 3, remarked as follows:

> *So, for me, WiFi is a form of biopower, because it controls the little spheres of my life. If I don't have access to internet, I basically can't do anything, I become non- existent at [name of the university].*

While internet connectivity seems to be priceless in terms of value, the installation of WiFi infrastructure in the residences, for example, costs millions of Rands, so, lack of finance is great hindrance in creating this value. Finance also controls all spheres of

online service delivery – without online learning, universities might as well have had to closed shop for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings corroborated Graham's (2013), findings that the use and functionality of technology-based systems have a direct impact on the work lives of professional staff and student outcomes. Mavondo, Tsarenko and Gabbott (2004) also found that technology was one of the resources and capabilities for higher education that students rated as very important. When classifying service-oriented differentiation using information and communication technology, Kowalkowski, Kindstrom and Gebauer (2013) found that services in support of the client's actions have the largest impact on firms' service business orientation. In providing Internet connectivity support services could deliver competitive value. Describing the three levels of strategy (corporate, competitive and functional), Thompson, Scott and Martin (2017:48) described the "functional level" of strategy to comprise "the activities that deliver the competitive advantage".

In this study, Resource Type 3 is considered as social capital. Finance and internet connectivity are somewhat abstract assets in terms of their theoretical classification. The original source of finance (budgetary allocation) for Student Affairs, allocated to universities and distributed to their various programmes, is the tax contribution by the public (society). Thus, finance is a fundamental social element of higher education.

Applying the morphogenesis lens, Pratt (2014) proposed that the use of ICT in learning settings develops social relationships for human interaction. A former CEO of Cisco, John Chambers, wrote in his autobiography that he was "privileged to lead a company that connected people to the internet and changed the way we work, live, play and learn" (2018: ix). Adopting a critical realism as a philosophy, Lawson's (2008) "ontology of technology" postulated that it is possible to sustain a conception of technology that is not only irreducibly social but able to give due weight to those features that distinguish technical objects from other artefacts. Lawson wrote about the social dimension of technology. The social dimension of technology is the nexus of value co-creation in the present study, under the construct internet connectivity of Resource Type 3. The mass distribution of knowledge to students and efficient and broader reach of audience in training events, the enactment of democracy systems and process (i.e., online elections) and engagement platforms are some of the examples that show how value is created through the internet connectivity. The

social dimension of internet connectivity reveals what Dreher (2015:55) would call "the dialectic of the objective and subjective reality of the social world". The objective reality of the world manifests in student development programmes and various online-based activities exert influence on the subjective world of individual students. Conversely, the subjective world of individuals reinforces and also create, through student-led social media, a modified objective world.

5.2.3.3 Summary

The present study described support service resources and capabilities as 'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of mission and vision'. Financial and internet connectivity biopower, among other resource types, is that something that adds value. Finance adds value in facilitating the acquisition of other resources (i.e. Type 1), but it is also observed to be a restraint to strategy and source of frustration for managers and service users alike. However, a deeper analysis of type 3 resources, shows how managers use other resources to generate financial resources. RDT focuses on the macro level explanations. However, under resource Type 3, the theory provides an understanding and interpretation of a micro and meso-level strategising (e.g., individual managers' level and departmental/divisional level) for the generation of financial resources. In addition to answering the main research question, Resource Type 3 also answers RSQ3: Which resources and capabilities attributes create value and sustainability for Student Affairs? The power of internet connectivity enables the delivery of support services. The provision of internet connectivity (i.e., WiFi in residences living spaces and in student transport systems) answers RSQ4: What do students understand to be the student affairs activities that create value for them? Internet connectivity has been viewed as a social 'biopower' of communication for students, influencing various spheres of their campus life.

5.2.4 Resource Type 4: Strategy Influencing, Enacting and Functional Level Interpretation

Resource and Capabilities Type 4 emerged from iterative observation and interpretation of data where Student Affairs leaders at research sites, consistently reflected on their respective universities' strategic goals and how they enact and engage at divisional and departmental levels to carve out their strategies. Resource

Type 4 (like others) resonate with how Student Affairs community described critical resources and capabilities for support services. These findings on Resource Type 4 corroborate van Niekerk's (2018) work, which built on Jansen van Rensburg et al.'s (2014) work. Van Niekerk investigated various strategising practices of middle managers in a university context of support services to demonstrate how they influence strategy. Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke's (2004) literature synthesis sheds more light in illustrating the link between support service and the academic project of an institution. (See table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Student support influences on student outcomes

Institutional practices that:	Support Social/Emotional Needs	Support Academic Needs
Aid integration	Enrolment processes Social networks	Pre-enrolment advice Academic counselling Student/teacher relationships Quality of teaching Academic Success (GPA)
	Orientation/Induction	
	Learning communities	
Provide services	Health & counselling Advisory services Recreational services Campus facilities Placement services	Supplemental instruction
	Peer tutoring	
	Mentoring	
Adapt to accommodate student differences	Absence of discrimination Feeling safe Valuing minorities	Learning preferences
	Cultural capital	
	Fairness	

Source: Prebble et al. (2004)

Student Affairs/middle managers are at the meso-level of the service ecosystem. The present findings concurs with Golgeci, Ali, Ritala and Arslan's (2021:6) conclusion that "[t]he meso-stage is crucial in the service ecosystems perspective because it connects the macro-level with the micro-level representing individuals and individual capabilities, attitudes and behaviours in service ecosystems". In this study,

Resource Type 4 is regarded as managerial capital. Strategy influencing is one construct that describes the actions taken by Student Affairs to register their strategic role at the university. In their advocacy, Student Affairs would argue for their space in producing fully prepared graduates. This objective is pursued through 'strategic thinking' capabilities, which is a property of Resource Type 1 (knowledge – of the context). In enacting their strategy, Student Affairs develop and implement programmes that contribute to the academic project of the university, for example; conducting assessments of what they call 'students at risk' (students who are at risk of failing and or dropping out of the university). They compile data on students at risk and present them to the faculty boards. Murji's (2019) findings indicated that data evidence of what support service managers are claiming to be doing, is critical, because in the world of academia evidence is important. This directly influences the shape of academic planning and ultimately and cumulatively the university's strategy. Resource Type 4 as a managerial capital answers RSQ3: Which resources and capabilities attributes create value and sustainability for Student Affairs?

Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation are the capabilities that create value for sustainability of Student Affairs. Resource Type 4 also connects to the Student Affairs units' strategy formulation principles tabled in the previous chapter which included (i) supporting the strategy direction of a university; (ii) strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal); (iii) strategic changes for composite support services and student-centred approach; (iv) multiple strategic alliances; and (v) strategic contribution to society. Murji's (2019) study found that institutions have strategic plans that provide direction for Student Affairs and are expected to be integrated in the divisional planning. Student Affairs strategy formulation principles 1 and 2 of the present study directly corroborate Murji's findings.

5.2.4.1 Strategy influencing

The present study's findings illuminate the strategic influence of Student Affairs through a myriad of interventions. In creating strategic value for an institution, Student Affairs, for example; provide independent accredited training to certain professions (i.e. psychology/counseling), which also enhance the reputation of an institution. Furthermore, the strategic influence is also in providing to first-year and other students, academic engagement skills and thus drawing the attention of the

university to the importance of co-curricular programmes. This value creating intervention links directly to the definition of student engagement.

5.2.4.2 Enacting and functional level interpretation

The enactment and interpretation level of strategy is more of a wayfinding approach for Student Affairs. Merging 'strategic thinking' (Type 1 attribute) and 'empowered engagement' (Type 2 concept) explains the wayfinding process (Bouty, Gomez & Chia, 2019). In developing a Student Affairs strategy with the five principles tabled above, requires that managers decode the high level vision statements to employees and to the student leadership, while embracing emergent forces and managing value tension. Bouty et al. (2019:442) explained that in wayfinding through purposive action, "the agent acts purposively by drawing on what is directly available from within specific set of circumstances in which s/he finds her/himself, to deal effectively with the predicaments and obstacles s/he immediately faces". It is pragmatist strategy approach which is a necessity when Student Affairs formulate their divisional strategies. Student Affairs leaders are generally middle managers, who, while connecting to the corporate/institutional-level strategy, must keep their focus on the service interface. Gjerde and Alvesson (2020:125) posited that "middle managers play an important part in organisational hierarchies from their position, placed between the operating core and the apex". A context where, as narrated by Jansen (2017), the university management negotiates with one group of students and negotiations are suddenly taken over by a new group, is quintessential to a wayfinding phenomenon. The wayfinding approach is a strategic interpretation that aligns with Mintzberg's emergent strategy phenomenon. Student Affairs leaders live in a context that can only be described in the direct words of one of the research participants who said that, *"the only certainty we're certain about is uncertainty".*

Resource Type 4, analysed at a meso-level presents Student Affairs managers as agents with interests in achieving their missions, through leveraging or creating positive interdependent relationships of stakeholders, in order to co-create and realise nuanced value.

In their landmark work, Mintzberg and Waters (1985:271) postulated that "strategy formation walks on two feet, one deliberate and the other emergent". Resource Type 4 shows managerial capital at the centre of leveraging value from top management's

deliberate strategy and way-finding sense-making patterns of disruptive forces at the service exchange interface. In addition to answering the main research question, resource Type 4 therefore answers RSQ2: How do Student Affairs leaders create value in resources and capabilities? The programmes that directly support the academic project provide the answer to RSQ3: Which resources and capabilities attributes create value and sustainability for Student Affairs?

5.2.4.3 Summary

Resource Type 4 (strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation) is regarded in this study as a managerial capital for the support service strategy. It is a resource type (attribute) closely linked to the five principles of support service strategy formulation that were presented in the findings. These findings (Resource Type 4) corroborate van Niekerk's (2018) work. Van Niekerk (2018) found that 'professional middle managers make use of holistic and comprehensive practices to effect change as they strategise' and she identified strategic roles of middle managers, including what she termed "downward supporting and upward influencing'.

In this study, strategy influencing was presented as one construct that described the actions taken by Student Affairs to indicate their strategic role at the university. In their advocacy, Student Affairs argue for their space in producing fully prepared graduates. This directly influences the shape of academic planning (in terms of support for students) and ultimately and cumulatively the university strategy. Resource Type 4 was presented to relate to the Student Affairs strategy formulation principles of this study. The findings under Resource Type 4, were also found to corroborate Murji's (2019) study, in terms of the link between institutional strategy and divisional strategy.

Middle managers play an important part in organisational hierarchies from their position placed between the operating core and the apex (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020). Student Affairs as middle managers create value using their managerial capital to leverage resources through influencing high level strategy and employing a wayfinding approach (Bouty, et, al, 2019), to do sense-making and interpreting emergent dynamics of service exchange interface. Resource Type 4 further corroborates the work of Murji (2019) who found that in their strategic planning,

Student Affairs identifies goals generated from top-down as well as bottom-up directions. The next discussion presents the resources typology model for support service strategy.

5.3 THE SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT SERVICE STRATEGY MODEL

The findings of the present study were theorised into a model that describes the resources typology for sustainable support service strategy. Murji (2019) found that Student Affairs did not have a strategic planning model, but their planning process had the elements of Tromp and Ruben's strategic planning model. Taylor and Matney (2007) conducted an evaluative longitudinal study of Student Affairs strategic planning process, using Goodstein et al.'s (1993) strategic model. The latter model follows a series of linear steps (Planning to plan, values scan, mission formulation, strategic business model – goals, integrating action plans, developing contingency plan and implementation). Taylor and Matney (2007) included reflective and assessment elements. Drawing on the work of Davis (2013) who studied the strategising process of middle managers at UNISA, van Niekerk (2018) conducted an evaluative study of how middle managers strategise to effect change during an institution's strategic change initiative at the University of Pretoria. The strategic change initiative investigated by van Niekerk was called "Optimising Student Services" (OSS). The present study focuses on the support service strategy formulation framework, with a resources and capabilities perspective. The study partly draws on the work of Meredith (1993) which promoted the development of a conceptual model that describes a phenomenon before producing a framework. This section presents a model that describes the sustainable support service strategy, with a resource and capabilities as a theoretical underpinning. A typology of resources and capabilities for support service strategy is presented with their immanent attributes and properties. The model depicts the manifest value (as co-created by actors) with its paradox and tension and then the outcome of the model with its effects on meso mission on the one side, and links to macro-strategy on the other side. Please see figure 5.1 below.

A depiction of a sustainable support service strategy model:
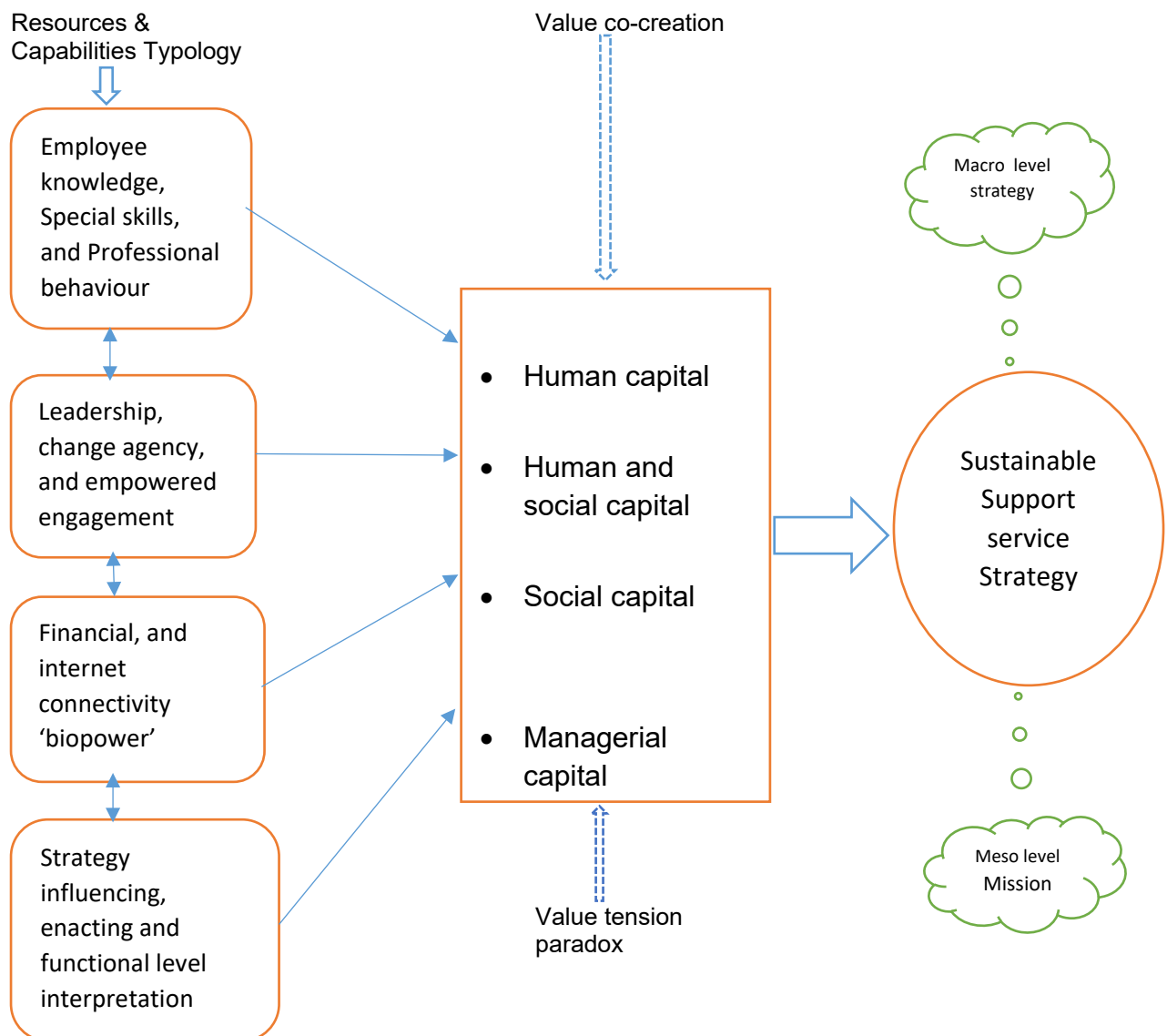
Figure 5.1: Sustainable support service strategy model
Source: Own compilation

In this model, the one directional thin arrows pointing to the middle box on Figure 5.1 show the value and value potential generated by a given resource bundle. The dual directional thin arrows represent the influence and relationships between resource bundles. The double dotted arrows pointing to the middle box show the value co-creation and the value tension, that are a source of sustainability of support services on the one hand and contestation of value appropriation and value-in-use on the other hand. Viewed from a morphogenesis perspective (Archer, 1982), Msosa's

(2019) the study showed an embedded value tension between student leaders and university management. The present study identified employee-centric and managerial capital resources bundles as critical in converting the value tension to value benefit for stakeholders. In their theory of microfoundations of resources, Felin, et al, (2020), proposed that the search for valuable resources is simplified by knowing the properties and new uses of specific resources. The present study's model presents a specific resources attributes, showing the properties and combinations for value.

The thickest arrow pointing to the round box, shows the final product of the model. The present study's model aligns has relations with Sheth et al.'s (1991) value model discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis. Sheth et al.'s (1991) value model included; conditional value, social, emotional, epistemic and functional value. The model contributes to service strategy (Lightfoot & Gebauer, 2011) ecosystem literature, with at least three of the model's resource types (Resource Type 1, 2 and 4) showing how value is created through actor engagement. After conducting a service ecosystem bibliomatic study, Golgeci et al. (2021) noted that the central research question was 'how different actors, including service providers and customers, build, realise and consume value propositions and how they engage in value co-creation activities in the service ecosystems'. The resource model contributes to answering this question. What follows, is a further explication of the resource bundles under the present model.

In their seminal paper on 'servitisation', Vandermerwe and Rada, (1988) postulated a view that 'service is no longer a separate category for managers to consider, but rather an all pervasive part of their strategic mission and corporate planning'. As shown in the present discussion of the model, researchers (Murji, 2019; Davis, 2013; Taylor & Matney, 2007; van Niekerk, 2018, Msosa, 2019) went further to investigate the concept of support services (in higher education) within the realm of strategy. Buultjens and Robinson (2011:337) concluded that "student services therefore make an important contribution to the extent to which the student enjoys all aspects of campus life, both inter and extra-curriculum activities". The current study contributes to this research stream (support service strategy). 'The most critical resources for majority of organisations have financial capital, human capital, and social capital. The latter two types of capital mostly create performance difference (Haynes, Hitt,

and Campbell, 2015). The findings of the present study corroborated this observation, and further showed that financial resources can be constraining as well.

The typology of this descriptive model focuses on the theoretical angle of resources and capabilities, and the following section expands on this typology.

- **Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour** is a bundle of critical resources and capabilities for support services. Structured together, these resource attributes have a potential to produce valuable human capital for a sustainable support service strategy. Vargo and Lusch (2017:48) noted the role of what they term "operant resources", which they described as resources that include, "knowledge and skills that can act on other resources to create a benefit". This resource bundle is at the centre in the definition of the term 'service', as defined by Greer, Vargo and Lusch (2016:2), as "the application of resources (primarily knowledge and skills) for the benefit of another individual or organisation". What this model shows is that 'special skills' in the service context are critical and that employee knowledge and special skills have to be accompanied by the requisite 'professional behaviour' of employees in the service exchange. This is because value is assessed by the beneficiary during the consumption or use, while it is also co-created. 'Services relating to the strategy of a customer-support service provider are highly customised, require more intensive customer relationships and are therefore focused on the user' (Lightfoot & Gehauer, 2011). Therefore, without professional behaviour, co-creation of value is diminished, service patronage is reduced and value tension is consequently heightened.

- **Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement** is a bundle of critical resources and capabilities for support services. In this resource attributes bundle, the 'leadership' construct appeared to have triad links, in that middle managers (van Niekerk, 2018) connect directly with service user representatives, their teams and their top management echelons. Assessing the strategic role of middle managers in higher education, Davis, et al, (2016) posited that 'all layers of management in a higher education institution are responsible for the productivity, efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability'. The model shows that leadership (of middle managers), in addition to influencing employees, also

influences other stakeholders such as service users and their representatives. It is a human capital producing social capital, in the process of value co-creation.

The value-in-use (Greer et al. 2016) of this leadership capability enhances and influence agency on students' navigation of the campus life and life beyond university. What emerges ultimately is an 'empowered engagement' between service users and service employees, which then creates human and social capital. The admonition coming out of this resource bundle is the value tension (Elfenbein, Foo, White, Tan and Aik, 2007; Lloyd, 2018; Toth, Peters, Pressey & Johnston, 2018) which is the difference between social values and needs of actors or stakeholders (employees and service users). The exercise of individual agency and coordination of joint actions to improve mutual value creation is emphasised by Toth et al. (2018). In this resource bundle, getting empowered (through information-sharing and training) contributes reciprocally to service value co-creation, but the caveat is on the tension between the creation and claiming of value (Elfenbein, et al. 2007). Service user representatives have a massive social value-tension dilemma as well, as they act as agents, weighing the risks and benefits for themselves and their constituents. This social value tension inevitably affects how their individual agency changes in the dyadic engagements between themselves and service employees.

- **Financial and internet connectivity biopower** is a bundle of critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. Financial resources are axiomatic as critical resources because higher education depends heavily on government funding. In the South African context, in 2019, 47% of the higher education sector's revenue came from government funding grants, generated through the public tax (society). However, generally any organisation (profit or non-profit driven) relies on or survives through various revenue streams. The one leg of the leadership triad (from Resource Type 2) connecting to top management, was identified as leverage in the support service ecosystem to create financial resources. Furthermore, in this model, Resource Type 1 attribute (fundraising skills) was also identified as generating income streams. The constraining 'biopower' of financial resources is that skilled and highly trained employees are hard to get. So, there is a bit of a paradox, which is, however, improved if the

scale is tilted towards various income streams and leveraging of stakeholder relations.

Internet connectivity itself requires a financial resource injection to build the infrastructure. We have seen (current study findings) in higher education, students using their social power and priorities shifted towards the availability of the internet connectivity infrastructure. Internet connectivity creates virtual communities where support services are delivered, where knowledge is created and used and where social movements are also enacted as catalysts for 'value appropriation' (Barney, 2018). To this end, this resources bundle has a social capital element that creates value for the sustainability of support services.

- **Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation** is a bundle of critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. In this study, Resource Type 4 is regarded as managerial capital. Strategy influencing is one construct that describes the actions taken by middle managers to register their strategic role at the macro-level of an organisation. Strategy scholars such as Davis et al. (2016) posited that 'all layers of management in a higher education institution are responsible for the productivity, efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability'. However, "[to] begin evaluating the competitive implications of a firm's resources and capabilities, managers must first answer the question of value" (Barney, 1995: 50). The model shows that middle managers act as agents in advancing their divisions' interests through influencing the macro strategy. They do this by presenting their mission and carving them out to 'speak' directly to some of the macro strategic goals. Furthermore, they gather and provide critical service users' profile and users' needs data that are central to macro-strategy. They market certain support services as part of the overall organisational value proposition package. To some degree, in response to Barney's question of value, middle managers identify niches in support service offerings as a nuanced value. Martin, Thompson, and Scoott, (2017:48) described the "functional level" of strategy, which is a domain of middle managers, to comprise "the activities that deliver the competitive advantage".

In enacting divisional strategies, middle managers dissect and interpret the macro-strategies with the help of or through inviting members of the top management to their divisional planning sessions. The advantage middle

managers have is the experience of the user interface. The input from front line staff is taken into plans through strategic conversations and visits to various functional units. All of this input is orchestrated by middle managers into value bundles of resources emanating from managerial capital for support service strategy.

5.4 SECTION A SUMMARY

Section A of the discussion chapter tabled and weaved together how the results around the mission, the support service strategy formulation principles and resource typology formed a model that describes the critical resources and capabilities as well as how value is create or co-created. The present study described support service resources and capabilities as 'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of mission and vision'. The findings produced nuanced attributes of critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy. The resource attributes included;

(a) Employee Knowledge, Special Skills and Professional Behaviour. This support service resources bundle is summarised as *employee-centric capabilities*, which have an inherent human capital (value). Managers are cautioned to be aware of the notion of 'professional behaviour' that can easily erode the value of employee knowledge and special skills.

(b) Leadership, Change Agency and Empowered Engagement. This support service resources bundle was summarised as the *orchestrated transformational resources,* which offers human and social capital (value). The orchestration of this resources bundle can be through a morphogenesis lens of institutionally habitualised human/social agency, which empowers and reciprocally creates valuable resources and capabilities.

(c) Financial and Internet Connectivity Biopower. This resources bundle is summarised as an economic and technological resource bundle, which provides a social capital for support service strategy. The social dimension of technology is the nexus of value co-creation in the present study, under the construct internet connectivity. The mass distribution of knowledge to students and efficient and broader reach of audience.

(d) Strategy Influencing, Enacting and Functional Level Interpretation.   This resources bundle is summarised as 'middle managers' divergent strategic behaviour', which provides managerial capital (value). Student Affairs middle managers create value using their managerial capital to leverage resources through influencing high level strategy and employing a wayfinding approach (Bouty et al., 2019), to do sense-making and interpreting emergent dynamics of service exchange interface. Using Follett's (1924) perspective, Nelson (2017) posits that 'middle managers see different elements of the same system that may be invisible to others on a higher or lower plane, as part of a holistic process of sense making to inform higher ups and lower downs'.

The present study's resource model offers a bundle of support service strategy resources and capabilities, showing various reconfigurations for the purpose of achieving 'sustainable value creation strategies' (Story, Raddats, Burton, Zolkiewski & Baines, 2017). The model is not intended to be a prescription, which is why each resource type is a bundle that suggests value potential. The grouping also helps in providing theoretical parsimony on the interpretation of the resource typology. As a qualitatively-driven mixed methods research approach, the next section focuses on discussing the quantitative research findings.

5.5 SECTION B: DISCUSSION OF THE QUANTATIVE FINDINGS

5.5.1 Introduction

In this mixed methods study, triangulation of data collection methods was done so as to provide validation of final the product – that is, the sustainable support service framework. The current section of the chapter discusses the results with the primary objective of answering some of the research sub-questions and support service value attributes and thus contributing to meeting the research objectives. Researchers such as Yezdani (2015) have suggested that "more can be done to address the problem of value creation for non-academic services" (p.283). Existing research indicates that resources are not valuable on their own, so the study sought to understand how value is created and how value is perceived by support service users. The latter purpose of the study was the main focus of the quantitative research strand. Thus, one of the study's propositions was that, 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be

sustainable'. Scholars (Barney, 1991; Felin, Kaufman, and Zenger's, 2020) have postulated that resources often have a (non-obvious) dormant value. However, "[t]he capacity to recognise new value, starts with knowing what one is looking for in the first place, by ex-ante specifying something unique amongst the vast reservoirs of latent unpriced resources and uses" (Felin, Kauffman & Zenger, 2020:9). To this end, Felin, et al, (2020), proposed that the search for valuable resources is simplified by knowing the properties and new uses of specific resources. Developing and employing the HedSUSERV scale was thus aimed at searching for the value attributes, through the constructs discussed below.

5.5.2 How Do the Quantitative Results Answer the Research Questions?

The quantitative results mainly answered two sub-questions, namely:

RSQ4: What do students understand to be the student affairs activities that create value for them?

RSQ5: What is the support service value, as perceived by students?

Data analysis followed a descriptive statistical approach, with a measure of central tendency and data dispersion (Cohen, et al, 2018; Miles and Banyard, 2007) as the main statistical analysis method. The observation of data dispersion used was the mean and standard deviation, to assess the extent of how the research sub-questions were answered and thus measure the support service value attributes. What follows is a discussion of the support service value constructs, which constituted the HedSUSERV scale.

5.5.2.1 Student-centredness.

Emanating from literature (e.g. Long, 2012) and from the qualitative findings, the construct 'student-centredness' was measured to see how it answers the present study's sub-question. Student-centredness was operationally defined, as a *student support service principle for guidance, development and support of student success*. Some of the items of the scale measuring this constructs included statements such as; 'serve the interest of students', 'provide guidance to students', 'give a sense of belonging', 'provides space for development and growth', 'access to student support'. All items loaded on this factor with a high factor correlation, which suggests

that they sufficiently measure the dynamics of this construct. The overall mean of 2.4 and the standard deviation of 0.73899, showed a wide variability and heterogeneity, with data dispersion showing coalescence of variances. The scale measures produced positive results for this construct to be considered as a support service value attribute, as perceived by students. The defining features of the attributes comprise; guidance, serving, belonging, development, growth, and support, as espoused the in operational definition. The results therefore indicate that this support service value construct is not as ephemeral as it may appear, especially since it is multidimensional construct (i.e. being used in the strict pedagogical spheres as well). Xulu-Gama, et al, (2018) also noted that student centredness is construct that encompasses educational and social outcomes such as development, belonging to campus societies, etc. There are relationships between this construct and 'student engagement' as shown by dimensions that measured this construct, which represented potential sources of the dormant value, included; 'proving space for development and growth', 'sense of belonging', and 'providing guidance'.

5.5.2.2 Employee competence attributes

Competence was operationalised *as cognitive job-related elements or skills acquired through formal education, as well as desirable personal traits and knowledge for support services necessary for student success*. The items that measured this contruct, which represented potential for dormant value, included statements with properties such as; 'necessary qualifications', 'commitment', 'care and respect', 'be able to listen', 'to solve my non-academic problems', 'capacity for our diverse needs'. Data showed positive support for these attributes, with some items receiving as high as 70% on strongly agreeing. The mean was <2 and the deviation was .5. This is a strong indication of this construct being a support service value attribute. Scholars have observed that the level of competencies in Student Affairs remains relatively low, in terms of recognised basic formal qualifications (Pansiri and Sinkamba, 2017). Other researchers have identified various competences such as those for student governance (Nkonoane, 2015) and student leadership development (Xaba, 2021). Long (2012) also listed a number of competences for Student Affairs including; leadership, counselling, advising, conflict resolution, working with diverse populations, etc. But there is only a few studies that identified personal attributes-type of competence value attributes in Student Affairs. Even the recent study by

Muller, Grabsch and Moore (2018) also focused on the common competences as listed in Long (2012), with no identified value linked to service user-perceptions.

5.5.2.3 Value in support services

"Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary", (Greer, Lusch and Vargo, 2016: 8). "Value is experiential", (ibid). Value is a central construct in the present study and is operationally defined as *an attribute of support services that provides sustainability on the one hand and benefits to students' development and success, on the other hand.* The items measuring this construct, which represented potential sources of dormant value, included properties such as; 'availability of services after hours and weekends', 'face to face interaction', 'prompt response', 'display of consultation times', 'added benefits' and 'quality'. The highest rating under strongly agreeing being 32.9% and 40% for agreeing, with the scale items that were measuring the variable. The overall mean of 2.1 and the standard deviation of 0.60448 suggested a pattern of positive support of the measures of the construct. The concepts used in measuring value are essential in mitigating the value tension in the service ecosystem, especially if we are to promote student centredness and student engagement.

5.5.2.4 Student engagement

In the present study, the concept 'student engagement', is operationally defined *as an effort for active participation and involvement in personal development and in institutional governance underpinned by support, guidance and facilitation.* The measurement items of this construct produced less support (relatively lower ratings), generally. The irony is that, for the qualitative empirical results, the same construct was among the salient findings in all four research sites. This is one of the features of research mixed methods, and as the researcher "compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011: 62), the outcomes point to future developments or improvement of measurements of variables.

Latif, et al (2019) also found low factor loadings on the same contruct, which is an indication that the construct requires further conceptualisation with more items to measure it. The lowest internal consistency reliability (0.633) was on this construct.

Over 38% of respondents chose "neutral" as their response rate to the items on protests and SRC, while between 17% and 21% disagreed with the statements, against 16% to 34.5% (highest positively-rated item) of those who agreed with the statements. The mean was 2.5 and the standard deviation was 0.73394.

Three of the four items on the 'student engagement' construct, make reference to protests and the SRC. These items were empirical from student participants' data of the qualitative findings of the present study, but it's possible that many of the 638 respondents either did not share the same sentiments of protests and SRC being the only help. The statement "They only listen to us when we protest", taken from students' participant data of the main findings, was in line with Moreku's (2014) findings, as well as Mbhele and Sibanyoni's (2022) findings. On this construct, this finding therefore does not have a strong corroboration of the qualitative findings of this study. Student Affairs interventions such as training, orientation, and influencing student's agency leads to empowered engagement as presented in the qualitative findings. So the agency of many respondents could be at an empowered level, as we see the positive rating of the next construct (collaborations). From this re-assessment, the measurement items of the 'student engagement' construct lean towards a less empowered engagement, compared to, as we shall see below, those of 'collaborations' as a construct. As also indicated by their operational definitions, the two constructs have a close theoretical relationship.

5.5.2.5 Collaborations

The construct 'collaborations' is operationalised as *a process whereby Student Affairs and students work together to deliver support services and to resolve campus problems.* The scale items included terms (paraphrased/abridged) such as; 'assist the university', 'promote and facilitate the support service','relate better when delivered with students involved', 'students contribute to solving university crises'. A very small proportions of respondents (between 1.1% and 4.1%) disagreed with the five items of this construct. Agreements were all over 40% and strongly agreeing between 24.3% and 38.6%. The overall mean was 1.9 with a standard deviation of 0.62146. The results showed support for the construct being a support service value. On this construct, respondents indicated to be empowered or seeing a great

importance in being empowered – which talks to the value attribute of collaborations, that was identified in the qualitative findings.

5.5.2.6 Support service satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Over 30% of respondents were satisfied with the support services of first year orientation, sports services and facilities, student counselling services and security services. Between 22.4% and 29.3% of respondents were satisfied with student accommodation, student funding/NSFAS administrative services and campus health/clinic services. However, 12.2%, 13.8% and 15% of respondents were dissatisfied with, first year orientation, student accommodation and student funding/NSFAS administrative services respectively. 12.1% were highly dissatisfied with student funding/NSFAS administrative services. 7.5% of respondents for both first year orientation and student accommodation services and facilities were highly dissatisfied. The overall mean was 2.6, with a standard deviation of 0.56029 which means the responses or perceptions had a relatively low variability, suggesting a stronger weight on the scores.

5.5.2.7 SECTION B SUMMARY

Existing research indicates that resources are not valuable on their own. Thus, one of the study's propositions was that, 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainable'. So through the HedSUSERV scale, the quantitative research strand sought to describe and measure the value attributes as perceived by support service users.

Derived from the qualitative research strand, five constructs were measured ('Student centredness', 'collaboration', 'value in support services', and 'staff competences') and four of those had patterns indicating to have potential sources of support service value. Data gathered around the mean with most measurement items having a < 2 mean, and 0.5 standard deviation. The student engagement construct received a low rating as a value attribute, but respondents were divided, with data dispersion showing a mean of > 2 and a standard deviation of 0.7. A *t*-test of independent sub-groups of respondents' data was also conducted. The sub-groups were; undergraduates vs postgraduates, as well as those living in university residences vs those living in accredited residences. The analysis of variances using

a Levene's test for the equality of variance between the subgroups showed no statistically significant difference. The effect size on point estimate, for Cohen's D was > 0.5, which is modest to moderate. This generally indicated a more homogeneity pattern of opinions on the value attributes for support services.

Support service value-in-use (Greer, Vargo, & Lusch, 2016; Vargo & O'Brien, 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2016) was operationalised in this study as a benefit for service users. On the HedSUSERV scale, the benefit to service users was represented by constructs such as; student centredness, staff competences, value in services, student engagement, and collaborations. To evaluate whether these constructs represented value attributes, the scale included measurement items such as;

'Support services offices serve the interest of students', 'support service staff provide guidance to students', 'availability of services after hours and weekends', 'prompt response', 'necessary qualifications', 'commitment', 'care and respect', 'be able to listen', 'capacity for our diverse needs', 'give a sense of belonging', 'provides space for development and growth', 'the SRC tries their best to engage the university management','student structures, committees, and forums are helpful in engaging the university on our needs', 'students also promote and facilitate support services', 'relate better when delivered with students involved'.

Data showed that respondents (service users) agreed with these measurement items, and thus supportive of the constructs to be the support service value attributes.

5.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter was divided into Section A, discussing the findings of the qualitative strand of the research and Section B, discussing the findings of the quantitative strand of the research.

Gansemer-Topf (2013) as well as Pansiri and Sinkamba (2017) noted that Student Affairs professionals may struggle to articulate the role they play within institutions to those unfamiliar with the concept. It was therefore necessary that the actual core mission of Student Affairs is investigated and reported on, so that there is a clear foundation for where the fraternity is positioned in the landscape of HEIs. The findings of the qualitative research presented a common mission of Student Affairs

as: *'co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience'*. The term 'support' is embedded in the mission stated above. The term 'service' was adopted from Greer et al. (2016), who explicated that; service is the application of resources (primarily knowledge and skills) for the benefit of another individual or organisation (the beneficiary). Support service is a nascent research stream, so, strategy formulation principles of this meso-level strategy formulation are imperative. The strategy formulation principles are particularly essential in the dynamic context of higher education where emergent strategies (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) are more likely. The proposed principles for support services are; (i) supporting the strategy direction of an organisation or institution (ii) strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal) (iii) strategic changes for composite support services and user-centred approach (iv) multiple strategic alliances and (v) strategy contribution to society. Based on the findings of the present study, the support service resources (including capabilities) were empirically defined as *'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of a mission and vision'*.

Directly addressing the present study's research questions and objectives, the research project discussed in the present chapter, produced resources and capabilities typology for support services, which included:

- Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour,
- Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement,
- Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower',
- Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation.

The resources and capabilities typology findings was developed into a model that describe the resource bundles for support services as well as depicting the embedded value types, namely; 'human capital', 'human and social capital', 'social capital' and 'managerial capital', which ultimately generate a sustainable support service strategy.

Section B of the chapter discussed how the five support service value constructs answered the study's sub-questions. The five constructs included; 'student-centredness', 'staff competences', 'value in support services', 'student engagement'

and 'collaborations'. The general satisfaction/dissatisfaction levels with support services were also measured, and the results were mostly positive. There was a clear pattern on four of the five constructs, supporting the attributes to be representing the support service value attributes in the study's resource typology. The constructs answered the sub-questions. One of the study's propositions was; 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainable'. The study's findings therefore provided the value-in-use attributes for this proposition, which is in line with the overall study's phenomenon of sustainable support service strategy. Next, is the chapter, (following the mixed methods research tradition), that integrates both findings of the present study, in order to produce a framework.

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS INTEGRATION, PROPOSED FRAMEWORK, STUDY CONTRIBUTION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the aims and objectives of the present study was to identify and consolidate the critical resources and capabilities under the umbrella of Student Affairs and to develop a framework for sustainable support service strategy formulation. The main research question is: ***What are the critical resources and capabilities for a sustainable support service strategy in the context of Student Affairs?*** One of the defining 'characteristics of a mixed methods research approach is the integration of the separately developed findings of a research study' (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2010; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). In this chapter, both the main qualitative findings and supplemental quantitative findings are juxtaposed and assessed on how they complement or diverge from each other and to see how they answer the research questions and research aims and objectives. A framework is thereafter presented as the final product.

6.2 RESULTS INTEGRATION

6.2.1 A Synopsis of the Main Findings (Qualitative)

Kuk and Banning's (2009) rare study reported that many Student Affairs structures tend to be designed around the mission and vision of their inherent universities. This is because there is still a paucity of research in the area of strategic management for support services, especially in higher education. Hence, the present study adopted an exploratory epistemological design, with a multi-case research approach (Eisenhardt, 2021). Kuk and Banning (2009) concluded that the Student Affairs divisions of the future are more likely going to be asked to restructure existing resources to serve changing needs and new student demands than receive additional allocations. Hence, the theoretical perspective of the present study, being resources and capabilities. The study's proposition, as reflected by the empirical findings (with the influence from the conceptual framework), are articulated as follows; (i) Without 'value' and 'sustainability', the support service outcomes are just mandane and not strategic. (ii) Support service activities that do not produce value are not strategic. (iii) Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value

for service users in order to be sustainable. These propositions generally framed the analysis and discussion of the findings, and this integration section is the concluding phase of the final product of the study. In this section, the various strands of the findings are revisited, and these included the; mission and goal, definition of resources, principles of support service strategy formulation, the resources typology, and the support service value attributes.

6.2.1.1. Mission and common goal of student affairs

The first findings pointed to the common mission and goal of Student Affairs and this was consolidated as **'co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience'.** This was found to capture the essence of Student Affairs' common mission and how they align this mission to their institutions macro-strategic goals. This mission provided a unique purpose of existence that positioned Student Affairs strategically in making a distinct contribution to HEIs. Contrary to Murji's (2019) study that found that there was lack of macro-level alignment of Student Affairs strategy, the present study found evidence of the alignment as reflected in the next discussion as well as in the study's central findings on resource typology.

6.2.1.2 Support service strategy formulation principles

Murji (2019) recommended that Student Affairs must develop a strategic plan process but cautioned that much more research still needs to be conducted. The present study contributes to this call and presents the findings on principles that can be adopted when Student Affairs formulates a strategy. They are as follows: (i) supporting the strategy direction of a university; (ii) strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal); (iii) strategic changes for composite support services and student-centred approach; (iv) multiple strategic alliances; and (v) strategy contribution to society.

6.2.1.3 Definition of resources and capabilities for support services

The study's findings produced a definition that was influenced by both empirical data and the study's conceptual framework in terms of the theoretical concepts that scaffolded the present study. Resources (and capabilities) for support services were defined as **'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of mission and vision'.** This operational definition connected to the

discussion on the support service mission and common goals, the strategy formulation principles and how themes were interpreted and synthesized.

6.2.1.4 Support service critical resource typology

The resource typology displayed below directly responds to the study's main question: ***What are the critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy in the context of Student Affairs?***

THE RESOURCE TYPOLOGY FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Employee-centric resource attributes:
  ➢ Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour

Orchestrated transformational capabilities attributes:
  ➢ Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement

Economic and technology:
  ➢ Financial and internet connectivity 'biopower'

Middle managers divergent strategic behaviour:
  ➢ Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation

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How do these resource types answer the study's sub-questions? The following boxes display the answer to the sub-questions RSQ2, RSQ3 and RSQ5.

The dimension/properties embedded in "Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour", are:

- For employee knowledge: strategic thinking, communication and crisis management
- For special skills: professional qualifications, fundraising skills, research skills, registered professionals, leadership training academy skills
- For professional behaviour: creativity, commitment, care, listening and respect

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On the research sub-questions RSQ2, RSQ3 and RSQ4, the dimension/properties embedded in "Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement" are:

- Change stewardship and agency
- Risk assessment and accredited education
- Establishing student leadership structures

- Engagement through structures, committees and forums
- Engagement platforms
- Partnership-building
- Orientation and training
- Leadership training
- Negotiating and mediation
- Listening and dialogue
- Proactive engagement
- Constructive engagement

Resource Type 3 also answered the same research sub-questions.

The dimension/properties embedded in "Financial, internet connectivity biopower", are:

- For financial: budgets, fundraising and special bursaries
- For Internet connectivity: Wifi, online communication, online bookings for services, online elections, online training, online services, online platforms.

Resource Type 4 answered sub-questions RSQ2 and RSQ3

The dimension/properties embedded in "Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation", are:

- Presenting a unique mission
- Propping the academic project
- Students at risk assessment
- Participating in executive management
- Involving the executive management
- Getting support from executive management
- Aligning to university strategy
- Marketing tool capabilities
- Making students champions of strategy
- Mediation and creating engagement structures
- Sensing and interpreting feedback from students.

6.2.2 Synopsis of the Supplemental (Quantitative) Findings

The supplemental strand of this research project was premised on the same empirical definition of resources and capabilities for support services that was produced by the main findings. The operational definition of resources for support services was; 'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of mission and vision'. Armed with this empirical definition, the quantitative strand of the research project went on to focus on unpacking and measuring the value attributes for support services. The assumption is that service users add value in a service exchange and that if they don't benefit (value-in-use (benefit for service users), managers cannot claim to have achieved their mission and vision. Hence one of the study's the propositions; 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainable'. Four research sub-questions (RSQ2, RSQ3, RSQ4 and RSQ5) were thus explored in the supplemental strand. Five constructs were empirically developed and measured in terms of how much they represent value attributes for service users.

The support service value constructs that were measured were 'student-centredness', 'support service staff competences', 'value in support services', 'student engagement', and 'collaborations'. Data showed that respondents (service users) agreed with the measurement items, and thus supportive of the constructs to be the support service value attributes. Thus, while aimed at answering the sub-questions, the quantitative findings also corroborated the qualitative findings on four constructs as discussed in the previous two chapters.

In concluding this section, figure 6.1 below, broadly shows the integration of the results of both research strands. Key in this integration, was the development of constructs for the quantitative data collection instrument using the preceding qualitative results, to the diffusion of the quantitative results into the study's framework as the final product of the study. Below is a depiction of the integration.

Qualitative Findings (QUAL)	Quantitative Findings (quant)
a) Mission and goals b) Principles for support service strategy formulation c) Resources typology model	a) Resource and capabilities support service value attributes and their prevalence. b) Contextual representation of support service value attributes
Framework for sustainable support service strategy	

Figure 6.1: Integration of qualitative and quantitative results

Source: Own compilation

Figure 6.1 is an illustration of how the empirical findings of both the qualitative and quantitative research strands were integrated with iterative contributions to each strand, in the development of the present study's framework.

6.3 THE SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT SERVICE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Murji (2019) applied the SPHEF in examining whether it was applicable to Student Affairs strategic planning process and found it to be inadequate for support services. However, Murji also found that the Division of Student Affairs do develop missions, visions and values regularly and they conduct strategy reviews frequently. In a South African context, building on the work of Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014), van Niekerk's (2018:iv) findings suggested that professional middle managers in the support services "enact holistic and comprehensive practices to effect change as they strategise, including; implementing strategies, interpreting and communicating information, facilitating adaptability, downward supporting and upward influencing". Student Affairs may be enacting certain strategising practices and adopting some of the misfitting SPHEF framework elements, but it does not have its own strategy

formulation framework. In closing this gap, the present study therefore developed a strategy framework for sustainable support services.

In the same year that Barney (1991) published his famous work on the RBV, Grant (1991) published a framework for the RBV. Grant's framework shows a five stage strategy formulation process, beginning with 'identifying and classifying resources' and then 'identifying capabilities', 'appraising the rent-generating potential', 'selecting a strategy to employ the resources and capabilities', and 'identifying resource gaps'. Hall's (1993) framework for intangible resources and capabilities, began by developing a taxonomy of intangible resources. Hall's framework grouped resources into 'people-dependent' (know-how of employees, culture) and 'people-independent' (assets) with capabilities transcending the taxonomy. In developing the sustainable support service strategy, the present study took lessons from Grant's (1991) and Hall's (1993) works. The present study partly adopted Meredith's (1993) approach, whereby the mining of literature produced a constellation of concepts, followed by empirical work, and thereafter a model was developed with a typology, describing the phenomenon and then the framework. The employment of a discursive approach was to try and mitigate what Meredith (1993) called, 'black boxes', 'war stories', and 'ivory tower prescriptions' in building theoretical frameworks. The following discussion presents the key pillars of the proposed framework.

6.3.1 The Support Service Mission

Servitisation is a strategic move of adding value to core corporate offerings through services (Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988). Support service adds a branch to the service strategy literature and the present study postulates that it is imperative to develop a mission for support services in order to describe the value and purpose of a given support service strategy. Vandermerwe & Rada's (1988:318) observation was that "[s]ervitisation is largely being driven by customers", so, carving out a support service mission is inevitably linked to value co-creation of the SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). For example; the findings of the present study put the student at the centre of the support service mission and the construct of 'student-centredness' was also measured empirically. The empirically-developed mission as per the study's findings showing the central focus on service users, was; *'Co-curricular development, wellbeing and holistic student experience'.*

Lazenby (2018) proposed that the first stage of strategic management involves 'formulating a strategic vision, mission and values', followed by the 'identifying of resources and capabilities'. Similarly Tromp and Ruben (2010) as well as Immordino, Gigliotti, Ruben and Tromp (2016) put mission, vision and values as the first phase of strategy planning for higher education. Therefore, the study's framework postulates that; with a clearly defined and distinctive support service mission and because of its proximity to the organisation's service users, support services add a strategic source of value.

6.3.2 Support Service Strategy Formulation Principles:

Studies investigating strategy planning processes (Murji, 2019) tend to neglect the principles to be kept in mind in the conceptualisation of strategy. The present study filled this gap. Support service strategy is not, on its own, at a macro-level, so it requires principles that act as a bridge between micro-meso levels and macro-levels of an organisation. In the 1980s, Vandermerwe and Rada (1988:322) noted that "services ha[d] not been sufficiently integrated into corporate competitive analysis and strategy design". However, "[r]ecently, servitisation research has increasingly incorporated contemporary topics such as digitalisation, the internet of things, Industry 4.0 and circular economy business models" (Rabetino, Kohtamaki, Kowalkowski, Baines & Sousa, 2021:437). Support service is a nascent research stream, so strategy formulation principles of this meso-level strategy formulation are an imperative tool. The strategy formulation principles are particularly essential in the dynamic context of higher education where emergent strategies are more likely, as evidenced by literature (see Bawa, 2020; Habib, 2019; Jansen, 2017, 2023; Mbhele & Sibanyoni, 2022). For how complex the higher education service ecosystem, please see also the PESBITE ecosystem on Figure 2.4 in this thesis. Higher education is an environment characterised by emergent issues, which could be described through Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) perspective of emergent strategies. It is an environment replete with 'patterns or consistencies realised despite, or in the absence of, intentions' (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). To this end, the proposed principles for support service strategy formulation are (i) Supporting the strategy direction of an organisation or institution; (ii) strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal); (iii) strategic changes for composite support services and user-centred approach; (iv) multiple strategic alliances; and (v) strategy contribution to society.

All layers of management are responsible for the productivity, efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability (Davis, et al. 2016). Middle managers play an important part in organisational hierarchies from their position between the operating core and the apex (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2019). Ludeman et al. (2020) proposed that 'student affairs programmes and services' missions and strategy must have a strategic fit with the institutional mission'. The support service strategy formulation principles are therefore a catalyst in connecting and integrating the micro-meso-level with the macro-level, in order to create sustainable support services.

6.3.3 The Resource and Capabilities Typology for Support Service Strategy

Central to the topic, research questions and objectives of the present study, is the notion of critical resources and capabilities for support service strategy. In the competitive sector of higher education, institutions compete to recruit the best students (Vught, 2008). In order to attract the most talented students, institutions use "selection procedures to find them [talented students], but they also offer grants and other facilities…leading to a permanent need for extra resources" (Vught, 2008:168). Citing Ludeman (2009), Murji (2019) postulated that strategic planning is vital for Student Affairs not only for ensuring high quality services, but also for the proper management of resources. One of the critical tasks of strategic management is the 'identification of resources and capabilities through internal environmental analysis' (Lazenby, 2018). Fowles (2014), echoing Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), noted that the RDT looks at organisational behaviours that are shaped by the availability of resources for survival. Through theoretical and empirical work, the present study produced a typology of resources and capabilities for support service strategy as follows:

- Employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour,
- Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement,
- Financial and internet connectivity biopower,
- Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation.

Bundled together, the first type of resources and capabilities (employee knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour) produces valuable human capital for a

sustainable support service strategy. Tsoukas and Vladimirou (2001) defined knowledge as the capacity to exercise judgement on the part of an individual, which is either based on an appreciation of context or is derived from theory or both. While knowledge and skills have been identified as operant resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2017), the present study added the constructs 'special skills' and 'employee professional behaviour'. As employee-centric competences, the study found that these constructs are sources of critical value in a service exchange context, since 'services are performed rather than produced' (Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988) and 'value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary' (Greer et al., 2016). In the present study, empirical patterns showed the highest level (up to 70%) of agreement by respondents on employee behavioural aspects of the research scale. Leaders in support services facilitate the accumulation of employee knowledge (e.g. written policies), hire specially-skilled employees and monitor employee behaviour. Reciprocally, change agency of service users as well as empowered engagement is facilitated by knowledgeable employees, their special skills and the behavioural aspects.

On the second bundle (leadership, change agency and empowered engagement) of support service resources and capabilities, the concept of leadership is illuminated for its relevance to this bundle of resources, through its defining attributes. For example; 'change and motivation' (Morrill, 2010), 'influencing decisions and guiding people' (Taylor & Machado, 2006), 'human relations and organising people' (Yielder & Codling, 2004), 'change, improvement and influencing other people' (Castillo and Hallinger, 2018), are all attributes that define leadership. Change agency manifests or invoked through the ongoing changes precipitated by the shortage of resources as well as the agency of service users that is influenced by service employees. The leadership element and change agency result in empowered engagement between service employees and service users in the process of value co-creation. In the present framework, this resource bundle is classified as providing human and social capital value. The current study recognises that an 'organisation can only make a value proposition (an offer of benefit) and that value is experiential' (Greer et al., 2016). Collaborations and engagement are central value attributes in this bundle of orchestrated resources and capabilities.

The third resource bundle is financial and internet connectivity biopower. This is classified as providing a social capital value due its nature characterised by resource dependence and communication. Some scholars have investigated what they termed a 'service paradox' (Brax, 2005), which is a situation where service is given prominence but does not yield financial returns. Barney (1991) noted that some resource attributes may prevent an organisation from conceiving and implementing valuable strategies. Analogous to a service revenue model, called 'freemium' (Tidhar & Eisenhardt, 2020), some support services are provided at a fee while others are provided without a direct fee as a support to a core service or tangible offerings.

In the present study, the findings suggested that financial resources have a 'biopower' that hinders the achievement of strategic objectives. However, the findings also showed that human capital resources and managerial capital can be leveraged to produce financial resources, so the 'service paradox' can be resolved – through orchestrated resources and capabilities. Identifying the value attributes (as shown through the study's quantitative results) mitigates the impact of financial resources constraining biopower. Rabetino et al. (2021) noted that servitisation research had increasingly incorporated digitalisation, the Internet of Things and Industry 4.0. The present study found that 'internet connectivity' is a critical resource and was deemed to have 'biopower' to control the spheres of support service employees and service users. The present study's findings indicated that internet connectivity resources are valuable in delivering support services and are also central in knowledge-seeking and engagement endeavours of service users. Thus, the internet connectivity construct is also connected to the notion of engagement. The findings further suggested that the value of internet connectivity provided sustainability of support service provision even in times of pandemic outbreaks. As a parsimonious explanation, financial and internet connectivity as a resource bundle can be characterised as both constraining and enabling value potential for support services.

On the proposed framework, 'strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation', as resource bundle, is classified as providing managerial capital. It explains an act of devising a distinct support service mission, aligning meso-level goals to macro-level goals, involving top management team members and decoding apex level strategic language and inspirations to the functional core (Gjerde &

Alvesson, 2020). Furthermore, it involves feeding the service user input dynamics of the service exchange ecosystem back to the highest level of organisational management. This resource bundle connects to other resource bundles through the attribute 'strategic thinking' and the concepts 'leadership' and 'change'. The present resource bundle also connects to the support service strategy formulation principles as proposed in the present study (i.e. macro-level strategy support and alignment).

Analysed at a meso-level, this resource bundle presents support service managers as agents with interests in achieving their missions, through leveraging or creating positive interdependent relationships of stakeholders in order to co-create and realise nuanced value. Mintzberg and Waters (1985:271) postulated that "strategy formation walks on two feet, one deliberate and the other, emergent". Managerial capital is at the centre of leveraging value from top management's deliberate strategy and sense-making patterns of disruptive forces at the service exchange interface. The enactment and interpretation level of strategy is more of a wayfinding approach for support service managers. Bouty, Gomez and Chia (2019:442) explained that in wayfinding through purposive action strategy context, "the agent acts purposively by drawing on what is directly available from within specific set of circumstances in which s/he finds her/himself, to deal effectively with the predicaments and obstacles s/he immediately faces". Middle managers create value using their managerial capital to leverage resources through influencing high-level strategy and the wayfinding approach (Bouty et al., 2019), for sense-making and interpreting emergent dynamics of service exchange interface. On the current resource bundle, the proposed framework takes heed of Lusch and Wu's (2012) admonition on service value co-creation. Lusch and Wu (2012:7) advised that "[a] university leadership team needs to develop meaningful *collaborations* with all stakeholders, develop the *capability to sense shifts in stakeholder wants and needs*, develop relatively rapid responses to improve service offerings and learn from both mistakes and successes". Emphasis added. The present study postulates that the current resource bundle explains how support service managers 'sense shifts in stakeholder wants and needs' (Lusch & Wu, 2012).

6.3.4 Value in Support Services:

Support service managers must create value for their service users. From the resources and capabilities perspectives, 'organisational resources must be valuable in order to be considered as resources' (Barney, 1991). The present study interrogated the concept of value in service theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the present study hinged the conceptualisation of value on the SDL as propounded by Vargo & Lusch (2004). In the proposed framework, value is considered from both the side of 'value capture' (Ambrosini, Bowman & Schroenberg, 2011; Barney, 2018; Makadok & Coff, 2002) and 'value-in-use' (Greer et al., 2016; Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien, 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). The former value type being the usefulness of an attribute for the monetary or non-monetary benefit on the support service provider and the latter value type being the general benefit as perceived in varying ways by the support service user. Lusch et al. (2007) posited that 'there is no value until an offering is used – so experience and perceptions are essential to value determination'. The present study developed a support service resource model on the premise of these resources (in the model) being the sources of value. A supplemental empirical study was further carried out to measure the prevalence and significance of value attributes in support services. We need to begin by recognising that any value that is partially dependent on the involvement of others is, by definition, a co-created value.

Figure 6.2, below depicts the integration between support service resources and value attributes. At the centre of the diagram are the support services resources, with the outside blocks showing dominant value attributes that were mearsured empirically.
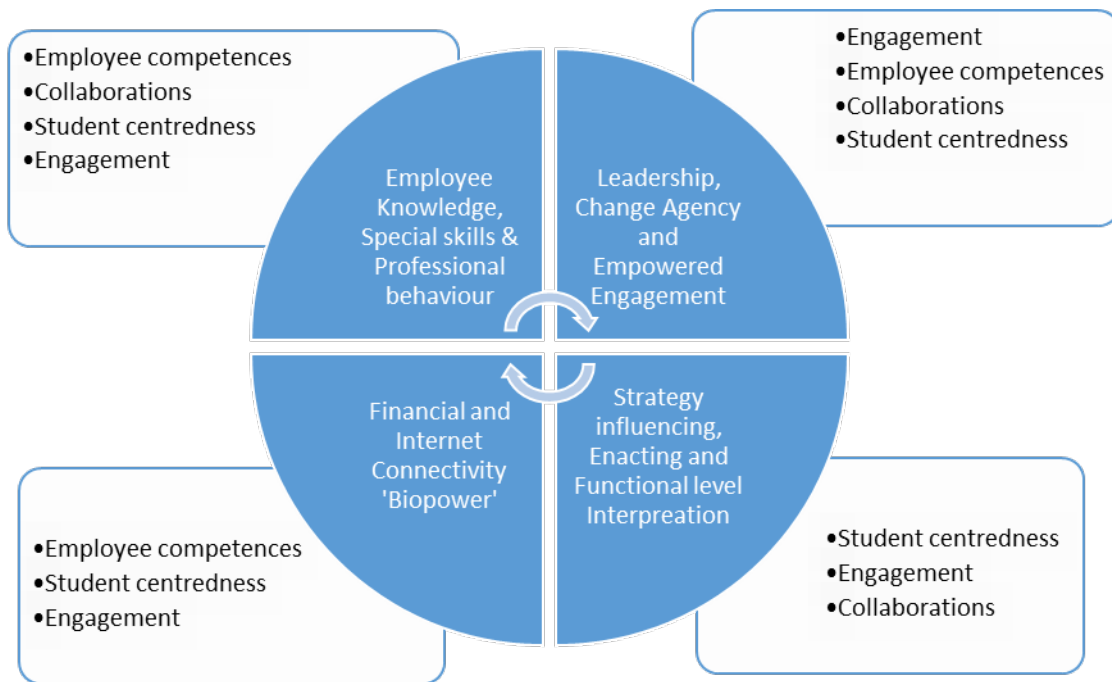
Figure 6.2: Integration of resources and capabilities typology with value attributes.

Own compilation

The present study found that value co-creation through actors has an element of value tension between actors or agents. Explained from the resource dependence theoretical perspective, Barney and Ulrich's, (1984) work illuminates the phenomenon of value tension. "Acquiring external resources needed for an entity comes by decreasing the entity's dependence on others and/or by increasing others' dependence on it, that is, modifying an entity's power relations with other actors" (1984:472). Resource bundles 1, 2 and 4 in the proposed framework are central in ameliorating or mitigating the value-tension in the support service context.

6.3.5 Internal and External Environment for Service Context:

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, a systems map was drawn depicting a typical university ecosystem, showing the external environment, summarised as PESBITE. The internal and external environmental factors have a direct and indirect connection to the proposed support service strategy formulation framework. The principles and resource typology of the framework also connect to both internal and external environments. Resource Bundle 2 attributes (i.e. leadership and change agency) and Resource Bundle 4 construct (i.e. upward strategy influencing and enacting) are the

connecting links to the internal environment. The principles (i.e. multiple strategic alliances and strategic contribution to society) are the connecting links to the external environment. 'Strategic alliances' and 'dealing with diminishing resources' are among principles that were identified by Ntshalintshali and Carmichael, (2011) as having been applied by King Shaka as his sustainable strategic approach. Ntshalintshali and Carmichael demonstrated how these and other principles are applicable in business strategy. As a strategic decision to increase resources and capabilities, "[King] Shaka embarked on a campaign to form alliances with other tribes", (2011: 74). This is just one example showing that strategic principles can be adapted from one context to another, and these findings noted a various types of alliances (internal and external).

From a theoretical explanation on the internal and external environment, support service managers are agents pursuing their own and meso-level operational interests. They are also contracted to principal agents of organisations and external stakeholders on whom they depend by and large for resources. Meso-level managers leverage their proximity to service users to enhance the macro-level goals, but also to increase top management dependence on them. For example; in the higher education management context, Habib's (2019) work showed how a university principal largely depends on Student Affairs for the process of student engagement. The empirical research also showed how multiple external alliances are forged to strategically provide support services using external resources (i.e. mental health support services organisations such as SADAG and the accreditation of privately-owned residences to mitigate the excess demand for student accommodation).

Therefore, the internal and external environments connect the strategy formulation principles, with resource and capabilities to create value for support services and for service users.

Figure 6.3 below is a synthetic depiction of the proposed framework for sustainable support service strategy formulation, which encapsulates the resources typology, principles, mission and goals, and internal and external environment. All centrering on strategic value as an ex ante for sustainability.

Figure 6.3 is the overall depiction of the sustainable support service strategy framework.
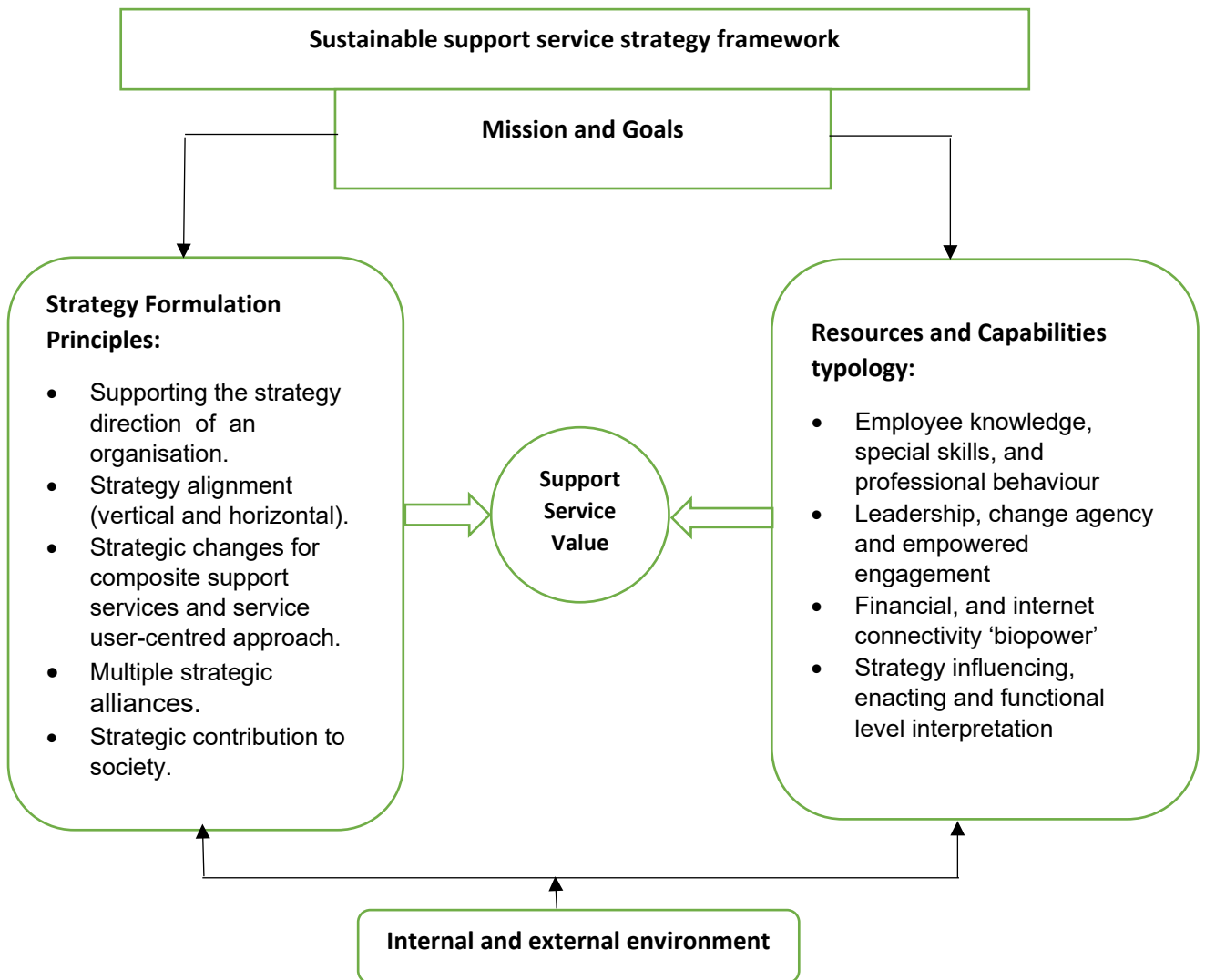
Figure 6.3: Sustainable support service strategy framework

Source: Own compilation

This framework is summed up as follows: Support service managers develop sustainable support service strategies by acquiring and or leveraging human, social, a combination of human and social, as well as managerial capital, typologies of resources and capabilities.

6.3.6 Theoretical Conclusion

Scholars (Peteraf & Barney, 2003; Nenonen, Starbacka & Windahl, 2019; Wernerfelt, 1989) emphasised that it is how managers orchestrate resources (Sirmon, Hitt, Ireland & Gilbert, 2011) that make them critical and valuable. Therefore:

- The resource typology model groups resources and their attributes not only to identify them as critical, but also to describe their value effect in the value co-creation and value-tension service ecosystem; and
- The support service strategy framework, centred on the resource typology and incorporating distinct mission and principles, parsimoniously shows how the strategy formulation components coalesce for value that generates sustainability in the support service.

In their theory of microfoundations of resources, Felin, et al, (2020), proposed that the search for valuable resources is simplified by knowing the properties and new uses of specific resources. The present study's model presented a bundle of specific resources attributes, showing the properties and combinations for value attributes. Following the shape of the conceptual framework, the proposed strategy formulation framework provides a lens in understanding the connection between the meso and the macro levels, in the context of support service strategy.

In pushing the envelope on the micofoundations research agenda, Abell, Felin and Foss (2008) postulated that there are no macro-level entities that produce macro-level outcomes. The study leans towards a strategy microfoundations theory (Felin, et al, 2020) which seeks to improve the description and *verstehen* of various sources of value by digging deeper and uncovering mechanisms at the meso level that generate phenomena at macro level (Foss and Foss, 2022). The model and the framework of the study showed that even for support services, resources are bundles or 'molecules' (Foss and Foss, 2022), rather than permanently solid components.

6.4 THE STUDY'S CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTION

6.4.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding section of the thesis discusses the salient features from various preceding chapters, as well as how the study made a theoretical and practical contribution. The section also discusses the study's limitations and recommendations for future research, and the last part of this section provides the researcher's reflection, as well how the present study contribute broadly on the African continent and global sustainable development goals.

6.4.2 SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CHAPTERS

The first chapter; introduced the study, with the purpose of setting out the statement of the problem and the theoretical background, that motivated the pursuance of the present study. The study is located within the discipline of strategic management, with a special focus on service and or support service as a research stream that has been neglected, despite 'servitisation' (Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988) having been introduced three decades ago. Furthermore, still within the service strategy lens (Lightfoot & Gebauer, 2011), the SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016), as an approach that brings the element of value co-creation, was examined against the support service strategy phenomenon which has a close service exchange context that has not been investigated widely as an aggregate construct. Higher education as a service sector grapples with various dynamic strategic challenges including resources shortages, conflicts and instabilities and competition. The Student Affairs fraternity, a branch of higher education ecosystem, provides personal support services, so, it provided a fertile ground for an empirical research project.

The second chapter discussed literature, which included management, strategy, leadership, service management (servitisation and SDL) and higher education management (focusing on Student Affairs). The tracing of classical management scholarship indicated that the beginning of 1900s served as a seminal period that spawned Taylor's (1911) scientific management with prominent concepts such as 'efficiency', which is still central to service and strategic management. Fayol's (1908) management principles and others (Follett, 1927; Gilbreth, 1953) infused the human

relations component to management and this component is critical in the service exchange ecosystem. The efficiency craze (Blake & Mosley, 2011) of the early 1900s, evolved into a key element of strategy, with Penrose (1959) applying efficiency analysis on resources and in the 1960s Chandler focusing on strategy planning and structure. The 1970s and 1980s of Porter's industry organisation theory (competition) and the 1980s to 1990s of an inward swing of the strategy pendulum which gave more traction to resources and capabilities (Barney 1986, 1991, 2007, 2018; Grant, 1991; Teece, et al. 2007; Wernefelt, 1984) still had the Taylorism hallmarks of work 'motions, speed and cost-reduction'. While strategy research developed other branches such as mergers and acquisitions as strategies for expansion of business, service (servitisation) emerged as another competitive strategy and this strand was propounded by Rada and Vandermerwe (1988). Service management (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985, 1988, 1991) had already been established as a field but the focus was on marketing as a discipline. Bitner (1992) developed what she called the 'servicescape' framework. The SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) drilled down the focus to the exchange level with the premise that service value is co-created. Vargo, Lusch and O'Brien (2007:8) went on to make a proposition that "[s]ervice is the basis for competition".

In the meantime, higher education was and still is under immense pressure, grappling with resource shortages (i.e., perpetually declining government funding), instabilities (student protests and high-impact incidents) and competition over students (and funding). Servitisation (Rada & Vandermerwe, 1988) brought competition through service into a traditionally manufacturing sector. Lusch and Wu (2012) brought the servitisation lens to mainstream service of higher education but support service in the mainstream service context remained an under-researched area.

In analysing the different elements of Student Affairs services and programmes cited by various authors, different elements were consolidated into two taxonomies of services – that is, the tangible and intangible attributes of Student Affairs services. These service typologies were composed of the 'hard' (more physical) services, and the 'soft' (more cognitive) developmental programmes and support interventions.

A conceptual framework was developed and depicted the the theoretical concepts and relationships, showing how resources, capabilities and value to generate sustainable support service strategy – which ultimately contributes to the macro goals. From this, a few theoretical propositions were made to the effect that; 'without value and sustainability, the support service outcomes are just mandane and not strategic', and that; 'Student Affairs programmes and services ought to have value for service users in order to be sustainable'.

The third chapter tabled the research methodology, which discussed the ontological and epistemological orientations. The former, followed a stance of multiple realities and the latter following the constructivism approach. Due to the nascent nature of the topic, a mixed methods research approach was chosen, with an exploratory sequential design. It was a qualitatively-driven mixed methods study, with a multi-case (Eisenhardt, 1989) data collection strategy, composed of qualitative and quantitative strands. The QUAL (qualitative) strand had 49 participants of two groups (staff and students) and the quan (quantitative) strand had 638 respondents of one group (students).

After a year of data collection and analysis, the fourth chapter was written up presenting the results of the QUAL strand as well as the supplemental quan strand. The main research strand produced the following findings:

a. A mission for Student Affairs (co-curricular, wellbeing and holistic student experience).
b. An empirical definition of support services resources: 'something that adds value to work processes and activities for the achievement of mission and vision'.
c. Support service strategy formulation principles: (i) Supporting the strategy direction of an organisation; (ii) Strategy alignment (vertical and horizontal); (iii) Strategic changes for composite support services and user-centred approach; (iv) Multiple strategic alliances; and (v) Strategy contribution to society.
d. A resources and capabilities typology for support services strategy:

> **THE RESOURCE TYPOLOGY FOR SUPPORT SERVICES**
>
> i) Employee-centric resource attributes bundle:
> - ➢ Knowledge, special skills and professional behaviour
>
> ii) Orchestrated transformational capabilities bundle:
> - ➢ Leadership, change agency and empowered engagement
>
> iii) Economic and technology:
> - ➢ Financial and internet connectivity "biopower"
>
> iv) Middle managers divergent strategic behaviour:
> - ➢ Strategy influencing, enacting and functional level interpretation

The resource typology produced a model describing how the human capital, the combined social and human, the social, and managerial capital produce value and ultimately a sustainable support service strategy.

The quan strand measured constructs that pertained to the value attributes for support services as perceived by service users. The constructs included student-centredness, support service staff competences, value in support services, student engagement. The general satisfaction/dissatisfaction level with support services was also measured. Four of the five constructs showed a representation of value attributes, but student engagement construct produced less support, which was further theorised as an indicator of empowered engagement and possible value tension in the ecosystem.

In Chapter 5, the findings were integrated, discussed and assessed against research questions and study objectives. The resource typology model and the integrated results, following Meredith's (1993) approach to theory development, led to the final product, which was a framework for sustainable support service strategy that illuminates what constitutes a support service strategy, as discussed in Chapter 6 of the present thesis.

6.4.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

- The present study showed a trajectory of strategy evolving from Taylorism (scientific management) driven by the concept of efficiency and the Penrosean ground-breaking application of the scientific management key concept (efficiency) to resources. The evolution of strategic management was chronicled from the Chandler era of strategy and structure school of thought, Mintzberg's emergent

strategy approach, the Porterian competitive paradigm, to the resources and capabilities perspective. As a novel contribution, the study introduced the support service phenomenon into the research stream of service strategy (e.g., servitisation, SDL, servicescapes).

- Theoretically, the present study showed how, combining four strategy theoretical lenses (i.e., stakeholder, agency, resource-based and resource dependence), could illuminate the nascent field of support service strategy research. The resource and capabilities typology is the product of the theoretical lenses, and an empirical contribution to the service strategy body of knowledge. Most research works refer to the employment of knowledge and skills in the definition of service and the present study identified specific additional attributes (i.e., special skills and professional behaviour). Secondly, the study showed how the question of, within the ambit of support services, how resources are orchestrated to create value, as well as the inherent value attributes.

- Student Affairs strategy researchers will also benefit from the findings, in that most research in this area has not focused on strategy. Even the recent research on student protests (an area where Student Affairs plays a critical mediation role) such as that of Mbhele and Sibanyoni (2022) has not necessarily focused on strategy. A few researchers have assessed strategy planning in Student Affairs (Murji, 2019) and strategising of support service middle managers (van Niekerk, 2018), so, the present study contributes to this nascent research stream through the proposed framework of sustainable support strategy formulation.

- Revisiting the seminal work of Penrose (1959) on resources strategy approach, Seoudi, Huehn, and Carlsson (2008), reiterated that 'productive services depend on the function or activity for which the resources are used, as well as the type of other resources they are combined with and the manner in which they are combined'. In line with Felin, et al's (2020) admonition of knowing/identifying the resources properties, the present study's model theoretically contribute in presenting resources and capabilities for support services strategy, as well as how these resources and capabilities can be combined in order to create or co-create value.

- Practitioners in support services and Student Affairs leadership will benefit from the resource model. Kuk and Banning (2009) advised that the Student Affairs

organisations of the future are likely going to be asked to restructure existing resources to serve changing needs and new student demands rather than receive additional allocations. The proposed framework also has direct utility to the fraternity of Student Affairs, as well as managers in the support service context, including the mainstream service context where resource dependence and service interaction exchange is high. Venter (2014:4) reminds us that "…most strategies fail because of implementation problems". The present study's framework fortifies and strengthens the strategy formulation and implementation process for support service managers.

- Methodologically, the study developed a data collection instrument (HedSUSERV scale) that is exclusively focused on support services value attributes. Most scales focus largely on education service and only to a smaller extent on support services, e.g., the HEdPERF scale (Firdaus, 2006); HiEduQual scale (Latif et al. 2019).

6.4.4 LIMITATIONS

The organizational structures of support services at HEIs in South Africa and internationally, vary vastly from institution to institution. Murji's (2019) findings also pointed to the variation of structures, with some divisions of Student Affairs falling into a faculty, others standing alone, while others were grouped under the Academic division. This posed a challenge in selecting the units of analysis for the present study, in that the general services under Student Affairs were identified theoretically, but some universities had some of the support services reporting to different senior managers. One institution under study was in the process of integrating some of the support services such as residences and sports into Student Affairs.

Strategy traditionally is aimed at competition and profit as a dependent variable. Despite the proliferation of servitization and service dominant logic, the service paradox still exists. So, it is still challenging to point out niches in the support service fraternity that link the micro and meso objectives to the macro strategy objectives. However, the findings (Resource Type 2 and 4), produced a path that can be explored further.

The theoretical lens was an amalgamation of four theories that generally explain a macro-level outcome, so the study did not contribute directly to either the expansion or modification of those four theories.

The support service value scale developed in the present study had sufficient factor analysis loadings, but the items on student engagement did not fit well, perhaps owing to the limited number of those items on this construct.

6.4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Future studies could expand the scope of units of analysis through redefining the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The empirical findings of the present study pointed to some aspects of how support services directly produce a macro-level differentiation strategy. More research is needed because service offerings are prominently marketed to include the support services in the higher education sector. Kayombo and Carter (2016) suggested that support services have an impact on university branding and influence student choice. The works of Habib (2019), Gaston-Gayes, Wolf-Wendel, Tutte, Twombly and Ward (2005), Long (2012) and Berghorst (2019) demonstrate the mediating and strategic role of Student Affairs at HEIs. Leusher-Mamashela (2013) also showcased the role of Student Affairs in 'student engagement' at strategic levels of a university.

Universities are in high competition for students (Powell and Rey, 2015) and identifying what differentiates one university from another is critical. Investigating the link between professional student support services and student retention and success, Roberts (2018) recommended that 'understanding the contributions of support service staff to the strategic goals of universities is vital to the effectiveness of these institutions'. Student retention and success is central in HEIs' strategic objectives.

When more work is done to identify the input of support services to the macro-strategy, it will be more possible to develop correlated independent and dependent variables to be tested empirically. The proposed framework is the start of consolidating and teasing out the variables to be tested.

The HedSUSERV scale can be modified to improve the element of student engagement, in future use. Practitioners can make use of the findings pertaining to

the service satisfaction/dissatisfaction part of the scale to plan improvements in service delivery. Practitioners will find the corpus of attributes and properties published in this thesis under the resource typology (with value attributes) of the findings, essential in restructuring and bundling their limited resources.

6.4.6 A REFLECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A research project that follows a mixed methods epistemological approach is a complex but rewarding endeavor. The close engagements between the researcher and the participants with multiple perspectives, produced rich socially-constructed knowledge, and thus corresponding to the service strategy research focus of value co-creation for today's organisations. The outcome of this research approach was not only the identification of pertinent concepts, but also on how the constellation of the concepts provided novel descriptions of the phenomena for researchers and practitioners.

Strategic management research has produced a lot of work based on the realist epistemological orientation, but the introduction of the relativist approach has improved the ethical obligations of organisations and researchers. This epistemological balance provides a voice for the previously neglected stakeholders of societies (the service users). The multi-case research strategy of this study provided an opportunity for the researcher to create a wide network with practitioners and a deeper understanding of the research contexts of higher education. Practitioners put a premium on the role they play in the broader society through the development of global leaders. The study's findings on principles for support service strategy formulation also showed the inter-dependence between organizational leaders and the society at large. As reported in this thesis, identities of research participants are kept confidential, but the knowledge gained, on support service strategy resources typology and framework, higher education leadership, middle management strategizing, will be disseminated in published papers for the benefit of other researchers and practitioners.

Goal number 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refers to 'Quality Education'. Reflecting the ideals of the United Nations' SDGs, is the African Union's agenda 2063 principle of 'inclusive growth and sustainable development'. In the present thesis, research work was tabled, pointing to an

unsustainable path of higher education dilemma of perennial campus disruptions and resource shortages. One study of a South African university reported on what has become an entrenched culture of 'hooliganism' during protests, and that same study found that this entrenched phenomenon has an impact on student academic experience and success. The present study showed how orchestrated capabilities for empowered engagement, create value and thus contribute to student development, and can mitigate the instabilities in HEIs. In a broader view, nationally, continentally, and globally, the present study propounded a shift from heavy and sole dependence on external (financial) resources to support students in higher education. The findings identified the resources and capabilities typology for support services, and showed how these can be orchestrated to optimize use as well as creating new value for sustainability. Quality education depends on resources and support, and this cannot happen in turbulent environments. The resources typology model of the present study contributes to a mission of supporting academic excellence, and the study's notion of empowered engagement contributes to the creation of calmer higher education environments, which thus addresses the inclusive and hostic growth and development of global citizens.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE: University of South Africa

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

23 July 2021

Ref #: 2020_SBL_DBL_034_FA
Name of applicant: Mr SV Dludla
Student #: 64055981

Dear Mr SV Dludla

Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Mr SV Dludla, (64055981@unisa.mylife.ac.za , 08●●04●●8)
Supervisor: Prof V Gumede, (Gumedvt@unisa.ac.za, 0●●36●●2)

Project Title: Sustainable support services strategy framework for student affairs in South African Universities. A resources and capabilities perspective.

Qualification: Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL)

Expiry Date: June 2023

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance, SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Outcome of the SBL Research Committee: Approval is granted for the duration of the Project

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 15/07/2021.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached

2) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

3) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.

4) An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

45 Building leaders who go beyond

SBL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS LEADERSHIP
UNISA

APPENDIX A1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE: UNISA, second page.

Sincerely,

Prof N Milton

Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee

011 – 652 0000/ wilton@unisa.ac.za

pp SBL CEO

Prof P Mavell

Executive Dean: Graduate School of Business Leadership

011- 652 0200/ mavelp@unisa.ac.za

45 years Building leaders who go beyond

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS LEADERSHIP
UNISA

APPENDIX B1: PERMISSION FROM UNIVERSITIES TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA

**UFS
UV**

Office of the Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation
Kantoor van die Viserektor: Navorsing en Internasionalisering

04-Oct-2021

Dear Sifiso Dludla

UFS AUTHORITIES APPROVAL

Research Project Title:

Sustainable support service strategy framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities: A Resources and Capabilities Perspective.

This letter serves as confirmation that your request to collect data from students and/or staff members at the University of the Free State for your research project has been approved.

Kind Regards

PROF RC WITTHUHN
VICE-RECTOR: RESEARCH & INTERNATIONALISATION
CHAIR: SENATE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPENDIX B2: PERMISSION FROM UNIVERSITIES TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946

3rd March 2021
Mr Sifiso Dludla
c/o College of Economic and Management Sciences
School of Business Leadership
UNISA

Dear Mr Dludla

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 **Full Permission** for you to conduct your research "Sustainable support service strategy framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities: A Resources and Capabilities Perspective" at the Durban University of Technology.

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.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

_____
DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

APPENDIX B3: PERMISSION FROM UNIVERSITIES TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

6 July 2021

Sifiso Dludla (student # 64055981)
Graduate School of Leadership
University of South Africa
Midrand
1685

Dear Ms Dludla

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

The request for the project titled *Sustainable support service strategy framework for student affairs in South African universities: a resources and capabilities perspective* refers. The process at the University of Johannesburg includes consultation with the affected academic and support environments. You indicated telephonically that one of the University of Pretoria's faculty research ethics committees had reviewed your proposal. Do provide us with a copy of the University of Pretoria's ethics clearance as this will suffice and not have to take through one of our ethics committees for review.

Following the review of the UNISA approved proposal and methodology and adherence to research ethics principles, permission is granted to conduct this study at the University of Johannesburg. However, it is important to note that institutional permission does not compel individual staff members and students to participate in a research study as participation in any research study is voluntary and based on informed consent.

Sincerely

Dr Carol Nonkwelo
Executive Director: Research and Innovation
Email: cnonkwelo@uj.ac.za

APPENDIX B4: PERMISSION FROM UNIVERSITIES TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Faculty of Commerce

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
2.26 Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 4375/ 5748 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 4369
E-mail: jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za
Internet: www.uct.ac.za

@Commerce UCT   UCT Commerce Faculty Office

14 02 2022

Sifiso Dludla
University of South Africa

REF: REC 2021/02/015

Sustainable support service strategy framework for Student Affairs

in South African Universities: A Resources and Capabilities Perspective

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics approval has been extended. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 30-Jun-2023 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the **responsibility of the principal investigator.**

We wish you well for your research.

2022.02.14
18:32:16 +02'00'

Jacques Rousseau
Commerce Research Ethics Chair
University of Cape Town
Commerce Faculty Office
Room 2.26 | Leslie Commerce Building

Office Telephone: +27 (0)21 650 2695 / 4375
Office Fax: +27 (0)21 650 4369
E-mail: jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za
Website: http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/com/Ethics-in-Research

"**Our** Mission is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our **society.**"

APPENDIX C: STAFF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

STAFF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

01 August 2021

Title: Request for participation in a research study

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Sifiso, Dludla and I am doing academic research towards a doctoral degree in Business Leadership at the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Professor Vusi Gumede, a professor, at the University of Mpumalanga. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled, "***Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities. A Resources and Capabilities Perspective".***

WHAT IS THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of this study is to identify critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support services framework. The study aims to contribute to strategic management literature, and to practice in a form of a framework.

1. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You were chosen and are invited to participate in this study because of your knowledge, and experience in terms of student support services as a staff member at your University.

Permission was sought from your University's authorities, through the office of the Registrar/Postgraduate Studies Offices/Research Ethics Committee. Permissions and contact details were granted to the Researcher under very strict conditions and with the strictest confidentiality, for the use of this research only. As a qualitative study, your name was selected purposively, as you meet the criteria being targeted for this study, and that is; Deans of Student Affairs, Executive Director of Student Affairs, Directors and Managers of Departments within Student Affairs. At your institution, the study aims to interview a total of five management staff members within the Student Affairs (or Student Services or Student Development) Division.

2. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY /WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

At the interview sessions, your role will be to share with the Researcher your opinions, knowledge, and experiences about the critical resources and capabilities informing the support services strategy in the context of Student Affairs. Furthermore, you will be requested to define what you understand about the critical resources and capabilities as well

as their value to your work at the university. The type of questions will include; the organizational setting of the Division of Student Affairs, the location, student engagement, holistic development, service needs assessments, efficiency, management and culture, key resources, capabilities, and value, resource definition, resource acquisition and orchestration or allocation, and strategy alignment.

With your permission, the interview sessions will be audio-recorded for the ease of record-keeping and data analysis by the Researcher. Your identity will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed or published. The recorded material will be kept locked and used only for this study, and only accessible by the researcher.

The interview session will last for approximately 60 minutes. Due to COVID-19 precautions, the interview sessions will be held online. If you are agreeable, what is called member checking will also be done after the data analysis process, to give you an opportunity to verify if your thoughts are captured appropriately.

3. CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, and with no penalty for the withdrawal.

4. WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participating in this research study provides participants with an opportunity to have their voice added in the development of support services and inherent strategies, as well as contribution to strategic management body of knowledge. At a broader scale, it is also aimed at contributing in addressing student needs at a societal level, in the context of South African higher education shortage of support service resources. The university officials will benefit in having a framework for planning service delivery, as well as leveraging resources and capabilities for sustainability of Student Affairs/Student Services fraternity, so that generations of students can continue to benefit as well.

5. WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study is sanctioned under strict ethics rules from the University of South Africa, with permission/approval for this field work (data collection) by your university also under strict ethics rules, so, the researcher is committed to conducting the study with the highest standards of ethical conduct. The one foreseeable inconvenience on the participant is time (approximately 60 minutes) foregone while taking part in the study. There interview questions do not include demographic information or personal details. The interview venue

will be chosen by the participant, but consideration must be given to possible noise and other interruptions from external sources such as people passing by or traffic noise if the venue is nearer a street.

6. WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name as a participant will not be recorded anywhere in the data or research report and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number and you will be referred to in this way in the data, publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. The name of your University will also not be mentioned in conjunction with your interview responses or findings.

Your answers, in a transcript version, may be reviewed by the supervisor for making sure that research is done rigorously and scientifically, but your personal details will not be disclosed. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to the Researcher, locked away and protected by a password, and such details will be destroyed after the completion of the research project. The data (with no personal identification), emanating from your input, may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentations. No personal details will be used in such publications and presentations. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

7. HOW WILL INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies (with no personal details) of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of 5 years in a locked cupboard at the Researcher's workplace for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years, hardcopy documents with data will be shredded, and electronic files will be deleted.

8. WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There are no monetary or material incentives for participating in this study.

9. HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa (UNISA). The UNISA ethics number is: 2020SBLDBL034FA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if it is

needed, but has been submitted to the relevant authorities of your University. A research permit from your University has also been obtained (please see attached).

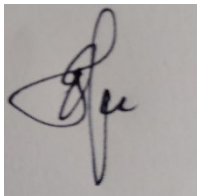## 10. HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS?

Member checking will be done soon after the data analysis, but also If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Sifiso, Dludla on xxxxxxxx, e-mail; 64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za or xxxxxxxxxxxx (the latter e-mail is included because it is a permanent e-mail address for the researcher, and usually student e-mail addresses are not accessible after graduation).

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please use the abovementioned contact details.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Professor Vusi Gumede, on xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Mr Sifiso, Dludla

Researcher/Student

APPENDIX D: STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

STUDENT PARTICIPANT RESEARCH INVITATION

11th September 2021

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Sifiso, Dludla and I am doing academic research towards a doctoral degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA), under the supervision of Professor Vusi Gumede. We hereby invite you to participate in a research study that gives students an opportunity to contribute to strategy framework for Student Support Services. The title of the study is; "**Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities. A Resources and Capabilities Perspective**".

Your role in this study will be to share with the researcher your thoughts, ideas, and your experience of university life pertaining to the support services. Special interest of the study seeks to understand what you as a student perceive to be critical support services and their inherent resources. Further question is on how have these critical services and resources been of benefit in your life at the university.

The research is conducted in a form of online interviews (approximately 30 minutes), using Micro Soft Teams online platform, so, there are no contact interview sessions (online only). The study has been approved by the UNISA's Ethics Committee, and permit was also issued by your university. The interviews are confidential, so, there are no questions on personal biographical/demographical information, and personal information will not be included in the findings or publications. Participation is voluntary, and participants are allowed to withdraw anytime during the study without giving reasons to the researcher. More details about the study and ethical obligations for confidentiality are on the attached information document.
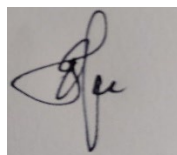
The interview questions do not include demographic information or personal details. Please reply with your nominated date and time of the interview session, to 64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za

I am available Monday to Saturday from morning till 10h00 pm.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Professor Vusi Gumede, on xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thank you for taking time to read this invitation and for your contribution in this study.

Thank you.

_____

Mr Sifiso, Dludla

Researcher/Student

E-mail: 64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<div align="center">

Informed consent for participation in an
academic research project

</div>

<u>**Study title**</u>: *Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities. A Resources and Capabilities Perspective*

Dear Participant,

You are hereby invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by **Sifiso, Dludla**, a doctoral student, at University of South Africa's Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL).

The purpose of the study is to investigate, **the critical resources and capabilities for a sustainable support service strategy framework in the context of student affairs in higher education**. The study seeks to contribute to strategic management body of knowledge as well as to the strategic management practice and policy in higher education support services.
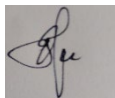
All your answers will be treated with strict confidentiality, and you will not be identified in any of the research reports emanating from this research, and the raw data will be kept in a safe place. The researcher is obligated to adhere to high ethical standards with regards to conducting this research work and the handling of data. The study was approved by the University of South Africa's Ethics Committee, as well as your institution.

Your participation in this study is very important **for the improvement of student affairs policy and practice, student support service delivery, and strategic management body of knowledge.** You may however choose not to participate and you may also withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. To improve the study's trustworthiness or validity, the researcher will do a member-checking of data, and that is, requesting you to check your part of the data to verify if it reflect your input. The member-checking will be done with your permission if you are willing and available.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of the findings on request.

Please contact my supervisor, Professor Vusi Gumede,xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, should you have any concerns regarding the research. Please sign below to indicate your willingness and consent to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely

Sifiso, Dludla

Student/Researcher (64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za) Cell: 0xxxxxxxxxxxxx email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I, …………………………………………………………….., herewith give my consent to participate in the study. I have read the letter and understand my rights with regard to voluntarily participating in the research.

_____ _____

Participant's signature   **Date**

APPENDIX F: STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

<u>Qualitative Research Interview Guide: (Staff Participants)</u>

<u>Purpose of the Guide</u>: To provide the researcher and the research participants (interviewees) the basis and the framework for the interview sessions. To cover the foundation of the study, including the aims and objectives of the study. To link the interview to the literature and study theory, while allowing emerging themes, and allowing research participants to freely share their views, understanding, and experiences around the phenomenon under study.

(i)   Introductory Remarks by the Researcher, and establishing rapport.

(ii)   <u>The research topic</u>: ***Sustainable Support Service Strategy Framework in the context of Student Affairs: A Resources and Capabilities perspective***.

(iii)   <u>Aims and objectives</u>: ***Identifying critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy. Investigate the value of critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy. Contribute to strategic management body of knowledge and practice in higher education leadership.***

(iv)   <u>The nature of the interview</u>: ***Semi-structured interview discussion. Researcher introduces topics, and interviewees share their views, understanding of the issues, and experiences.***

<u>Administrative Section</u>:

a) Date of Interview: _____ Interview Venue: _____

b) Job Title of Interviewee: _____ Name of Dept.:_____

c) No. of Years in current Position:____ Number of Years in Student Affairs: _____

d) Job Title of Interviewee Line Manager: _____

Study Concept Themes	Link to Study's Research Questions, Aims and Objectives, and study's broader contribution	Link to Theory and Practice
1. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: (Resource bundling)		
What is your Division as a	Sector focus	Definition of Student Affairs. (Helfgot,

whole called?		2005). Literature contribution
What has been strategic changes of your Division's name in the past ten years?	Sector focus	Sector dynamics. Framework
What are other departments or Units under your Division?	Sector focus	Definition of Student Affairs. Literature contribution. Framework. Resource bundling
What do the various departments under your Division share in common?	Sector focus	Student Affairs philosophy, values, culture, mission. Literature contribution
Does your department's structure support the delivery of services? If so, how? If No, why?	Sector and strategy focus	Structure design, and resource bundling. Framework
2. STUDENT AFFAIRS & SERVICE CONCEPTS AND CONSTRUCTS:		
What is the main role of your Division in the university?	Strategy focus	Support Service strategy-level framework. Competitiveness. Long, (2012)
What is the main role of your department in the university?	Service focus	Framework. Competitiveness
What are the key services provided by your department?	Service focus. Main research question. And RQ1.	Service characteristics. Resource attributes. Resource Taxonomy.
How does your department engage students?	Service focus. RQ2.	Service dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Framework.
How does your department assess student needs?	Service focus. RQ2.	Service dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Framework.
In your view what constitute student experience?	Service focus. RQ2.	Uniqueness. (Barney, 1991) Characteristics of service. Competitiveness. Framework.
What is your view on holistic student development?	Service focus.	Framework. Characteristics of service.
What are some of the challenges that your department face in delivering services?	Service focus	Framework. Context dynamics
How do you collaborate with students?	Service focus	Service dominant logic. Student engagement (Kuh, 2009). Framework. Value co-creation
How do you share service knowledge with students?	Service focus	Service dominant logic. Knowledge interface. (Ordanini & Parasuraman, 2011). Framework. Value co-creation
How do you measure service quality?	Service resources	Value in resources. Value of university experience (Woodall et al 2014)
3. MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS & CONSTRUCTS		
a) What is the role of people in the management of your department?	• Main research question	• Capabilities (Framework). Unobservable attributes
b) How do you view staff in general in your department in terms of	• Main research question. Broader focus.	• Capabilities & Leadership style. Framework.

	productivity?			
c)	What is the organisational culture within your department?	• Broader focus	• Uniqueness. valuable resource (Barney, 1991). Unobservable attributes	
d)	How do you measure efficiency in your department's services?	• Broader focus	• Current definition of valuable resources (Barney). Penrosean (1959) resources development	
e)	What processes do you follow in developing work plans?	• Broader focus	• Strategy practice (planning). Framework	
f)	How do you manage performance?	• Broader focus.	• Strategy practice issues (performance). Framework.	
g)	How do you manage change in your department?	• Main Research question. Broader focus	• Strategy development. Framework	
4. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS				
a)	What do you believe to be the critical resources and capabilities in your division?	• Main Research question	• For resource taxonomy and definition (Kraaijenbrink, 2010). Framework building	
b)	What are the critical resources and capabilities for your department?	• Main Research question	• For resource taxonomy, and definition. Framework building	
c)	How do you acquire resources? and how do you develop capabilities?	• Main Research question	• Important for competitiveness. Dormant resources (Felin, et al, 2020)	
d)	Which resources and capabilities are difficult to acquire or build in your department?	• Main Research question	• Resource endowment (Wernerfelt, 2020). Resource accumulation	
e)	How do you define a resource? And How do you define capabilities?	• Main Research question	• Resource definition in Student Affairs. Better testing of theory. Definition. (Kraaijenbrink, et al, 2010)	
f)	How do you determine the value (importance or benefit) in a resource	• Main and sub-question	• Resource ex ante indicators - important to improve theory prediction powers. (Kraaijenbrink, et	

	or in capabilities?		• al, 2010)
g)	How do you allocate resources within your current structure?	• Main research question.	• Capabilities (Ray et al, 2004) and resource combination. Difficult to imitate.
h)	What are your department's internal strengths and capabilities?	• Study's broader focus	• Important for SWOT analysis/strategy formulation
i)	What is different about your university?	• Main research question	• Competitiveness. Heterogeneity. (Hoopes et al, 2003).
j)	How does your department contribute to the uniqueness of your university?	• Main research question	• Uniqueness (Barney, 1991). (Hoopes et al, 2003).
k)	How does your department deal with emergent issues that impact on your strategic plans and policies?	• Study's broader focus.	• Test of agility and ambidexterity (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013), in strategic approach. Relevant to Higher education dynamic context. Contributes to robust strategy development framework.
l)	How does your department's strategy align with university goals?	• Study's broader focus	• Strategy alignment. Contribution to aggregated variable
m)	What do you believe to be the role of Student Affairs fraternity in higher education in South Africa?	• Research sub-question. RQ5.	• National higher education challenges. Student affairs literature expansion (addressing the gap in literature).
n)	What are the key challenges that your Division is facing?	• For deeper understanding of phenomenon, and nuanced contextual issues	• To inform strategy development. Important competitiveness and allocation of resources
o)	What are the weaknesses in Student Affairs fraternity?	• Research sub-question. RQ5.	• To inform strategy development. Important competitiveness and allocation of resources. Further development of Student Affairs.

Notes:

- **RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ5** = Research Question number, as appearing in the thesis methodology chapter.
- **Resource**s = 'are the tangible and intangible assets firms use to conceive of and implement their strategies' (Barney, 1991). Firm resources include assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge controlled by a firm that enables the implementation of strategies (Barney, 1991).
- **Capabilities**= can be defined as the management of resources, skills, knowledge, and learning in the context of an organisation (Teece, Shuen, and Pisano (1997).
- **Value** = "the importance customers and stakeholders attach to services, which is related to the actual or potential benefit, outcome and impact. Monetary value may be a factor" (Grieves and Pritchard, 2018).

APPENDIX G: STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Qualitative Research Interview Guide: (Students Participants)

Purpose of the Guide: To provide the researcher and the research participants (interviewees) the basis and the framework for the interview sessions. To cover the foundation of the study, including the aims and objectives of the study. To link the interview to the literature and study theory, while allowing emerging themes, and allowing research participants to freely share their views, understanding, and experiences around the phenomenon under study.

(v)   Introductory Remarks by the Researcher, and establishing rapport.

(vi)   The research topic: *Sustainable Support Service Strategy Framework in the context of Student Affairs: A Resources and Capabilities perspective*.

(vii) Aims and objectives: *Identifying critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy. Investigate the value of critical resources and capabilities for sustainable support service strategy. Contribute to strategic management body of knowledge and practice in higher education leadership.*

(viii) The nature of the interview: *Semi-structured interview discussion. Researcher introduces topics, and interviewees share their views, understanding of the issues, and experiences.*

Administrative Section:

e) Date of Interview: _____ Interview Venue: _____

f) Level of study for Interviewee: _____ Gender: _____

g) Home:_____ Place of stay during study: _____

h) Support service used:

Student counseling:		Campus Health:		Dining Hall:	
Security services:		Campus Transport:		Disability Support:	
Student leadership:		Student development:		Student Housing:	
Sports:		Student Funding services:			

Other support services:

Study Concept Themes	Link to Research Questions, Aims and Objectives, and study's broader contribution	Link Theory and Practice
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:		
a) What do you know to be the role of Executive Director/Senior Director/Dean of Students.	• Sector focus	• Definition of Student Affairs. (Helfgot, 2005). Literature contribution. (Long, 2012).
b) Which name correctly reflect the services you want: Student Affairs, Student Services, Student Life.	• Sector focus	• Definition of Student Affairs. Literature contribution. Framework
c) How does the location of support service offices affect service delivery?	• Sector focus	• Service delivery design. Framework.
STUDENT AFFAIRS & SERVICE CONCEPTS:		
a) How do student support services impact on your student life and student experience.	• Strategy focus. RQ4	• Support Service strategy-level framework. Competitiveness
b) What are the key support services provided by departments that you know of in your campus?	• Service focus. Main research question. And RQ1.	• Service characteristics. Resource attributes. Resource Taxonomy.
c) What challenges do you think they are facing in delivering services?	• Strategy focus. RQ2.	• Sector dynamics (Frisk, 2018). Framework.
d) How do departments assess student needs?	• Service focus. RQ2.	• Service dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Framework.
e) In your view what constitute student experience?	• Service focus. RQ2.	• Uniqueness. (Barney, 1991) Characteristics of service. Framework. Value of

			• university experience (Woodall et al 2014).
f)	What is your view on holistic student development?	• Service focus.	• Framework. Characteristics of service.
g)	How do departments collaborate with students?	• Service focus	• Service dominant logic. Student engagement (Kuh, 2009). Framework. Value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004)
h)	How do departments share service knowledge with students?	• Service focus	• Service dominant logic. Knowledge interface. (Ordanini & Parasuraman, 2011). Framework. Value co-creation
MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS			
h)	How do you see staff in the support service departments?	• Main research question	• Capabilities (Resources perspective). Framework Unobservable attributes
i)	What is the organisational culture do you see in support service departments?	• Broader focus	• Uniqueness. resources (Barney, 1991) • Unobservable attributes
j)	What do you think influences efficiency in support service departments?	• Broader focus	• Current definition of valuable resources (Barney). Penrosean (1959) Rescources development
k)	What mental images of support service departments do you have?	• Main Research question. Broader focus	• Strategy development. Brand. Framework
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS			
p)	What do believe to be the key resources and capabilities in Student support division?	• Main Research question	• For resource taxonomy and definition. Framework building

q) How do you define value in support services?	• Main Research question. And RQ4.	• For resource taxonomy, and definition. Framework building.
r) What are the characteristics of value in support service?	• Main Research question. And RQ3.	• Important for competitiveness.
s) Which services have you found indispensable during your life on campus?	• Main Research question	• Resource endowment (Wernerfelt, 2020). Resource accumulation
t) How do the support services impact on your academic life as a student?	• Main Research question. And RQ4.	• Resource definition in Student Affairs. Definition. (Kraaijenbrink, et al, 2010).
u) What role would you like to play in co-creating value in the support services?	• Main and sub-question	• Resource ex ante indicators - important to improve theory prediction powers. (Kraaijenbrink, et al, 2010)
v) What is different about your university compared to other universities?	• Main research question	• Competitiveness. Heterogeneity (Hoopes et al, 2003).
w) How do support service department deal with crises?	• Study's broader focus.	• Test of agility and ambidexterity (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013), in strategic approach. Relevant to Higher education dynamic context. Contributes to robust strategy development framework.
x) What are the weaknesses in Student Affairs, in your view?	• Research sub-question. RQ5.	• To inform strategy development. Important competitiveness and allocation of resources. Further development of Student Affairs.

Notes:

- **RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ5** = Research Question number, as appearing in the thesis methodology chapter.

- **Resources** = 'are the tangible and intangible assets firms use to conceive of and implement their strategies' (Barney, 1991). Firm resources include assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge controlled by a firm that enables the implementation of strategies (Barney, 1991).

- **Capabilities**= can be defined as the management of resources, skills, knowledge, and learning in the context of an organisation (Teece, Shuen, and Pisano (1997).

- **Value** = "the importance customers and stakeholders attach to services, which is related to the actual or potential benefit, outcome and impact. Monetary value may be a factor" (Grieves and Pritchard, 2018).

APPENDIX H: SURVEY INVITATION

STUDENT SURVEY RESEARCH INVITATION

<u>Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities. A Resources and Capabilities Perspective.</u>

7th July 2022

Dear Student,

I hope you are well and hopefully enjoying your mid-year study break. I am also trying to make as much progress in my academic research work during this time. I am student at UNISA, but conducting data collection at [Name of University] for my studies. I am researching on Student Support Services. I am using an online research platform called Zoho survey.

I humbly request you to please support and participate in this academic survey. It is purely for academic purpose, and it is voluntary and all data is confidential. Data utilised will be aggregated, thus no participant details will be utilised. You may withdraw your participation without consequences, but hope you complete the survey.

It is an online questionnaire and you do not have to write answers - you simply click on the provided answers that you believe applies to your experience as a student at [Name of University]. It should take you just 15 minutes to complete.

Please click on the link below to complete the questionnaire:

https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/L0CNuU
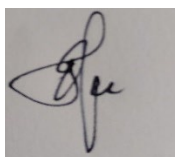
For any queries or comments, please contact me at 64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

Your support is really appreciated.

Thank you very much.

Regards.

_____

Mr Sifiso, Dludla

Researcher/PG Student

E-mail: 64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede

E-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

APPENDIX I: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (Pages 436 - 449)

PDF

Final questionnaire.pdf (Command Line)

Student Support Services (FS)

Student Support Services Survey

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your valuable time. This Survey is for academic purpose. The survey seeks to identify and measure the elements that constitute critical resources and capabilities for student support services strategy in higher education.

The study/survey is approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa, as well as your institution, and the Researcher is bound by ethical obligations. The survey is confidential, which means participants' details are kept confidential and will not be published. Your participation is voluntary and you have a right to withdraw at any stage.

The survey should take you about 10 minutes to complete. Your participation will be highly appreciated. Please complete all the sections. It's only a click of a button (your choice). Section A is for demographic and Administrative purposes. In sections B to G, please choose a number that corresponds with your level of opinion and experience on your university's student support services. If for some reason you get interrupted by poor network signal or loadshedding, please reconnect again later and complete the questionnaire.

I am highly grateful for your time.

Researcher:
Sifiso Dludla
Postgraduate Student: University of South Africa
E-mail: 64055981@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede

*Please click on the buttons below, to indicate your consent on participating in this survey.

○ Yes = I wish to participate

○ No = I do not wish to participate.

SECTION A

Demographic and Administrative Data:

Please indicate your choice by clicking on the correct box that represents your answer.

What is your current level of study at the University?

○ 1 = First Year   ○ 2 = Second Year   ○ 3 = Third Year

○ 4 = Fourth Year   ○ 5 = Fifth Year   ○ 6 = Sixth Year

○ 7 = Honour's or Postgraduate Diploma   ○ 8 = Master's   ○ 9 = Doctoral/Phd

Where are you staying during your studies (during the academic term)?

○ 1 = At the University Residence   ○ 2 = At a University-leased Residence   ○ 3 = At an accredited Residence

○ 4 = At a private apartment/flat/house, not linked to university   ○ 5 = At my (parents) home   ○ 6 = At my relatives' home

○ 7 = Other

Where is your (parents) home located?

○ 1 = Village or Rural area   ○ 2 = Township area   ○ 3 = City or Urban area

○ 4 = Outside South Africa

Please indicate your demographic details below:

○ 1 = Female   ○ 2 = Male   ○ 3 = I prefer not to state

Please indicate your age-group category below:

○ 1 = 16 to 19 Years   ○ 2 = 20 to 22 Years   ○ 3 = 23 to 25 Years

○ 4 = 26 to 30 Years   ○ 5 = 30 and above

Please indicate your race category below:

(The choices below are ordered alphabetically)

○ 1 = African   ○ 2 = Coloured   ○ 3 = Indian

○ 4 = White   ○ 5 = I prefer not to state

SECTIONS B - G

The next sections (B - G) are also quick to answer. You simply click a number in a box that reflects your answer.

The choice of answer indicates the level or extent of your Agreement or Disagreement with each statement that is provided.

Student Affairs/Student Support Services briefly include; Student orientation/First year experience, student funding (and NSFAS) administration, student accommodation and food services, university sports, student governance/leadership (and SRC) or student life office, student counseling and careers, student transport, security services, disability support, and health/clinic services. Please keep this in mind as you read and answer the questions.

The key constructs for sections B to F are: Student centredness in student support services; Student support staff competences; Value of student support services; Student engagement; and Collaboration. Section G is the overall assessment of your experience on the support services.

Please rate your answer as guided above, according to the 5-point Likert-type scale, where the rating scale implies;
1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Neutral
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly disagree

*SECTION B:

STUDENT CENTREDNESS:

Student Support Service Offices serve the interest of students

| ☐ 1 = Strongly Agree | ☐ 2 = Agree | ☐ 3 = Neutral |
| ☐ 4 = Disagree | ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree | |

*Student Support Services Staff provide guidance to students

| ☐ 1 = Strong agree | ☐ 2 = Agree | ☐ 3 = Neutral |
| ☐ 4 = Disagree | ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree | |

*University life would have been difficult if there were no student services offices

| ☐ 1 = Strongly agree | ☐ 2 = Agree | ☐ 3 = Neutral |
| ☐ 4 = Disagree | ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree | |

*Student Affairs Offices have played a huge role in my university life

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

---

*Student support service offices give us a sense of belonging, in this university.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

---

*In addition to academic development, my university provides a space for development and growth in various other spheres of student life.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

---

*My academic life would be affected negatively if I did not have access to student support services and support facilities

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

SECTION C: Student Support Service Staff Competences

Please provide your answer by clicking on the box indicating the level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements, based on your opinion and experience on your university's student support services.

*Student support services staff need to have the necessary qualifications

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*I expect student support service staff to show commitment when providing the services.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*I expect student support service staff to show care and respect when providing services.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*Student support service staff need to be able to listen to my issues.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*I expect student support service staff to have the ability to solve my non-academic problems.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*Student support service staff should have the <u>capacity for our diverse needs,</u> including first year student needs, international student needs, and postgrad student needs.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

SECTION D: Value In Student Support Services

Please provide your answer by clicking on a box that reflects the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the statement provided. The concept of 'Value' is also known as 'benefit'

*Student support services must be available when we need them, including after hours and weekends (especially for those who live away from their homes).

- ☐ 1 = Strongly agree
- ☐ 2 = Agree
- ☐ 3 = Neutral
- ☐ 4 = Disagree
- ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*Instead of sending e-mails or consulting online, I often need a face to face support service interaction in order to get my problems resolved.

- ☐ 1 = Strongly agree
- ☐ 2 = Agree
- ☐ 3 = Neutral
- ☐ 4 = Disagree
- ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*When I'm stressed I need to talk to a person in their offices, and not through a cellphone or laptop.

- ☐ 1 = Strongly agree
- ☐ 2 = Agree
- ☐ 3 = Neutral
- ☐ 4 = Disagree
- ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*Support service staff must respond quicker to my e-mails.

- ☐ 1 = Strongly agree
- ☐ 2 = Agree
- ☐ 3 = Neutral
- ☐ 4 = Disagree
- ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*If the support service office door is open, I feel welcome.

- ☐ 1 = Strongly agree
- ☐ 2 = Agree
- ☐ 3 = Neutral
- ☐ 4 = Disagree
- ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*Consultation times and contact details on the student support service office doors provide critical information for me to plan my activities.

- [ ] 1 = Strongly agree
- [ ] 2 = Agree
- [ ] 3 = Neutral
- [ ] 4 = Disagree
- [ ] 5 = Strongly disagree

*Added benefits in the support services increase the overall value of these services.

- [ ] 1 = Strongly agree
- [ ] 2 = Agree
- [ ] 3 = Neutral
- [ ] 4 = Disagree
- [ ] 5 = Strongly disagree

*Quality support services add value to my student experience

- [ ] 1 = Strongly agree
- [ ] 2 = Agree
- [ ] 3 = Neutral
- [ ] 4 = Disagree
- [ ] 5 = Strongly disagree

SECTION E: Student Engagement

Please provide your answer by clicking on the correct box that indicates the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the statements provided.

*They only listen to us when we protest

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*They only attend to our problems when we bring the SRC.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*The SRC tries their best to engage the university management.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*The student structures, committees and forums are helpful in engaging the university on our needs.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree   ☐ 2 = Agree   ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree   ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

SECTION F: Collaborations

Please provide your answer by clicking on the correct box that reflects your level of agreement or disagreement to the statements provided.

*Students have the capacity to assist the university with support services such as student orientation, peer support, mentorship, etc.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*As students we have the capacity to promote and facilitate some of the support service programmes and events.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*As a student I relate better when some of the support services are delivered with students involved.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*The university must allow more student-led platforms of information-sharing.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

*As students we contribute to solving crises for the university, working with the support service offices.

☐ 1 = Strongly agree ☐ 2 = Agree ☐ 3 = Neutral

☐ 4 = Disagree ☐ 5 = Strongly disagree

SECTION G: General Support Services
Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

Last Section: Please indicate below, your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with following Student Support Services.

*First year and first time student orientation

○ 1 = Highly satisfied   ○ 2 = Satisfied   ○ 3 = Neutral
○ 4 = Dissatisfied   ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*University Student Funding (and NSFAS) Administration Services:

(Please rate this service based on how you experienced it, and not based on the lack of funding).

○ 1 = Highly satisfied   ○ 2 = Satisfied   ○ 3 = Neutral
○ 4 = Dissatisfied   ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*University Student Accommodation/Housing Services & Facilities:

(Please rate this service based on how you experienced it, and not based on lack of accommodation).

○ 1 = Highly satisfied   ○ 2 = Satisfied   ○ 3 = Neutral
○ 4 = Dissatisfied   ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*Sports Services and Facilities

○ 1 = Highly satisfied   ○ 2 = Satisfied   ○ 3 = Neutral
○ 4 = Dissatisfied   ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*Student governance and leadership services office:

(Sometimes this office is called Student Life Office)

○ 1 = Highly satisfied   ○ 2 = Satisfied   ○ 3 = Neutral
○ 4 = Dissatisfied   ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*Student Counselling and Careers Services:

(Sometimes, referred to as Student Counseling and Development Office)

- ○ 1 = Highly satisfied
- ○ 2 = Satisfied
- ○ 3 = Neutral
- ○ 4 = Dissatisfied
- ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*Student transport services:

- ○ 1 = Highly satisfied
- ○ 2 = Satisfied
- ○ 3 = Neutral
- ○ 4 = Dissatisfied
- ○ 5 = Highly Dissatisfied

*Security Services:

(Sometimes known as Protection Services)

- ○ 1 = Highly satisfied
- ○ 2 = Satisfied
- ○ 3 = Neutral
- ○ 4 = Dissatisfied
- ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

*Campus Health/Clinic Services:

- ○ 1 = Highly satisfied
- ○ 2 = Satisfied
- ○ 3 = Neutral
- ○ 4 = Dissatisfied
- ○ 5 = Highly dissatisfied

Student Support Services Survey

I am grateful for your participation. You have made a valuable contribution in the study of student support services strategy in higher education. All the best to your studies as well.

Thank you !!!

APPENDIX J: SCALE RELIABILITY TABLES

1. Student Centredness Construct

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,869	0,871	7

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	No. of items
Inter-Item Correlations	0,49	0,333	0,724	0,39	2,171	0,01	7

Item-Total Statistics

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
B1	15,06	21,388	0,621	0,554	0,854
B2	15,05	21,109	0,66	0,586	0,849
B3	15,28	20,336	0,639	0,434	0,851
B4	14,44	19,052	0,695	0,57	0,843
B5	14,68	19,625	0,743	0,575	0,837
B6	15,08	21,336	0,511	0,297	0,868
B7	14,77	19,661	0,659	0,477	0,848

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

2. Student Support services Staff Competences Construct

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,729	0,78	6

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	No. of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	0,371	0,135	0,695	0,56	5,162	0,027	6

Item-Total Statistics

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
C1	8,23	6,448	0,356	0,161	0,732
C2	8,68	6,533	0,638	0,541	0,651
C3	8,77	6,713	0,637	0,582	0,657
C4	8,69	6,567	0,621	0,472	0,655
C5	7,61	6,293	0,294	0,111	0,772
C6	8,61	6,769	0,495	0,279	0,684

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

3. Student Support Service Value Construct

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,771	0,779	8

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	No. of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	0,306	0,147	0,717	0,57	4,881	0,019	8

Item-Total Statistics

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
D1	14,76	18,442	0,364	0,16	0,769
D2	15,04	17,295	0,519	0,53	0,738
D3	14,94	16,885	0,551	0,543	0,731
D4	15,13	18,678	0,471	0,234	0,746
D5	15,18	18,949	0,477	0,281	0,746
D6	15,1	19,13	0,476	0,357	0,746
D7	15,18	19,481	0,466	0,43	0,749
D8	15,27	19,066	0,496	0,422	0,744

Own compilation from SPSS

4. Student engagement Construct

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,633	0,633	4

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	No. of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	0,301	0,014	0,719	0,705	50,928	0,08	4

Item-Total Statistics

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
E1	7,45	5,391	0,378	0,526	0,59
E2	7,59	4,977	0,531	0,556	0,475
E3	7,95	5,366	0,434	0,425	0,548
E4	7,87	6,032	0,315	0,382	0,628

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

5. Collaborations construct

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,813	0,814	5

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	No. of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	0,466	0,392	0,624	0,232	1,593	0,005	5

Item-Total Statistics

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
F1	7,92	6,743	0,59	0,425	0,781
F2	7,79	6,364	0,636	0,471	0,767
F3	7,71	6,172	0,628	0,416	0,769
F4	7,85	6,493	0,591	0,383	0,78
F5	7,59	6,566	0,566	0,326	0,788

Own compilation from SPSS

6. Support services satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,734	0,745	9

Summary Item Statistics							
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	No. of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	0,245	0,09	0,427	0,337	4,725	0,007	9

Item-Total Statistics					
Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
G1	20,83	20,656	0,333	0,129	0,726
G2	20,45	20,882	0,318	0,176	0,729
G3	20,47	21,132	0,384	0,192	0,715
G4	20,72	21,292	0,434	0,23	0,707
G5	20,61	20,964	0,525	0,329	0,696
G6	20,94	20,671	0,477	0,303	0,7
G7	21,14	20,588	0,401	0,176	0,712
G8	21,08	19,944	0,446	0,251	0,704
G9	21	20,702	0,439	0,27	0,705

Source: Own compilation from SPSS

APPENDIX K: TURNITIN REPORT (Summary)

Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities. A Resources and Capabilities Perspective

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2 January 2023

Declaration of professional editing

Sustainable Support Services Strategy Framework for Student Affairs in South African Universities. A Resources and Capabilities Perspective

By

Sifiso Dludla

I declare that I have edited and proofread this thesis. My involvement was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency and referencing style. I did no structural re-writing of the content.

I am qualified to have done such editing, being in possession of a Bachelor's degree with a major in English, having taught English to matriculation, and having a Certificate in Copy Editing from the University of Cape Town. I have edited more than 400 Masters and Doctoral theses, as well as articles, books and reports.

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