Employment practices of student library assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal

by

Queen N. Mthembu

Supervisor: Dr N Sentoo

Co-supervisor: Ms PPT Rakoma

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Management Sciences in Library and Information Science in the Department of Information and Corporate Management, Durban University of Technology, South Africa, 2018

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DECLARATION

I, Ncamisile Queen Mthembu, declare that this study represents the original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form at another university. Where use is made of the work of others, it has been acknowledged in the text and included in the list of work cited.

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ABSTRACT

Employing student library assistants (SLAs) has been a time-honoured tradition of academic libraries. In the library, SLAs help to staff the circulation desk during hours when librarians are not available, to answer directional or reference questions and to carry out special projects that benefit the library in various ways (Wu 2003: 141). SLAs also benefit from working in the library, not only through financial gain, but university libraries are the best training grounds for the development of their personal and professional competencies.

The purpose of the study was to compare the overall employment practices of student library assistants (SLAs) in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The research project is intended to provide an understanding of the factors that affect the selection and recruitment of SLAs, their hours of work and the rate of pay. This study used the survey method as the data collection method. Two sets of questionnaires were designed for two types of respondents, namely student library assistants as well as their supervisors. The information was extracted from the questionnaires and presented in the form of graphs and tables. The study revealed that many academic libraries follow a similar pattern when selecting and recruiting student library assistants; however, issues such as duration of training provided to SLAs, and having a library guide prepared for students, tend to differ. The research findings could contribute towards assisting academic libraries in improving their service delivery and achieving their organisational mandate. Recommendations and suggestions where differences were discovered are shared.

KEYWORDS: Academic libraries, academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal, employment practices, part-time employment, student employment and student library assistants

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List of Acronyms

BTech - Bachelor of Technology

DUT - Durban University of Technology

HR - Human resources

IT - Information technology

KZN - KwaZulu Natal

LIS - Library and Information Studies

MUT - Mangosuthu University of Technology

OPAC - Online Public Access Catalogue

SLAs - Student library assistants

TUT - Tshwane University of Technology

UKZN - University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNISA - University of South Africa

UNIZULU - University of Zululand

Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study

1.1 Introduction

Murugan (2013:1) defines an academic library as a library which serves students, faculty staff and researchers when seeking information in institutions of higher learning, such as a college or university. These libraries serve as a repository for published information as well as an intermediary for acquiring materials from the outside world. The support of teaching requires material for class readings, and for student papers. In the past, the material for class readings, intended to supplement lectures as prescribed by the instructor, was called *reserves*. In the period before electronic resources became available, the reserves were supplied as actual books or as photocopies of appropriate journal articles (Murugan 2013: 1).

National Center for Education Statistics (2015) defines an academic library as an entity in a postsecondary institution that provides all of the following: an organised collection of printed or other materials, or a combination thereof, staff trained to provide and interpret such materials as required to meet the informational, cultural, recreational, or educational needs of clientele, an established schedule in which services of the staff are available to clientele and the physical facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule.

Jacobson and Shuyler (2013) find that, although academic studies are assumed to be the main focus of undergraduate students attending university, an increasing number of students balance their academic pursuits with part-time employment. Students have different motives for working in academic libraries; besides the financial incentives, working part time also provides students with an opportunity to explore career options. Despite the pressures of added commitments, working in an environment that supports academic endeavours can contribute to the academic success of students through continued learning opportunities and skills development. Academic libraries, who employ a considerable number of students, are in a position to positively influence not only the transition to college life, but also the development of students over their academic career (Melilii, Mitola and Hunsaker 2016: 1).

Academic libraries have various positions occupied by different employees according to their job statuses. The most common structure consists of directors, deputy directors, library managers, librarians, library assistants, stack attendants and student library assistants. Raju (2008: 132) categorises the job functions of librarianship as professional, paraprofessional and support functions. Professionals are those performing duties of collection development, decision making, management functions, staff supervision and administration. In the South African context paraprofessionals perform similar functions as professionals; the distinguishing factor is that they have obtained qualifications from Universities of Technology, and are regarded as support staff that perform clerical duties, involving circulation, shelving and cash handling. Student library assistants perform similar duties as the support staff (Library Assistants). Even though they are part of the library staff, academic libraries have varied employment practices with respect to duration of service, rate of pay, and number of hours worked and more, and it is these differences in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) academic libraries that this study aims to investigate. The terms *student library assistants* (SLAs) and *student assistants* are used interchangeably in this study.

In this study student library assistants (SLAs) are regarded as students who are currently studying full-time with an institution and are employed on a part-time basis by the library (Mthembu, 2006). Part-time employment is a fact of life for many full-time students, who are often driven by the need to pay for university and living expenses (Jacobson and Shuyler 2013: 547). While these student assistants are working in the library they have to deal directly with library users.

1.2 Context of the study

The context of this research concerns issues of human resources management, which, according to prominent authors Nel, Werner, Haasbroek, Poisat, Sono, Du Plessis and Ngalo (2011) policies, practices and systems influence employees' behaviour, attitudes and performance. Human resources management involves the productive use of people in achieving the organisation's strategic objectives and the satisfaction of individual employee needs (Nel et al. 2011: 6). The human resources department is therefore responsible for recruitment and selection, employment training and development of staff, compensation, benefits, performance management and

discipline, personnel records, health and safety of employees, and efforts to improve quality and productivity (Nel et al. 2011: 6).

Employing SLAs in academic libraries is a trend, both nationally and internationally. This is due to financial constraints that libraries face within institutions (Wu 2003: 141). Employing students tends to be the more cost-effective practice rather than to employ full-time staff (Radebe 2014). Students from all faculties are eligible to apply; however, within the institutions where the Library and Information Studies (LIS) programme is offered, preference is given to those students who are studying towards the LIS qualification. This is because the LIS students need more exposure and they are more likely to be proficient in the library (Radebe 2014) than others. These practices will determine whether the library is made available after hours and also impact on the quality of service offered, and to what extent there is job satisfaction among SLAs. The employment of top quality people, who are committed, attached and loyal to the organisation depends largely on those who have been recruited, and ultimately selected as best candidates for the job. Therefore, recruitment, selection, training and remuneration needs to be structured and consistent. It is of interest to survey the situation in respect of SLAs in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal.

Issues that this research aims to address among others are: the recruitment and selection practices are used when employing SLAs, training provided to SLAs, number of hours worked by SLAs across all academic libraries under investigation, remuneration and challenges faced by SLAs and challenges encountered by supervisors when working with student library assistants.

1.3 Research problem and aims

Academic libraries nationally and internationally seem to be facing a common challenge when it comes to library staffing particularly to render the after-hours service. Thomsett-Scott (2012) reports that student assistants comprise approximately 32% of total staff in libraries and the question of concern is whether patrons receive the same top-quality service from students as they would from librarians. Radebe (2014) reassures that employing students seem to be the most cost-effective practice rather than employing full-time staff members to work after hours, while Wu (2003:141)

provides reasons why libraries employ student library assistants. One being that of financial constraints that libraries face within institutions.

This study is therefore important as SLAs form part and parcel of staff in academic libraries nationally and internationally. The library has vested interest in both the success of the students in their studies, and also in their contribution to the business and reputation of the library. As O'Neil and Comley (2010: 110) suggests that recruitment, training and supervision have been identified as success factors to facilitate student employees' success and engagement in the library workplace and for better all-round support of student assistants. Supervising students is not the same as supervising regularly employed staff because of the need to consider the balance between work and academic study. Student assistants need attention in terms of workplace induction and training, ongoing supervision, feedback and encouragement to be effective and confident in performing their roles (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 110). Whether they are hired for the unique abilities they bring to the job or to compensate for budgetary constraints, student assistants make significant and meaningful contributions to the functioning of academic libraries after hours by making the after-hours service possible in academic libraries (Logan 2012: 318).

The aim of this study was to survey the employment practices of student library assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. This research therefore developed the following objectives, namely to:

- Examine the recruitment and selection procedure of SLAs
- establish the number of hours worked and the rate of pay of SLAs
- determine the challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants.

1.4 Research questions

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- What recruitment and selection practices are used when employing SLAs?
- Is the training provided to SLAs adequate?
- Does SLAs work the same number of hours in academic libraries under investigation?
- How are the SLAs remunerated?
- What are the challenges faced by SLAs and challenges encountered by supervisors when working with student library assistants?

1.5 Definition of relevant terms

1.5.1 Student library assistants

A *student assistant* is a part-time temporary employee whose primary purpose for attending the university is the achievement of a degree or certificate. Student employees are considered at-will employees, and their employment is interim or temporary and incidental to the pursuit of a degree or certification. Student assistant positions are jobs located on campus. These jobs can range from clerical to landscaping positions. Employment of students may be terminated at any time, without right to appeal (University of West Georgia 2016).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher has defined *student library assistants* as students who are currently studying at the university and are employed on a part-time basis by the library.

1.5.2 Academic libraries

An *academic library* is a library which serves students, faculty staff and researchers when seeking information in institutions of higher learning, such as a college or

university. These libraries serve as a repository for published information as well as intermediary for acquiring materials from the outside world (Murugan 2013: 1).

1.5.3 Orientation

Orientation in this study refers an introduction, a way to help students become familiar with the library and generally feel comfortable within the library and its services so that they will be able to offer an effective service to library users. (Angell and Boss 2016: 44).

1.5.4 Training

Training is the act of increasing the knowledge and skill of an employee for doing a particular job (Chand 2015). Training is a highly useful tool that can bring an employee into a position where he or she can do a job correctly, effectively, and conscientiously.

1.5.5 Supervision

Strydom (2011: 56) refers to *Supervision* as the action of monitoring someone and directing how something is done. It is the process of co-ordinating work-related activities so that the people performing them complete these activities effectively and efficiently.

1.5.6 Recruitment

Recruitment refers to the process of attracting potential job applicants from the available labour force. To ensure the employment of top quality people, who are committed, attached, and loyal to the organisation, depends largely to those who have been recruited and ultimately selected as closely as possible to the job specifications (Nel et al. 2011: 23).

1.5.7 Selection

Selection is the process of differentiating between applicants in order to identify and hire those with a greater likelihood of success in a job (Human Resources Management 2010).

1.6 Limitations to the study

The limited study by Mthembu (2006) looked at the evaluation of the effectiveness of services offered by student library assistants in Durban University of Technology (DUT) libraries in the Durban area. Although this study achieved notable results in proving that these members of staff play an important role in academic libraries, it was limited as it did not include the rest of academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. This study takes the research further by comparing the employment patterns of these valuable members in all academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal.

All Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and University of South Africa (UNISA) were excluded from this study because they both employ qualified students, whereas at the academic libraries selected for this study, student library assistants were students who did not have completed qualification and were studying full time at the institution and were employed by the library on a part-time basis.

A further limitation is that, although the researcher had proposed to involve four institutions in this study, she was unable to administer questionnaires at UNIZULU academic library due to the fact that the contract of student library assistants had not been renewed; therefore, there were no students employed during the data collection period (2015). Despite these limitations, sufficient in-depth data was gathered from the participating academic libraries.

1.7 Research methodology

Methodology is a process by which data is collected and analysed. This study collected primary data where information was obtained first-hand by the researcher in the form of questionnaires. According to Sekaran (2013:51) quantitative research as

a technique associated with gathering, analysing, interpretation and presentation of numeral data, and involves the interplay among variables after they have been operationalized. Quantitative methods are generally geared towards documenting subject attributes expressed in quantity, extent, or strength as well as guaranteeing among other things, objectivity, accuracy, validity and reliability. This study adopted a quantitative approach due to the nature of the data collection instrument used. The study formulated two sets of questionnaires one for the supervisors of students and the other student assistants. Data was analysed based on the responses obtained from the questionnaires. The population in this study was student library assistants who work in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal and Library Coordinators who are supervisors of SLAs in academic libraries. This population was a manageable group so there was no need to sample. The academic libraries used in this study were Durban University of Technology (DUT), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and University of Zululand (UNIZULU).

A pilot study was conducted to students who previously worked as student library assistants at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) before administering the questionnaires to the whole study population. These students were not part of the study population. The research methodology followed in the study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.8 Structure of the research report

The report consists of five chapters.

Chapter One: This chapter provides details about the background to the study, the research problem, research objectives, critical questions to the study, motivation for the study, definitions of relevant terms and the outline of the overall report.

Chapter Two: The second chapter reviews the literature relevant to this study. It provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope of the study. The scope encompasses the following aspects: recruitment and selection of SLAs, training of SLAs, remuneration of SLAs and challenges faced by supervisors when working with SLAs.

Chapter Three: This chapter discusses the methodology used to carry out the research. It gives some background to the two main research types that dominate educational research: quantitative and qualitative methods; as well as mixed method research that combines the two, which the researcher has chosen as the research design in this study. It further discusses the population of the study which consists of student library assistants who work in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal and library coordinators who are supervisors of SLAs in academic libraries.

Chapter Four: This chapter presents in great detail the analysis of both SLAs' and supervisors' questionnaires, findings and the interpretation of the data collected. Findings are supported by a relevant literature review.

Chapter Five: This last chapter summarises the findings of the research, provides recommendations and suggestions for the future research to the study. The conclusion is drawn from the results presented Chapter Four. This study revealed that academic institutions in this study follow similar processes when recruiting and selecting SLAs. Although training is provided, there is no standard time frame allocated for training. Number of hours worked and the rate of pay differ according to seniority of SLAs.

1.9 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed background to the study, the research problem, research objectives and aim, critical questions to the study, motivation to the study, definitions of relevant terms used in the study and the outline of the overall report.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on literature consulted by the researcher. A literature review provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a needed area of enquiry. It shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the one being undertaken, filling in the gaps and extending prior studies (Creswell 2014: 25). Creswell explains that a literature review serves as a "map" or "maps" of the terrain. It provides guidelines, or at least suggestions, for the design of one's project. By reviewing previous studies on a particular topic, one not only learns the maps and "guidebooks" but also the "itineraries", that is the different ways that people have travelled this terrain. Literature consulted by the researcher encompasses the following aspects: recruitment and selection of student library assistants and training of student library assistants. As not much research has been done on this topic in South Africa except at Bachelor of Technology (BTech) level, the researcher has based most of her arguments and literature support on Unites States examples.

2.2 Academic libraries and role of SLAs

Ryan (2011: 12) defines academic libraries as libraries that support the development of a tertiary institution of which they are a part. They select, collect, organise and keep the collection that supports the institution's teaching and learning curriculum. Academic libraries are one of the most important support divisions in a university. Ryan (2011:12) goes on to say that academic libraries are positioned to embrace transformation and innovation for the future. They are charged to push beyond incremental changes to abandon current outdated and dying practices and assume new roles in the academy. As institutions of higher education shift towards more business-like practices and respond to societal and economic pressures, academic libraries must re-envision themselves to fit into this new framework (Ryan 2011: 12).

In order for students to do well in their studies they depend increasingly on academic libraries. A general review of literature revealed that the staffing structure of academic libraries comprises of the senior director who is the head of the department, followed

by the director, the deputy director, library managers, senior librarians, librarians, assistant librarians, library assistants, stack attendants and at the bottom of the structure are the student library assistants (Aiyebelehin 2012). Prior to the investigation of the study, the researcher has gathered information regarding the opening and closing of library hours. It was found that all libraries opens at 8:00 am and thus differs with its closing hours. Some libraries open until 21:00pm and some until 23:00pm during examination periods. Generally the common practice will be for permanent staff to resume their duties at 8:00 am and leave at 16:30 pm. The question is who then renders the service after hours?

Logan (2012: 317) provides a statement that precisely answers this question,

> Without Student Assistants the library could not remain open as long; costs for staffing the circulation desk would increase; document delivery and interlibrary loan services would take too long; materials would not be re-shelved in a timely manner; and processing new books would be slowed.

Mthembu's (2006) findings in her study concur that these valuable members provide an effective and satisfying service after hours. Without the employment of student library assistants, the after-hours service would not be possible due to many factors, one of them being financial constraints. Student library assistants continue with the after-hours services, sometimes in the absence of supervisors. Adewale and Ajayi (2010: 1) confirm that the idea of engaging students in the Work Study Programme in the university library was devised in the late 1990s in African universities. It was later adopted by South African universities.

2.3 Recruitment and selection of student library assistants

Nel et al. (2011: 23) refer to *recruiting* as the process of attracting potential job applicants from the available labour force. The employment of top quality people, who are committed, attached, and loyal to the organisation, depends largely on those who have been recruited, and ultimately selected as closely as possible to the job specifications. Top quality recruitment starts with job specifications. Although it is a costly exercise, for top quality assurance within the human resources (HR) department, the recruitment official must know where to advertise and how to advertise

(Nel et al. 2011: 57). According to Reale (2013: 7), recruiting student library assistants is not a difficult task but finding the "right" candidate takes time and effort. Interviewing the student is the best way, not only to obtain first-hand information about students, such as their majors, their hometown, interests and their extracurricular activities, but also to give them enough information about the job to help them to decide if the library in fact is the place where they want to be. Initially the common practice internationally was that student assistants were recruited broadly via the university's student recruitment service and by word of mouth. A role statement, a brief description of the role and requisites, was used rather than a more formal, standardised university position description. Nowadays students are recruited from target groups including post-graduate students and priority given to Library Studies students. A minimum requirement is that students should have successfully completed the first year of their course, as indicated by O'Neil and Comley (2010: 105). It is still unclear what the maximum period a student is expected to be employed is, for because each library is guided by its policy. Some libraries believe that the combination of returning students, library studies students and postgraduates appears to deliver a more mature student employee (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 105).

Reale (2013) describes different types of students that she has come across over the years. She emphasis that each student exhibits a certain character or behaviour which libraries should take into consideration during the selection process. Smith and Galbraith (2012: 137) describes how the millennial students cannot be convinced to stay in the job by either competitive pay or pay raises.

This study further found that pay was not the only factor attracting and keeping student assistants in their job, but flexibility, work environment and meaningful work. The influence of the supervisor extends beyond pay and can affect students' performance and satisfaction (Smith and Galbraith 2012: 137).

Generally the common practice amongst libraries is that they hire best performing students with the hope that they will be able to strike the balance between work and study. However, Maxwell (2012: 52) argues that many university libraries prefer to hire first-year students with the hope that they will stay longer, provide better continuity to the positions, and generate higher return on investment (ROI) in the library.

Arguments presented in the previous paragraphs provided the basis for surveying the practices and were used to develop questions that were included in the questionnaire on recruitment and selection of SLAs in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal.

2.4 Training of student library assistants

Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda and Nel (2010) define *training* as a way in which an organisation uses a systematic process to modify the knowledge, skills and behaviour of employees that will enable it to achieve its objectives. It is task orientated because it focuses on the work performed in an organisation based on job or task descriptions. The job or task requirements will determine the training standards for a particular job. Erasmus et al. (2010) further place emphasis on how training benefits both the individual and the organisation. Individuals are empowered to make better decisions and solve problems more effectively, staff members are able to handle stress, tension and conflict more effectively, job satisfaction is increased, communication skills, knowledge and attitudes are improved. In addition, the organisation benefits from training in that the morale of the workplace is improved, corporate image is enhanced, it contributes to organisational development, helps to keep costs down, relationships between supervisors and subordinates are improved and employees easily adapt to change. Student employees are a vital part of library operations and deserve an effective training programme. Students in general and students in library and information science programmes working in libraries have an excellent opportunity to learn more than just gathering practical information. Through a training programme that provides experiential learning, mentoring, critical evaluation and constructive improvement, job preparation and personal support, these budding librarians can be prepared for their first positions (Thomsett-Scott 41: 2012). Training student library assistants effectively is fundamental to the success of academic library service where students are often the primary contact with patrons. Mitchell and Soini (2014: 594) agree that student library assistants play an increasingly integral role in the operation of university libraries; thus, training them is essential and having an effective training programme is imperative. They add that supplying students with regular and on-going monitoring and rapidly adjusting training as needed not only increases student and librarian satisfaction but it also maintains students' interest, and relieves overburdened librarians and budgets (Mitchell and Soini 2014: 600).

In her article Thomsett-Scott (2012) refers to the report from the Association of College Libraries that on average, students comprise approximately 32% of total staff in libraries and the question of concern is whether patrons receive the same top-quality service from students as they would from librarians. Although librarians provide the majority of reference help and student assistants complete more menial tasks, many student assistants do work at points of service, including circulation, information, and reference desks. In these cases, student assistants inevitably will, at some point during their employment, be required to answer basic reference questions. Thomsett-Scott (2012) further put emphasis that as libraries rely more and more on student assistants, they should maintain exceptional customer service to patrons, which requires student assistants to possess information literacy skills that exceed these of library patrons.

Folk (2014: 178) states a good argument that lifelong learners is central to the mission of higher education institutions. Information literacy is a key component of, and contributor to, lifelong learning. Information literacy competency extends learning beyond formal classroom settings and provides practice with self-directed investigations as individuals move into internships, first professional positions, and increasing responsibilities into all arenas of life. Information literacy skills prepare students to become lifelong learners and successful professionals (Folk 2014: 178).

In her article Thomsett-Scott (2012: 43) notes that the investment in student training determines the effectiveness of services offered to patrons and the image of the library projected to both patrons and campus guests. Most instances of miscommunication on the job are due to lack of training. Students often want to do well and want to be perceived as capable, but if libraries do not provide them with training, libraries put them in unfair positions of failing. Lack of training is a failure on the part of libraries and not of students (Reale 2013:16). Much of the literature about student assistants focuses on training so that they may deliver a high level of service. Stanfield and Palmer (2010: 638) observe a common theme in their study that if student assistants were to perform higher order tasks in libraries, thorough and on-going training is essential. One of the objectives of the study was to investigate the challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants and training is one of the aspects that the researcher focused on. The answers that the researcher sought

to determine was whether academic libraries under investigation do conduct training or not, and how adequate the training of the student library assistants was to ensure that patrons received top quality service from students.

2.4.1 Training programmes

Maxwell (2012) and Aho, Beschnett and Riemer (2011) expound on different training programmes and methods developed and adopted by their respective academic libraries. They advocate a flexible training methodology, especially the one adopted by the Iowa library in the United States of America after discovering that a formal classroom method of training student assistants had proved ineffective for Iowa Library. This was because it did not address new procedures that emerged during the year and students that were hired later in the academic year failed to benefit from the initial group sessions. These kinds of training lacked flexibility and had failed to focus on individual weaknesses (Maxwell 2012 and Aho, Beschnett and Riemer 2011).

Currie (2010) presents a series of Web 2.0 tools as well as an OPAC that enhance training and staff communication. Students feel empowered through the use of these tools because they are familiar with the technologies, which might help mitigate the effect of the "being-trained" aspect. Using current tools also helps the students gain experience that will benefit them in their future careers. Another method of training offered in Harrisburg University of Science and Technology in Pennsylvania is a cross-training approach. It brings together multiple campus units which may help break down the "silos" that form at large academic institutions, leads to more accurate referrals and facilitates a more seamless experience for students with emphasis on the importance of training and how is it approached in academic libraries (Mitchell and Soini 2014: 594).

Preparing student assistants for the responsibility of working at the reference desk occurs on a number of levels and is accomplished by a number of staff members. Staff members are invited to monthly reference instruction meetings, where reference issues are discussed through searching exercises and demonstrations. In addition to full time staff, the Bio-Medical Library, Aho, Beschnett and Reimer (2011: 48) relies heavily on student staff members across the board. The reference department has

expanded the use of student assistants by adding student assistants to the mix of staff providing reference services. Students chosen for these positions have worked for the library for a significant period of time, demonstrated an aptitude for reference work and had significant and more structured reference training than typical library staff. Each student spends dozens of hours in one-on-one instruction, co-staffing the desk and observing staff-patron interactions, and completing quizzes designed to stretch their skills prior to being assigned to work a shift alone (Aho, Beschnett and Reimer 2011).

With ever-decreasing budgets and staffing, many libraries will need to re-evaluate who works at the reference desk. At the University of Minnesota's Bio-Medical Library, reference is provided by many different people with many different backgrounds and skills. This diversity in staffing makes reference services more knowledgeable, more flexible, and more engaged than it might otherwise be. It also helps staff expand their skills. Aho, Beschnett and Reimer (2011) suggest, "let's try new ideas, and allow many of us to participate in one of our library's main goals—providing and maintaining reference excellence".

In addition to the popular training periods that cover procedures, policies, and common resources, in his article, Thomsett-Scott (2012) discusses an interactive training programme at Valparaiso University. The programme includes interactive quizzes and review sessions. Quizzes were initially designed by the person in charge of the training but, after students' requests, it was later designed by students themselves. Students reported that quizzes and testing were more effective than verbal instruction. The authors noted that quizzes also helped them select the best students for scheduling during times when full-time staff members were not available.

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate and document employment practices pertaining to SLAs in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal by looking at orientation strategies, training methods and job evaluation methods used. Stanfield and Palmer (2010: 637) mention the type of training that is most beneficial to student assistants in their study which are: (i) To present students with "real life" situations that they work through (ii) Customer service training which involves training students on the most basic elements of customer service, from the importance of eye contact to strategies for working with angry patrons (iii) Reference interview training: training

students on how to approach a patron's questions, for example "where are your books on windows?" and (iv) Reflective learning: making sure students understand the context of what they do and how they learn and apply skills to new situations as they go forward.

2.5 Duties performed by SLAs

It is the library's business to provide organised anticipation and response to the teaching, learning and research information needs of the university community. It also provides significant infrastructure (technology, collections, space and staff) to reach this goal. Librarians have access to a wide range of knowledge resources, aiming to add value and expertise in their provision of services to clients. This service element is a key part of their role and is essential in facilitating the success of the library in effectively connecting people to information. However, less experienced, although knowledgeable, student employees can also play an increasingly important role in augmenting the library's ability to do this, in part due to the recognition that students feel more comfortable seeking assistance from another student rather than library staff (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 101).

When conducting a literature review, it was identified that nationally and internationally student library assistants are assigned more or less general LIS duties to perform, amongst which are reference shifts, circulation, shelving and working in research commons. Student assistants are involved in core activities of the library and are valued for how they add enthusiasm and fresh perspectives, and are proud of the responsibility they share for preserving and caring for important heritage materials (Logan 2012: 320). By entrusting students with the responsibility for entire projects and interesting work rather than bits and pieces of non-intellectual work, library sections have found that students become engrossed in their work and stay in their positions for several years, becoming valuable assets to the library, and sometimes to the profession as some plan careers in libraries as a result of their experiences (Logan 2012: 320).

However, in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia libraries appear to have information technology (IT) support and IT-related activities in library spaces as duties

performed by student library assistants (Walton 2010; O'Neil and Comley 2010). These duties include and are not limited to (i) IT and library monitors who help with IT queries, photocopiers and using e-resources/library resources, (ii) Student advisors who help with publicity, surveys, and answering basic directional queries, (iii) Supporting users in a wide range of activities including study and information skills, (iv) Promoting services and resources to students. It was interesting to discover if the duties mentioned here were the same in KwaZulu-Natal academic libraries.

Authors Stanfield and Palmer (2010) and Mitchell and Soini (2014) present the benefits of hiring student assistants to work in academic libraries as not only allowing the librarians to work on higher order job activities, but also providing a peer-learning service. As highlighted in Mitchell and Soini (2014: 592), some students relate more effectively to a peer than to a professional. Peers may elicit involvement of first-year students more effectively because they are not perceived as intimidating as authority figures. Looking beyond the library literature, student affairs or student services research offers important insights for fully understanding the benefits of peer leadership. Mitchell and Soini (2014: 592) explain the benefits of peer leadership from the student perspective: peer leaders are closest to the student experience and may notice issues sooner than the professional staff. And when provided with thorough training, peer leaders can be an expert source of referral for fellow students. Peer leaders can assist fellow students in finding their niche on campus, discovering new opportunities, and connecting them with friends, support groups, and resources that reduce the stress of transition to university life (Mitchell and Soini 2014: 593).

Many articles reviewed discuss the role played by student assistants in academic libraries as more of directional queries, basic reference questions, Web 2.0 and online public access catalogue (OPAC) or database searches for other students. This enhances service delivery to library patrons because, if students handle basic reference questions that are repeatedly posed at the reference desk and are trained to refer more complicated reference transactions to the librarians, library users are better served because librarians have more time for in-depth research consultations and are not interrupted by questions student assistants can handle (Stanfield and Palmer 2010: 635). When librarians spend less time at the reference desk with simple questions, they also have more time to dedicate to other professional activities such

as liaison work, instruction and collaboration with other students' services, planning and outreach (Stanfield and Palmer 2010: 635). These duties not only benefit librarians, but they also benefit student library assistants by helping them develop more information literacy skills and also to learn on the job (Stanfield and Palmer 2010: 635). Student library assistants are excellent at performing routine library maintenance duties, but their favourite jobs involve operating the computer, whether it is checking out materials, locating books online or teaching peers search strategies. Student library assistants enjoy sharing their specialised knowledge with both students and lecturers (Maxwell 2012: 53).

2.6 Student remuneration

Student employees are paid an hourly rate; however, the employer may choose to begin the student at a higher rate of pay within the appropriate range if the student has previous job experience or special qualifications for the job. Universities such as University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology uses student assistant levels for all student employees to determine their rate of pay. The rates are based upon job descriptions and years of experience performing similar duties. Locally pay rates for student employment positions are not less than R35 an hour and do not exceed R60. Student assistants should work a maximum of 20 hours per week (Radebe 2014).   Supervisors are responsible for tracking student work hours each week in order to ensure compliance with university policy. If a student receiving a salary or stipend is employed in more than one student position, the total number of hours worked per week may not exceed 20 hours per week.

In the University of West Georgia (2016) students receive an increase in hourly rate each academic year that they return within the same position. Increases can also be issued by increasing their job duties and level of responsibility. The pay rates for each job category is determined by the knowledge, training, skills, and level of responsibility and risk assigned to that category (University of West Georgia: 2016).

2.7 Challenges of hiring student library assistants

Folk (2014) argues that while there are many benefits in hiring student library assistants in academic libraries, there are also many challenges. Although working while in school can have a negative effect on student performance, in her article Folk (2014: 181) reports that many studies have determined that part-time employment on campus has an overall positive impact on student persistence and a positive or neutral effect on educational attainment. Folk (2014) also states that students who work in libraries or with faculty utilise library resources more than students who had never worked. She continues to state that students who work in academic or career-related jobs on campus generally report higher estimates of involvement in the life of the university they attended.

The use of student assistants requires a high level of flexibility, particularly in relation to rostering and hours worked, in recognition of the fact that students' academic progress and success is their primary task. While this might not seem to be difficult, the problem arises during examination times. Rostering changes and unexpected turnover remain problematic. Graduations, internships and semesters spent studying abroad are important contributing factors to high turnover (Mitchell and Soini 2014: 593). The high turnover of student assistants has implications for training duration, frequency, and format of training. Other issues that stem from hiring student assistants are highlighted by Stanfield and Palmer (2010), such as financial budgets, punctuality, retention, attendance and students socialising with friends while on duty. While budget issues will remain an on-going concern in the current economy, issues such as punctuality, attendance and students' professionalism at the desk can all be addressed by developing well-designed training programmes and creating a supportive work environment for student library assistants (Mitchell and Soini 2014: 593). Interestingly the literature reveals little of how student library assistants view their employment in libraries (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 102).

2.8 Role of student library assistant supervisors

Logan (2012) states that "library schools do not teach everything individuals need to know to be a good librarian: this knowledge often comes from on-the-job experience."

Library managers and student supervisors may not be aware of the fact that they are accidental mentors. Mentoring means different things to different people in different situations; in the context of the academic library, it will often require a less formal approach in practice. Reale (2014) defines mentoring as any process by which a student is taught or nurtured in professionalism as it immediately relates to his or her job setting and to the work world in general. In addition, the mentor acts as a kind and concerned friend, who encourages and believes in his or her students' career goals. The mentoring relationship aids the students in reaching their full potential. Effective mentoring includes developing potential through delegation of appropriate projects, providing assistance to complete the projects, and coaching (Thomsett-Scott 2012: 46). Mentorship involves a formalised relationship between professionals, one being more knowledgeable and skilled, the other seeking this knowledge and skills (Buke and Lawrence 2011: 99). Buke and Lawrence (2011) further define the role of supervisors as "educating, training, helping to form students' work ethics and habits", concluding that "after all we are employers in higher education".

Authors Buke and Lawrence (2011) explain that library jobs offer a place for learning and growing outside of the classroom, and help student employees figure out how to balance work and academic responsibilities. They have noted that spending time in conversation and listening to the students can improve the experience for both students and the supervisors. These conversations allow students to gain informal experience through listening to practicing librarians. The article did not further discuss how did these conversations took place and what are the students views in this matter.

Logan (2012: 318) in his article states that "I've learned more about the value of good librarianship simply from conversations with Joe [a professional librarian] than I have in any other course or from any other teacher". Student library assistants can only perform better or take ownership of a job or feel like being part of the library team if they know they are or feel included. He further tells us how this can be achieved. "This

can be done by creating opportunities for student employees to work with and alongside their peers, as well as with support staff and supervisors. Inclusion need not be costly: by keeping photos of student employees on the office wall and organising picnics along with staff makes students feel included and part of the team. Incorporating the student employees with permanent staff not only makes students feel like a "real employee" but they learn so much more from their adept counterparts". Student library assistants should be given additional responsibilities; for example, creating displays for the library. Although they may feel overwhelmed at first, once they start working on them and realising what an impact they are making, they will begin to enjoy it and take ownership of it. It is important for student's growth to always give feedback. If the student is never told how and where to improve, they may never improve (Buke and Lawrence 2011: 101).

The library has a vested interest in both the success of the student in his or her studies, but also in their contribution to the library's business and reputation. Recruitment, training and supervision have been identified as success factors to facilitate student employees' success and engagement in the library workplace and for better support all round of student assistants. Supervising students is not the same as supervising regularly employed staff because of the need to consider the balance of work and academic study. Student assistants needs attention in terms of workplace induction and training, ongoing supervision, feedback and encouragement to be effective and confident in performing their roles (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 110).

2.9 Summary

This chapter discussed an interesting selection of local and global literature with diverse scenarios accessible in monographic forms, journal articles and online websites. Issues such as recruitment and selection, training of SLAs, training programmes, duties performed by SLAs and challenges of hiring student library assistants and the role of student library assistants' supervisors were brought to light. This chapter revealed that student library assistants' employment is an academic library practice globally. It was also discovered that the duties they perform and the number of hours worked are almost similar. The literature also emphasised the issue

of training and adopting different training programmes which are pertinent in order for student library assistants to excel in the performance of duties.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to survey the employment practices of student library assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. According to Gupta and Gupta (2011: 2), research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem. It is the science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures which researchers follow in their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology. It is also defined as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. Its aim is to outline the work plan of research. Methodology is a process by which data is collected and analysed. This study collected primary data where information was obtained first-hand by the researcher in the form of questionnaires. While the previous chapter reviewed literature relevant to the study, this chapter sets out the methodological processes followed in carrying out the study.

3.2 Research design

Welman (2012) describes the research design as the plan according to which we obtain research participants and collect information from them. In this plan researchers describe what is going to be done with the participants, with a view to reaching conclusions about the research problem. The author went on further to say that in the research design researchers must specify the number of groups that will be used, how the groups will be selected, if the population involved will be selected or will be assigned randomly to groups.

3.3 Methodological approaches
3.3.1 Positivism (Quantitative)

There are two main approaches to research: the quantitative and qualitative approach. Gupta and Gupta (2011: 5) defines the quantitative approach as characterised by studying a few variables and a large number of entities. To find answers to a quantitative research problem, the approach is normally in a broad sense to use

surveys with already set answering alternatives. Furthermore, this approach is considered especially useful when conducting a wide investigation that contains many units. Sekaran (2013:51) defines quantitative research as a technique associated with gathering, analysing, interpretation and presentation of numeral data, and involves the interplay among variables after they have been operationalized.

3.3.2 Interpretivism (Qualitative)

Creswell (2014: 60) defines qualitative research as an enquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. This type of research enables the researcher to identify issues from the perspectives of the study participants and understand the interpretations as well as meanings that they give to behaviour, events or objects.

Gupta and Gupta (2011: 5) defines a qualitative approach regards the research problem as based on the situation as a whole, without generalisation.

A qualitative research approach aims at reaching a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied; it also tends to be relatively flexible. Characteristics of qualitative studies are that they are based on the researcher's own description, emotion, and reactions. Qualitative studies are conducted when the researcher collects, analyses, and interprets detailed data concerning ideas, feelings, and attitudes. The qualitative approach also comprises closeness to the respondents or to the source from which the data is collected. The qualitative approach is characterised by the gathering abundant information and investigation of several variables from a few number of entities. The most common way to gather top quality data is the use of interviews where no set answering alternatives are being offered (Gupta and Gupta 2011: 5).

3.3.3 Mixed method research

Mixed method research according to Creswell (2015: 2) is an approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and

then draws conclusions based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. Mixed method research has the following characteristics: (i) Collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in response to research questions (ii) Use of rigorous qualitative and quantitative methods (iii) Combination or integration of quantitative and qualitative data using a specific type of mixed design, and interpretation of this integration and (iv) Sometimes, framing of the design within a philosophy or theory.

This study employed quantitative research method. The study used a questionnaire as a data collection instrument which is mainly quantitative in nature. The questionnaire investigated the recruitment and selection procedure of SLAs, established the number of hours worked and the rate of pay of SLAs and the challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants.

3.4 Population

According to Bless, C.; Higson-Smith, C. and Sithole, S.L. (2013: 162), population refers to the study object and consists of individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events, or the conditions to which they are exposed. The size of the population usually makes it impractical and uneconomical to involve all members of the population in a research project. Consequently, the researcher relies on the data obtained from a sample of the population. The subset of the whole population, which is actually investigated by a researcher and in the case of quantitative research whose characteristics will be generalised to the entire population, is called the sample (Bless et al. 2013: 162). In this study the population was student library assistants who work in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal and Library Coordinators who are supervisors of SLAs in academic libraries. This population was a manageable group so there was no need to sample. The academic libraries used in this study were Durban University of Technology (DUT), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and University of Zululand (UNIZULU).

Through communication with the supervisors in the respective academic libraries, the researcher gathered the total number of elements as presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Total number of elements

Institution	No. of SLAs	No of Supervisors
DUT	44	7
MUT	60	3
UKZN	110	4
UNIZULU	25	1
Total	239	15

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting elements for inclusion in a research project (Remler and Van Ryzin 2011: 139). Sampling assists the researcher when the target is large and unmanageable. There are two main types of sampling methods, probability and non-probability sampling. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011: 140) distinguish between these sampling methods saying that in probability sampling, the probability of each element or member of the population to be included in a sample can be determined, while in a non-probability study the inclusion of each element of the population in a sample is unknown. This study used the census approach because all the SLAs and their supervisors in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal were included. When data is collected on the entire population, rather than a sample, this is referred to as a census (Remler and Van Ryzin 2011: 146). The total sample size was therefore 214 (SLAs) + 14 (Supervisors) = 228.

3.6 Data collection method

There are many different instruments that can be used to collect data, for example, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. All these tools have advantages as well as disadvantages depending on the nature of the study. This study used questionnaires as the data collection instrument. Bless et al. (2013: 394) describe a questionnaire as an instrument of data collection consisting of a standardised series of questions/items relating to the research topic to be answered in writing by participants. A questionnaire is a formulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answers, usually within rather closely defined alternatives.

Questionnaires are an efficient data collection mechanism when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how to measure the variables of interest. Questionnaires can be administered personally, mailed to respondents, or be electronically distributed (Blasius and Thiessen 2012: 27).

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) and Bless et al. (2013) name advantages of questionnaires, stating that anonymity is retained when using questionnaires, it may save the researcher travel expenses and can be sent to a large number of people, including those who live thousands of miles away. The postage is cheaper than long-distance telephone calls and participants can complete the questionnaires at their own pace. The information can be captured into a computer programme which will count responses in each category. From the perspective of survey participants, the distance can be an added advantage: participants can respond to questions with some assurance that their responses will not come back to haunt them. Thus, they may be more truthful than they would be in a personal interview, especially when addressing sensitive issues (Leedy and Ormrod 2013: 191). As much as there are advantages of using questionnaires in research, there are also disadvantages. According to Bless et al. (2013: 199), the response rate for questionnaires tends to be very low especially when mailing or emailing questionnaires to unknown people. Potential responders have little or nothing to gain by answering and returning the questionnaire, and so many of them do not return it (Leedy and Ormrod 2013: 202). Even when people are willing participants in a questionnaire study, their responses will reflect their reading and writing skills and, perhaps, their misinterpretation of one or more questions (Leedy and Ormrod 2010: 189). The researcher is not always present to check whether a respondent has understood the questions or whether the correct person actually completed the questionnaire (Bertram and Christiansen 2014: 79).

Despite this, this study used questionnaires as the data collection instrument because it is known to be the most efficient data collection instrument when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how to measure valuables of interest. The flexibility of a questionnaire, in that it could be emailed to far-away respondents and could be personally administered to close-by respondents, made it a favourable instrument for this study.

3.6.1 Data collection instrument

The researcher had designed two sets of questionnaires, one for the student library assistants and the other for supervisors. In the following section the researcher describes how the instruments were designed in terms of the items contained therein.

Appendix B: Student library assistants' questionnaire

In this questionnaire, Question 1-6 was designed to determine the profile of the respondents. Questions contained therein were biographical questions such as age, gender, the university they are registered at, the field of study and the level of study.

Questions 7-9 pertained to the student library assistant post, probing how SLAs found out about the post and how they applied for the position.

Questions 10-12 were about the interview process, whether SLAs attended and who formed part of the interview panel.

Questions 13-18 were about the employment process and determined If SLAs had signed contracts after being employed.

Questions 19-22 was based on training. The answers described what aspects of library duties w SLAs were trained on, how long the training was and whether it needed improvement. SLAs were welcome to furnish their comments.

Questions 23-27 asked SLAs about their working hours, how much they get paid per hour and whether or not they received benefits.

Questions 28-30 asked SLAs whether they encountered challenges while working and if working as student library assistant added value in their lives. The last three questions required student's views, comments and criticism.

Appendix C: Supervisor's questionnaire

Similar to the SLAs questionnaire, Questions 1-5 were biographical questions. The supervisors were asked to state their gender, the institution they are working for, their designation, the number of years in the current position and how long have they been supervising student library assistants.

Questions 6-10 asked supervisors questions pertaining to the post. They were asked whether they felt the post was important or not, how they had advertised the position and who was eligible to apply.

Questions 11-13 were based on interview processes (who sat in on the interviews).

Questions 14-22 were based on training. Who conducted training, how long was the training, whether there was a manual prepared in support of the training programmes and on what aspects of duties the SLAs were trained?

Questions 23-24 asked supervisors about the duties performed by SLAs, and in the following question they were asked to rate SLAs on this list of duties.

Question 25 asked supervisors whether there were any benefits that students received and their hourly rate of pay. This question was meant to serve as a confirmation since it was also asked in the SLAs' questionnaire.

Questions 27-30 formed part of qualitative approach where supervisors were required to state the challenges encountered when working with SLAs, air their views regarding the employment of SLAs and state whether it was good practice to employ SLAs in academic libraries.

3.6.2 Questionnaire design

Regarding questionnaire design, Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 194) advise that it should be kept brief and solicit only that information essential to the research project. Questionnaires should be as simple to read and respond to as possible; they should

provide clear instructions, avoid unambiguous language and each question should have a purpose. During this study the researcher made every effort to ensure that the items included in the questionnaire were clear and unambiguous, in order to encourage completion of questionnaires. Questionnaires used in this study included a majority of closed-ended questions whilst open-ended questionnaires, despite their potential to yield rich responses, were kept to the minimum (Blasius and Thiessen 2012: 27). Open-ended items were used only when necessary as there is a tendency for respondents to ignore open-ended items.

As already explained, the researcher made efforts to design the questionnaire with care to ensure reliability and validity in collecting data needed. The instrument was also pre-tested to ascertain if participants would respond to items as expected.

3.6.3 Reliability and validity

Reliability is about consistency. An assessment or test is reliable when consistent results are obtained. Reliability refers to whether or not you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once (Bernard 2013: 46). Bless et al. (2013: 157) claim that to assess the reliability of the instrument, the same measurement procedure be applied to the same group of people called test-retest reliability. Reliability means dependability or the extent to which results are repeatable. Using a survey questionnaire to be answered by different respondents the same way each time results in high reliability of the instrument. On the other hand, validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data, and findings in research. A test is valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity has to do with whether the research methods, approaches and techniques actually relate to or measure the issues the researcher intended to explore (Erasmus et al. 2010: 208). To ensure validity all items in the questionnaire are related to the study. In Chapter 2 the researcher discussed literature pertaining to this study which guided the researcher when constructing a questionnaire that was able to extract the required data from respondents. Supervisors were also targeted to validate responses obtained from student library assistants. Reliability estimates the consistency of a research instrument whilst validity involves the degree to which you are measuring what you are supposed to measure.

3.6.4 Pilot study

Piloting was done with students who previously worked as student library assistants at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) before administering the questionnaires to the study population. A pilot study allows one to check that the instructions explaining how to complete the questionnaire are clearly stated and understood by all (Bless et al. 2013: 212) to eliminate problems that may not have been foreseen when designing the instrument. The pilot study was not conducted with supervisors due to a limited number of supervisors.

Through piloting the researcher could conclude that the questions were simple and straightforward and respondents did not encounter any problem completing them. Two sets of questionnaires were designed, one for the student library assistants and the other for the supervisors in academic libraries.

Considering ethics, a covering letter was attached to the questionnaire, explaining the purpose of the study, asking the respondents to answer all questions, assuring respondents of confidentiality and encouraging them to participate in the study. A promise was made that the results would be made available to them on request.

3.6.5 Questionnaire distribution and return rate

The researcher arranged with supervisors to distribute questionnaires at the different universities to student library assistants as they checked in for their shifts. Personal deliveries were made to maximise return rate. However, in institutions where there were multiple campuses located in different geographic locations, questionnaires were emailed to the supervisors and they had to forward them to the student assistants when they reported for their shifts. There was no printing from the side of the supervisor as questionnaires were completed electronically and returned to the researcher for printing. Initially the researcher had given respondents a period of four weeks to complete the questionnaires. On distribution the researcher found out that most student assistants had gone home because it was post-examination time and some of the supervisors were already on leave. The researcher administered questionnaires to those respondents that were still available at the time.

Supervisors' questionnaires were emailed to them and they were asked to complete the questionnaires and send them back via email. The researcher then printed the answered questionnaires as they were returned. Data collection was therefore extended for approximately two more months to allow for additional responses when the SLAs returned and supervisors were back from leave. Reminders were sent almost every second day telephonically and by email. As presented in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3, at DUT the researcher distributed 44 questionnaires for SLAs and supervisors per email. At MUT, since the researcher was employed there, questionnaires were distributed personally to all 60 student library assistants and their supervisors. At UKZN, which consisted of more SLAs, 110 questionnaires were distributed on different campuses as well as on campuses that were located in different places. The researcher arranged with the supervisors for questionnaires to be emailed. The return rate for both supervisors' and SLAs' questionnaires is presented in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. The percentage return for supervisors were 79% and for students were 54%.

Table 3.2: Questionnaire distribution and return rate: Supervisors

(N=14)

(n=11)

Institution	No. Distributed	No. Returned	% Returned
DUT	7	7	50%
MUT	3	3	21%
UKZN	4	1	7%
Total	**14**	**11**	**79%**

Table 3.3: Questionnaire distribution and return rate: SLAs

(N=214)

(n=115)

Institution	No. Distributed	No. Returned	% Returned
DUT	44	24	11
MUT	60	38	18
UKZN	110	53	25
Total	**214**	**115**	**54%**

3.7 Data analysis

Once data is collected it must be organised, checked for accuracy and completeness. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011: 9) refer to data as unprocessed observation. If we record numbers to represent our experiences, we get quantitative data and when we reduce people's thoughts, behaviours and emotions, the result is qualitative data (Bernard 2013: 394). Analysis is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place (Bernard 2013: 394). This study used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis as the questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended items.

Qualitative data is generally analysed using content analysis, where responses are read and reduced to common themes (Bless et al. 2013:213). The researcher used a computer data analysis software package (Microsoft Excel). Quantitative data is often analysed using a range of descriptive and inferential statistical processes from available statistical packages. The information extracted from the questionnaires are presented in the form of graphs and tables to reveal patterns and trends. General frequency and percentage distributions are usually sufficient to reveal the trends and patterns among variables (Bless et al. 2013: 395). For open-ended questions, the researcher identified and summarised common themes.

After the interpretation and discussion of findings, the researcher draws conclusions and make recommendations.

3.8 Summary

This chapter outlined the main research methods used in this study, and explained the researcher's choice for using mixed method research for this study, which combines quantitative and qualitative aspects. Data collection instruments used in this study were also described in detail, consisting of two sets of questionnaires which were designed, one for the supervisors and one for the student library assistants. The total number of elements for this study was 229; therefore, the researcher used the census approach since the population was small and manageable. The total number of questionnaires distributed to SLAs were 214 and 115 questionnaires were returned.

The total distributed to supervisors were 14 and 11 were returned. The next chapter will present the analysis of the data which was collected through a survey. The results of the data analysis are interpreted and discussed in detail.

Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodology and data collection methods used in this study. This chapter discusses the data collected from the questionnaires and analysed in detail. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the aim of this research was to analyse the employment practices of Student Library Assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, two sets of questionnaires were designed, one for supervisors and the other for student library assistants. The total number of elements for this study was 229. The total number of questionnaires distributed for SLAs were 214 and 115 (54%) questionnaires were returned. The total number distributed to supervisors were 14 and 11 (79%) were returned. Some responses to the questions were grouped together because they were related. For open-ended questions, findings were analysed and captured into common themes. Data gathered from questionnaires are then presented and form part of this chapter.

4.2 Responses of student library assistant supervisors

4.2.1 Gender

Figure 4.1 : Gender of Supervisors (n=11)
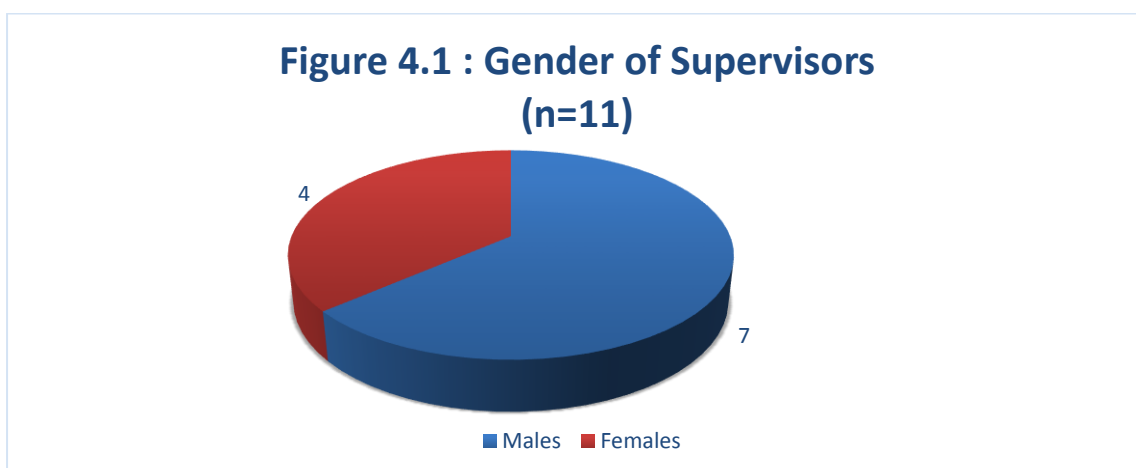
Figure 4.1 presents the gender of student library assistants' supervisors and of the 11 that participated in the study, 7 (64%) were male and 4 (36%) were female. A probable reason for the dominance of male supervisors during the after-hours service is for

safety reasons; it is understandable for males to work after hours than females who could easily become victims of crime when travelling alone at night. A study conducted by Ocholla (2002: 63) states that the profession of librarianship in academic, public, private, schools, and special libraries is known as predominately a female profession. However there has been a notable change in the profession over the years where more males are also employed in the profession.

4.2.2 Institutions of employment

Results as shown in Figure 4.2 indicate that of the 11 respondents, 7 (64%) were from the Durban University of Technology, 3 (27%) were from Mangosuthu University of Technology and 1 (1%) was from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher had administered the questionnaire herself to campuses that were located in the Durban area while on campuses that were located far, questionnaires were administered via email. The return rate of 1 (1%) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal may be due to them being administered via email. According to Bless et al. (2013: 199), the response rate for questionnaires tends to be very low especially when mailing or emailing them to people the researcher does not know. Potential responders have little or nothing to gain by answering and returning the questionnaire, and so many of them do not return it (Leedy and Ormrod 2013: 202).

Figure 4.2 : Institutions of employment (n=11)
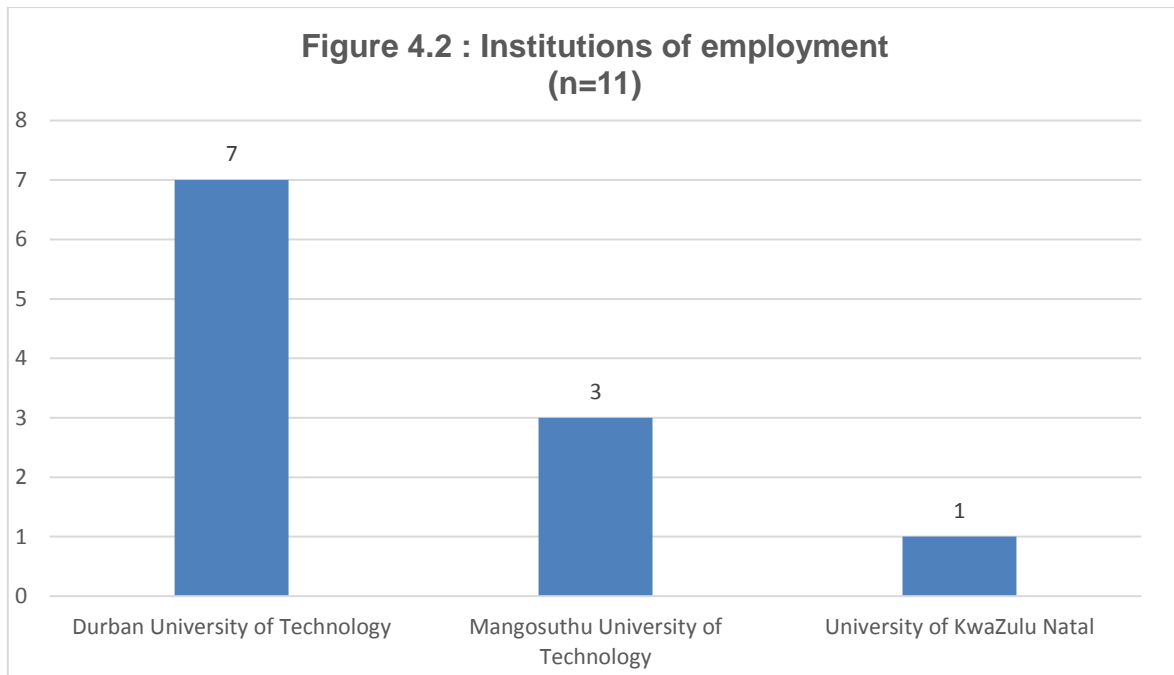
4.2.3 Supervisor's designation

Table 4.1 reveals that of the 11 respondents 1 (1%) was a site co-ordinator, 2 (18%) were circulation librarians 3 (27%) were evening librarians, 1 (1%) was a subject librarian, 1 (1%) was an assistant librarian and 3 (27%) were library assistants. It was noticeable that evening librarians and library assistants dominated as the supervisors of SLAs; however, it was also noted that titles of posts varied. This depended on who occupied the position of an evening supervisor after-hours.

Table 4.1 : Supervisor's designation

(n=11)

Designation	Total	%
Site Co-ordinator	1	1%
Circulation Librarian	2	18%
Evening Librarians	3	27%
Subject Librarians	1	1%
Assistant Librarian	1	1%
Library Assistant	3	27%
Total	**11**	

4.2.4 Number of years in current position

Vance (2006: 2) defines the concept of *employee engagement* as the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do for work and the perception that their employer values what they bring to the table. The greater an employee's engagement in an organisation the more likely he or she is to "go the extra mile" and deliver excellent on-the-job performance. Engaged employees may be more likely to commit to staying longer with their current organization.

Table 4.2: Number of years in current position (n=11)

No. of years in current position	No. of respondents	%
1-4 years	5	45%
5-8 years	0	0%
9-14 years	4	36%
15-21 years	0	0%
22 years	1	9%
No response	1	9%
Total	**11**	**100%**

According to Table 4.2, one (9%) of the 11 supervisors had been in the current position for 22 years, none of the supervisors had been in their current position for between for 15-21 years. Four (36%) had been in their current position for between 9-14 years; none of the supervisors indicated being in the current position for 5-8 years and 5 (45%) had been in this position between for 1-4 years. One did not respond to this question. The reason that 1 (9%) supervisor had been in this position for 22 years could be due to the fact that some people enjoy working with students and become more comfortable with the job over the years. Bell (2012) says,

> Librarianship, in or out of academia, is a noble endeavour. It's noble to serve the public, and help them to learn at the grassroots level, to help children discover the joy of reading, and watch them build a foundation for future

success and to help scientists and technicians in the private sector achieve discoveries that improve the quality of life. Academic librarianship is not better or nobler than any other sector, but it attracts a certain kind of person.

4.2.5 Number of years supervising student library assistants

Table 4.3 indicate that of the 11 participants, 7 (64%) have been supervising student assistants for over 6 years, while 2 (18%) indicated that they have been supervising student library assistants for between 2-3 years and 2 (18%) for 4-5 years. None of the supervisors have supervised for between 0-1 year. It is noted that 7 (64%) of supervisors have been supervising SLAs for six years and longer. According to (Bell 2012), academic librarians desire to work directly with students. Apart from a noble profession, it is about making a difference, helping people, being part of something bigger than oneself, and improving the quality of the community (Bell 2012). One of the objectives of the study was to determine the challenges faced by supervisors while working with SLAs. From the results one could conclude that people occupying these positions enjoys working with SLAs.

Table 4.3: Number of years supervising student library assistants (n=11)

Years of experience	No. of respondents	%
0-1	0	0%
2-3	2	18%
4-5	2	18%
6 years and more	7	64%
Total	**11**	**100%**

4.2.6 Importance of employing student library assistants

All 11 (100%) respondents indicated that it is important to employ student library assistants. When elaborating on this, the following sentiments were captured:

- It is good way of gaining work experience and also acquire a set of skills that are needed in the real world.
- Students help complete minimal projects that require manpower and libraries gain in that sense since most libraries operate on a minimal budget.
- LIS students gain work experience and exposure which contribute to being marketable.

Logan (2012: 317) supports these results by stating that

> "Without student assistants the library could not remain open as long; costs for staffing the circulation desk would increase; document delivery and interlibrary loan services would take too long; materials would not be re-shelved in a timely manner; and processing new books would be slowed".

Mitchell and Soini (2014: 592) elucidate that complex questions are screened by student and paraprofessional staff first, thereby freeing up librarians' time to offer top quality reference for in-depth queries.

In summary, employing SLAs is a mutual benefit for both SLAs and the library. SLAs benefit by gaining work experience while libraries benefit by having more manpower to render library services especially after hours. Although it can be challenging to work as a student library assistant it is a blessing in disguise for the library because, according to Stanfield and Palmer (2010), some students feel more comfortable approaching another student with a query. The mere presence of student workers as point-of-reference interactions can usually make the library seem more approachable to other students.

4.2.7 Advertisement of student library assistant positions

Figure 4.3 : Advertisement of SLA positions (n=11)
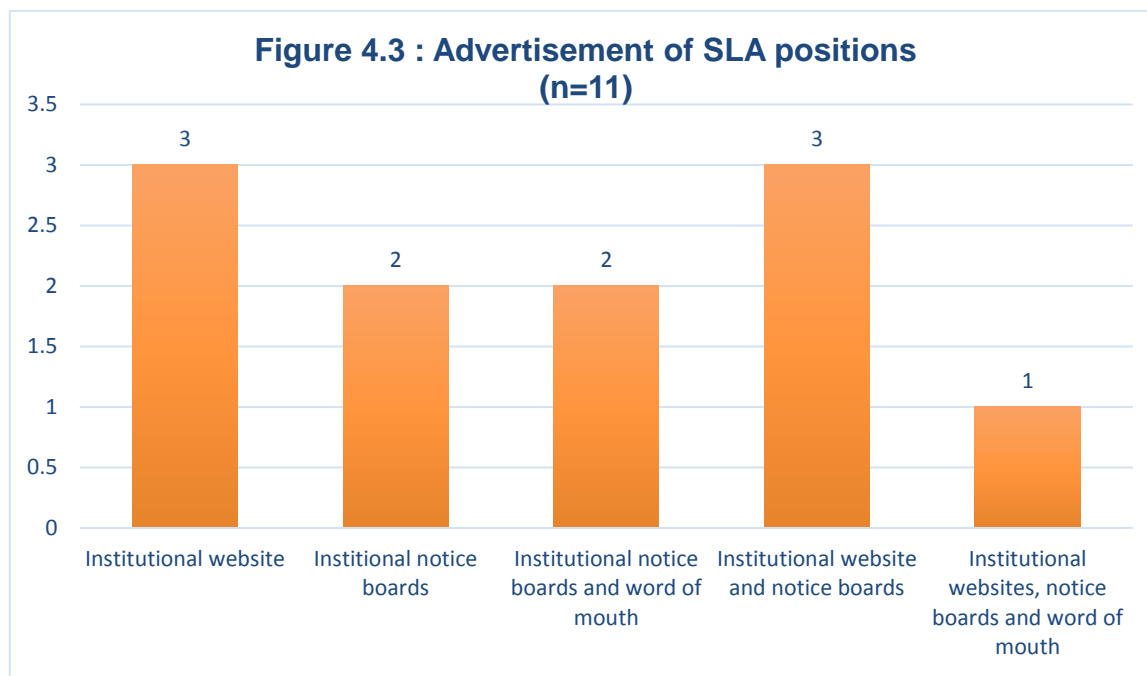
As illustrated in Figure 4.3, the respondents were asked to select amongst various options with respect to advertising for SLA vacancies. Of the total of 11 respondents, 3 (27%) used institutional websites and notice boards, 2 (18%) chose institutional notice boards, 2 (18%) institutional notice boards and word of mouth while 1 (9%) chose an institutional website, notice boards and word of mouth when advertising for student library assistants positions. It is clear that supervisors use institutional websites and institutional notice boards when advertising SLA positions. This could be because institutional notice boards are cheaper to use and can be accessed by a large number of students on campus. Another probable reason for also using the institutional website could be based on the assumption that most of the time students are connected to the Internet and advertisements on the institutional website will be easily accessible to them. Farrell and Driver (2010: 188) uses the term *campus bulletin boards* similar to what we refer to as institutional notice boards which are used to post help wanted signs. This method has been found to be a simple, yet effective low-cost option. Bulletin boards are very visible to the students and can often produce applicants quickly. One of the aims of this study was looking at the recruitment and selection procedure of SLAs. It has therefore found that when recruiting student library

assistants, the preferred method used was institutional websites and institutional notice boards.

4.2.8 Eligibility to apply for position as student library assistant

Figure 4.4 indicates that of the 11 respondents, 10 a very large percentage of (91%) respondents indicated that any registered student, irrespective of course enrolled, was eligible to apply. However, 1 (9%) respondent indicated that only students registered for a LIS qualification should apply for student library assistants' positions. The reasoning behind this could be that there are different reasons why these positions exist, amongst which are to give LIS students experience, assist financially needy students and to prepare all students for the working world regardless of the profession. Sometimes the LIS qualification was not offered by that institution.

Organisational work environments provide conditions that expose students to the everyday cultural knowledge that underpins the behaviour and actions of the organisation. This knowledge and other knowledge necessary for learners to be effective in their work role are learnt collaboratively and often informally through performing the role. This experience of developing and using these forms of knowledge is valuable to students' future learning in other work environments and complements classroom learning with its strong reliance on transmissive modes of teaching and codified abstract knowledge (Jackson, Willis, Eraut and Campbell 2011: 284).

Figure 4.4 : Eligibility to apply for position of SLA (n=11)

	Students studying towards LIS	Registered students from all courses
Value	1	10
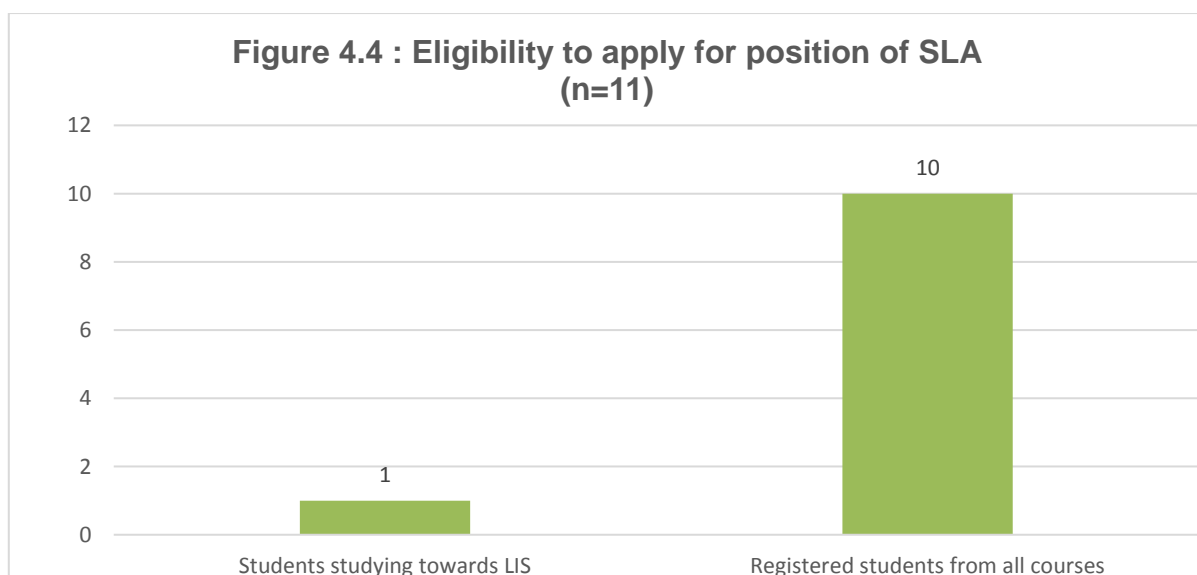
4.2.9   Requirements to be employed as student library assistant

Figure 4.5 : Requirements to be employed as SLA (n=11)
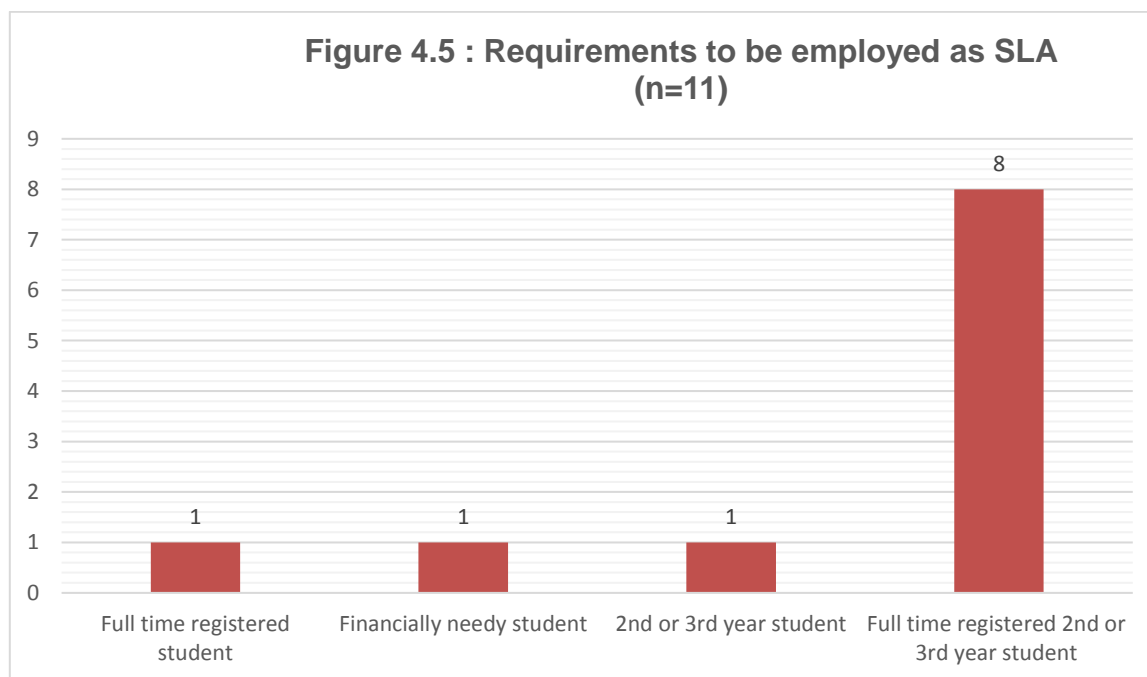
As illustrated in Figure 4.5, of the 11 participants 8 (73%) stated that in order to be employed as a student library assistant, one should be a full-time registered student and be in the second or third year of study; 1 (9%) respondent indicated that a student needs to be a full-time registered student, 1 (9%) that one needs to be a financially needy student and 1 (9%) that one needs to be a second- or third-year student. The majority of 8 (73%) of the respondents stated that one needs to be a full time registered second- or third-year student in order to be employed as SLA. It is assumed that at second-year level students would be familiar with university life and would be able to cope with the work and study challenges and not compromise their studies. A minimum requirement is that students should have successfully completed the first year of their course (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 105).

4.2.10 Students studying towards a Library and Information Studies qualification to be given preference over students from other programmes

Figure 4.6 : Students studying towards LIS to be given preference (n=11)
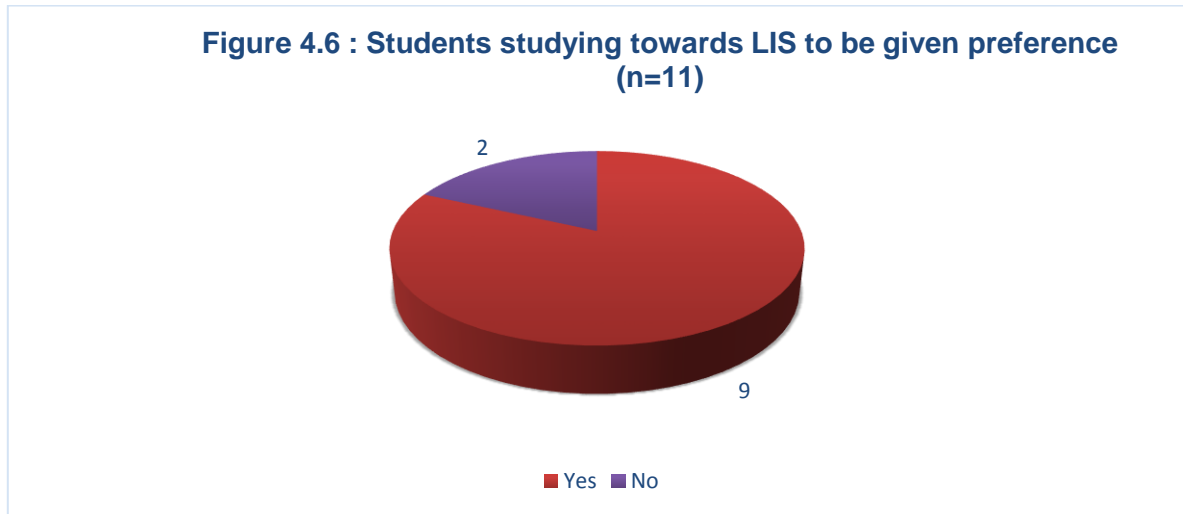
As Figure 4.6 indicates, nine (82%) of the 11 respondents were of the opinion that students from a LIS programme should be given preference while 2 (18%) indicated that they should not be given preference. The reasons for many respondents choosing this option are:

- LIS students need library experience
- Library work is more valuable to LIS students than to others
- LIS students understand the nature of library services.
- In order to compete in the library job market, applicants must have work experience in addition to their degrees. In many programmes, academic libraries play a large role in providing their universities' LIS students with real-world experience and training. The reasoning behind this could be that LIS students are easy to train because they have background knowledge of the profession. Logan (2012) states that "library schools do not teach everything individuals need to know to be a good librarian: this knowledge often comes from on-the-job experience".

Those respondents who indicated that preference should not be given to students studying towards LIS qualification argued that:

- Adequate training can make a good SLA irrespective of the course they come from. Due to loss of funding over the years, many libraries opted to hire less expensive staff members who were not certified librarians in order for the service to continue (Wise 2013).

Although a large percentage, namely 9 (82%) of supervisors, were of the opinion that students studying towards a LIS qualification should be given preference, the researchers' sentiments on this issue was that it did not matter what qualification a student had as long as adequate training was provided because some of the academic libraries that do employ SLAs do not have LIS qualifications offered in their institutions.

4.2.11 Interviews conducted for student library assistant positions

All 11 (100%) respondents indicated that interviews were conducted for SLA positions. One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the recruitment and selection procedure of SLAs. The purpose of conducting interviews is to gain the kind of information that will help the supervisor understand the student's motivation for working, his or her skills and previous work experience, and fitness for the available job (Martinez 2014: 553). One of the critical questions to the study was asking what recruitment and selection practices were used when selecting SLAs. These results indicate that one of the recruitment and selection practices was to attend an interview to ensure the employment of top quality people. Interviewing the students is the best way not only to obtain first-hand information about students, such as their majors, their hometown, interests and their extracurricular activities, but also to give them enough information about the job to help them to decide if the library in fact is the place they want to be (Reale 2013: 7).

4.2.12 Interview panel

Figure 4.7 : Interview Panel (n=11)
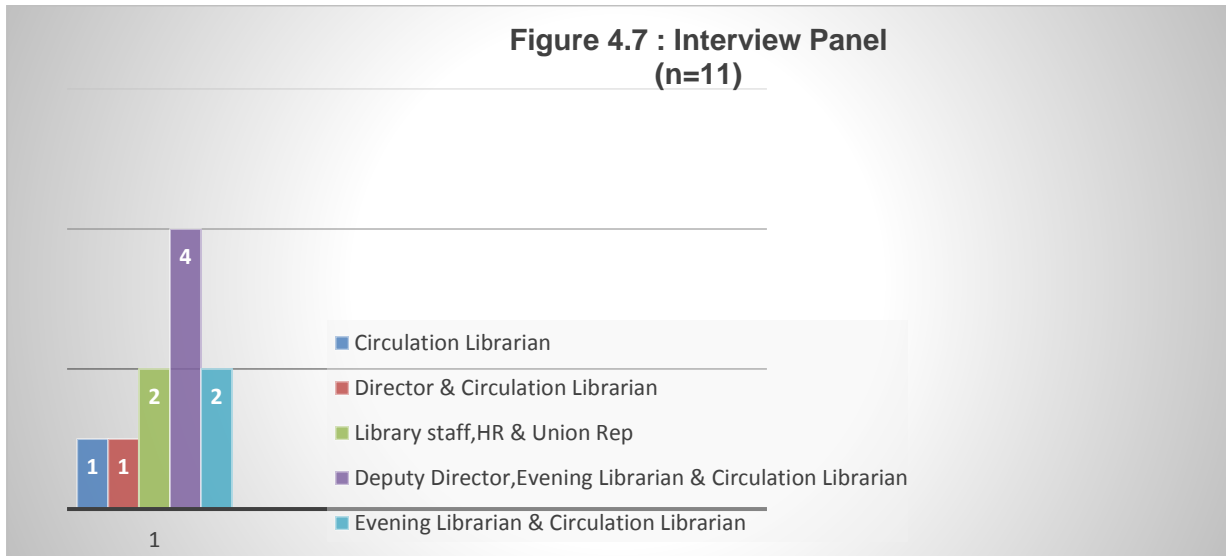
Figure 4.7 is a follow up question to Question 11. Results indicated that 4 (36%) identified the deputy director, evening librarian and circulation librarian, 2 (18%) identified the library deputy director, library, evening librarian and circulation librarian, 2 (18%) stated library staff, human resources representative and union representative, 1 (9%) stated library director and circulation librarian and 1 (9%) stated circulation librarian as forming part of the interview panel. The evening librarian was a common staff member who was identified by all respondents. This may be because the evening librarian is the person who works very closely with student library assistants after hours and therefore needs to be part of the decision-making process.

4.2.13 Role of Human Resources Department (HR) in the employment of student library assistants

Figure 4.8: Role of Human Resources Department in employment of SLAs (n=11)
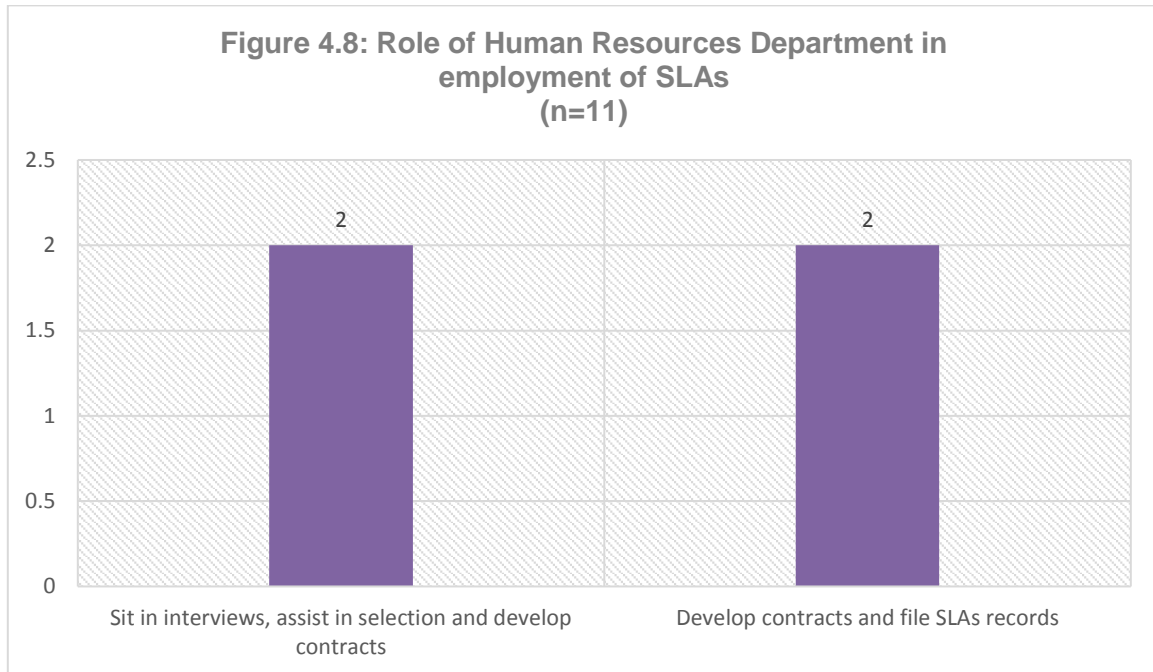
As shown in Figure 4.8, four (36%) of the 11 respondents indicated that the role of Human Resources (HR) was to form part of the interview panel ensuring that employment procedures were followed. They assisted in selection and development of employment contracts once SLAs were employed and filing SLAs' contract records. The involvement of HR could be because the student library assistants form part of library staff who are paid through the institution's funds and therefore HR needs to have records of who is employed by the institution. Nel et al. (2011: 6) is of the opinion that the role of the human resources department is recruitment and selection, employment training and development of staff, compensation, benefits, performance management and discipline, personnel records, health and safety of employees, and efforts to improve quality and productivity.

4.2.14 Training

In order for student library assistants to perform duties of a top-quality nature students need to receive thorough training (Erasmus et al. 2010). All 100% of responses indicated that supervisors do provide training to newly employed student

library assistants. Literature emphasises the training of SLAs. To achieve the objectives of the study, one of the critical questions the study hoped to answer was "Was the training provided to SLAs adequate?" Training is critical to the quality of SLAs' work. If training is not done properly, SLAs will not be able to provide an efficient service to the library after hours. Therefore, there will be no value in employing SLAs in the library because SLAs would lack the capacity to render top-quality service after-hours.

4.2.15 Frequency of training

Figure 4.9 : Frequency of training (n=11)
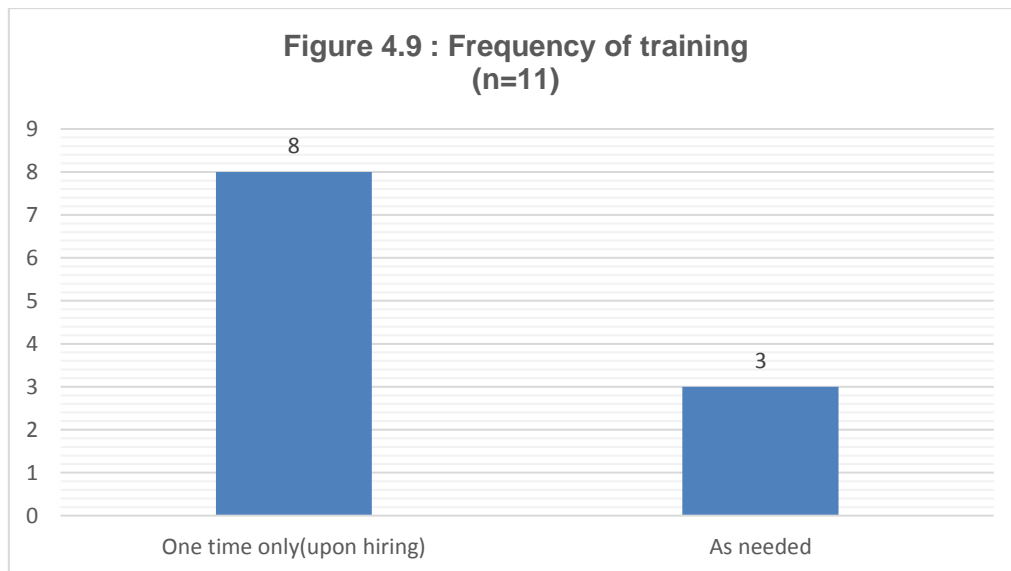
As illustrated in Figure 4.9, of 11 respondents 8 (73%) stated that training occurred once upon hiring and 3 (27%) indicated that training took place as the need arose. Training was understood to be the crucial factor as far as student employment is concerned. This could be because upon hiring, students need to be orientated on the use and library services. One of the key questions of the study was to find out if the training provided to SLAs was adequate. The results in Figure 4.9 indicate that a large percentage of the respondents are of the opinion that training was provided once only (upon hiring); however in the literature Mitchell and Soini (2014: 600) maintains that supplying students with regular and on-going monitoring and rapidly adjusted training as needed not only increases job satisfaction, but it also maintains students' interest, and relieves overburdened librarians and budgets; therefore, the practice of training provided by the surveyed institutions needs to be reconsidered.

4.2.16 Structure of training

Figure 4.10 : Structure of training
(n=11)
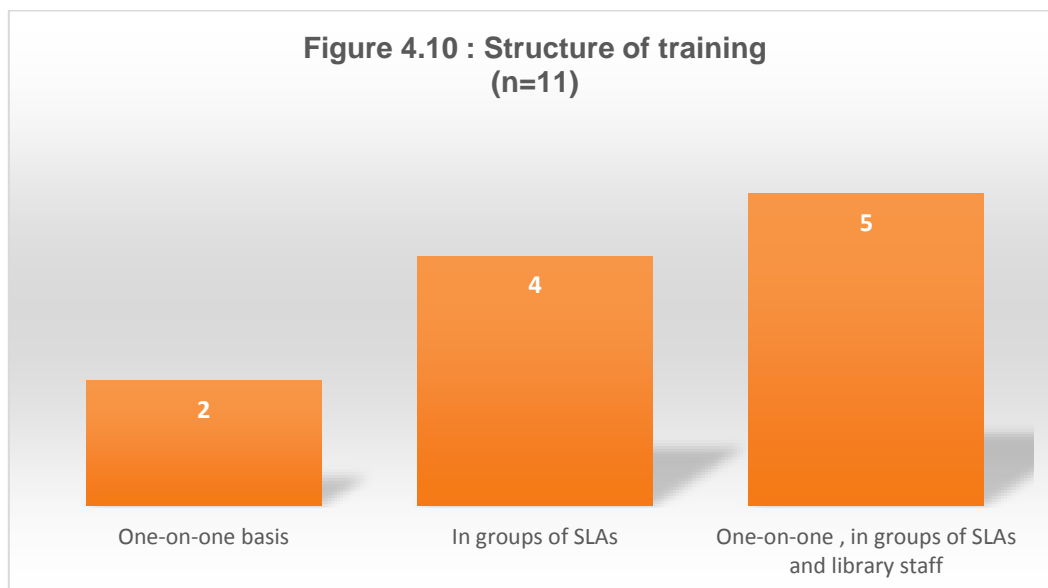
In Figure 4.10 it is shown that of the 11 respondents 5 (45%) stated that SLAs were trained in groups, with permanent staff members as well as one-on-one when the need arose, 4 (36%) stated that training was done in groups of SLAs and 2 (18%) responded that training was done on a one-on-one basis. This could be because when training is provided to SLAs, staff members need to be present to highlight their respective sections of the library during the training sessions. Currie (2010) argues that having a formal classroom method of training student assistants did not work for Iowa Library in the United States. This was because this kind of training lacks flexibility and fails to focus on individual weaknesses. Mitchell and Soini (2014: 594) support this argument by referring to a cross-training approach which brings together multiple campus units which helps in breaking down "silos" in academic institutions, leads to more accurate referrals and facilitates a more seamless experience for students with emphasis on training and how it is approached in academic libraries.

4.2.17 Aspects of library services that SLAs receive training on

Figure 4.11 shows that of the 11 respondents, a large percentage 10 (91%) of the respondents indicated that SLAs were usually trained on circulation, basic information

queries and answering of telephone. However, 1 (9%) respondent indicated that SLAs were trained on circulation duties only. The results indicated that the three areas where training focused on were circulation duties, basic library queries and answering of telephone. This could be because in the evening student assistants' main duties were to man the circulation desk and answer basic directional queries; therefore, they are expected to provide an efficient service at the circulation desk which is the heart of the library. Student library assistants play a vital role in desk coverage, shelving, shelf reading, processing mail, making copies, assisting with orientation, cleaning equipment and a variety of additional jobs which allows staff to concentrate on other assigned duties, as confirmed by Farrell and Driver (2010: 186).

Figure 4.11 : Training Aspects (n=11)
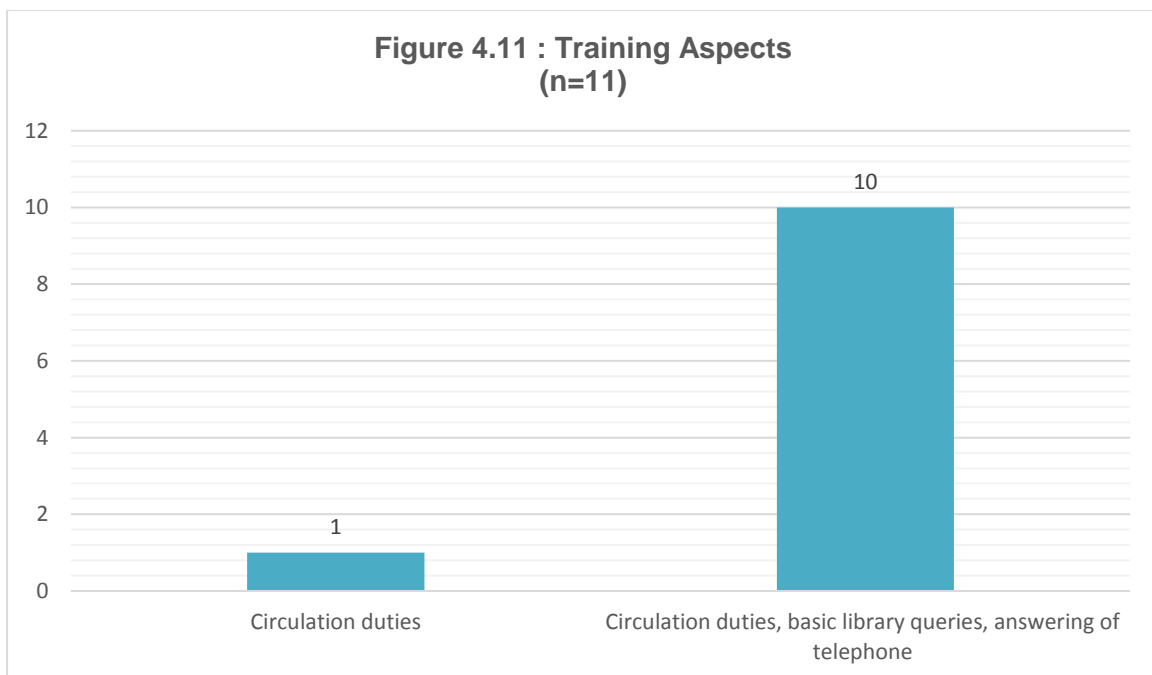
4.2.18 Person responsible for training of student library assistants
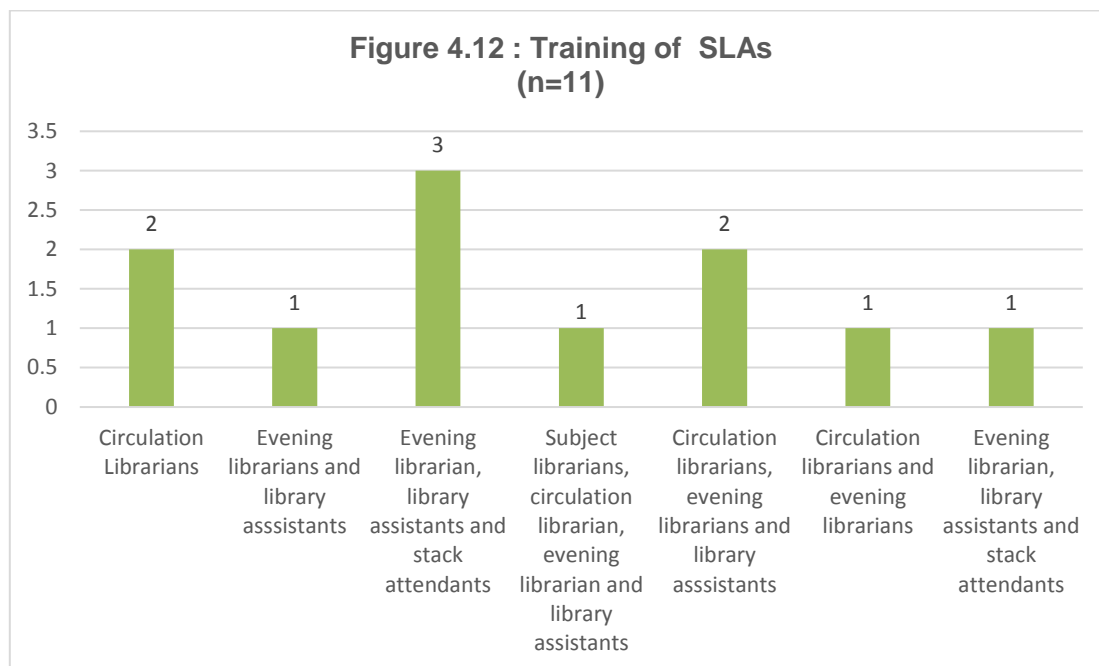
Figure 4.12 illustrates the role players when training is provided to SLAs. Three (27%) indicated that evening librarians, library assistants and stack attendants were involved in training of SLAs, 2 (18%) indicated that circulation librarians, evening librarians and library assistants and 1 (9%) indicated evening librarians, subject librarians, circulation librarians, library assistants and stack attendants were involved in training of SLAs. It is evident that evening librarians, library assistants and stack attendants were the key role players when it comes to training of SLAs. This could be because student assistants work after-hours with the evening librarians while their duties are to work at the circulation desk which is mainly the job function of library assistants and to shelve library books which is the job function of stack attendants. Therefore, it is crucial that these people are present during training sessions. It is important to have cooperation from other librarians and support staff as well. Incorporating librarians and support staff into student assistants' training gives them an internalised understanding of what the SLAs should know and do, it allows them to become more familiar with the names of SLAs and it also makes them feel more invested in the success of SLAs (Farrell and Driver: 2010).

4.2.19 Duration of training provided to student library assistants

Figure 4.13 : Duration of training
(n=11)
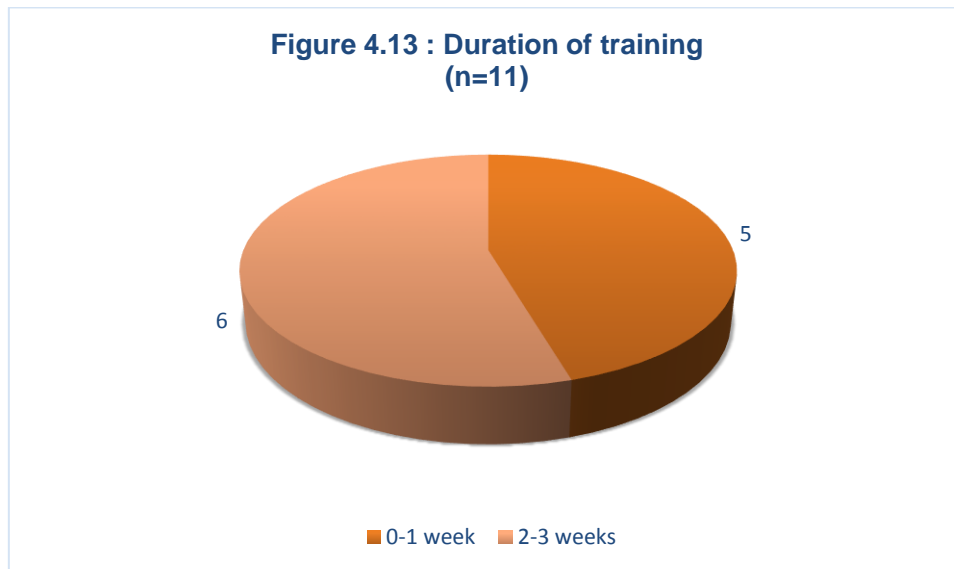
The duration of training provided to SLAs is presented in Figure 4.16. This shows that 6 (55%) of the respondents indicated that training runs for the duration of 2-3 weeks while 5 (45%) indicated that the duration of training is 1 week. The variation on the duration of training may be that at institutions where the LIS qualification was offered students studying this course easily understand the principles; thus, the training duration became shorter than at those institutions where LIS qualifications were not offered and library concepts were new to the newly-recruited students. There is no stipulated duration of training; literature (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 105) confirms that training is pertinent when employing student library assistants. Inadequate training may lead to challenges faced by supervisors and student assistants in a workplace. However, Garrett (2011) argues that training should be kept to a minimum and be simple. Supervisors need to remember that the priority of student worker is to study; therefore, they will not invest too much time and attention in learning to do a job.

4.2.20 Follow-up training conducted to student library assistants during their period of employment

Figure 4.14 : Follow-up training (n=11)

1

10

■ Yes ■ No
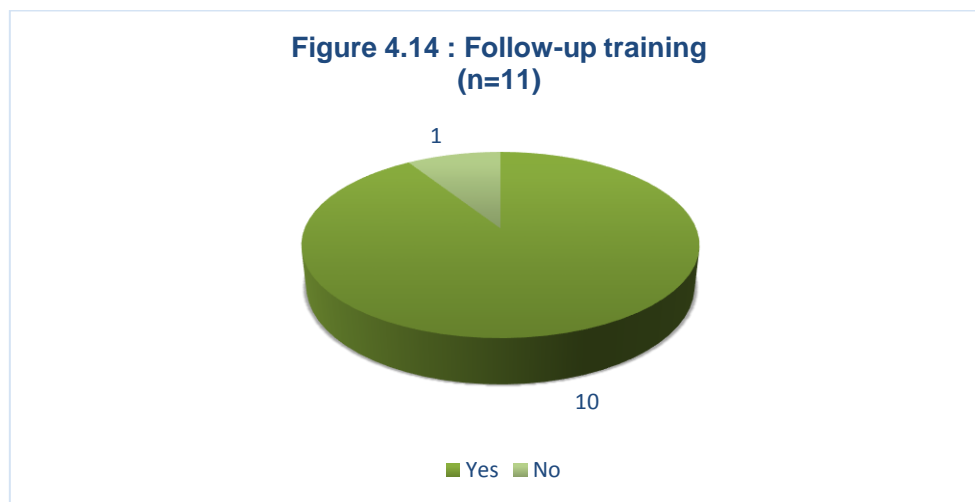
Figure 4.14 illustrates that of the 11 respondents 10 (91%) indicated that they provide follow-up training to newly employed SLAs while only 1 (9%) indicated that there is no follow-up training conducted. It is evident that a large percentage, namely 10 (91%) stated that there is follow-up training provided. This could probably be due to the amount of information that is evolving and libraries need to keep abreast with the latest emerging technologies. SLAs are trained on new developments that may occur while they are employed to keep them updated on new library services. One of the objectives of the study was to ascertain whether training provided to SLAs was adequate. Martinez (2014: 558) puts emphasis on follow-up training, stating that for effective training strategies, development of student employees can be enhanced through supervisors' coaching and mentoring. Coaching and mentoring are development techniques used widely in professional environments, and are differentiated by the intention of the interaction. Coaching is fine-tuning skills and giving a prompt about what comes next. It is clarification and feedback. It is extended training in the details. It is ongoing as needed and it is purposeful. Mentoring is a listening ear, wise advice, and friendly encouragement. The goal of coaching is to develop and improve job skills. The goal of mentoring is to encourage positive growth in the young adult (Martinez 2014: 558). This study hoped to document best practices across all three academic libraries under investigation with the aim of providing better training strategies.

4.2.21 Library guide prepared for student library assistants

Figure 4.15 : Library guide
(n=11)
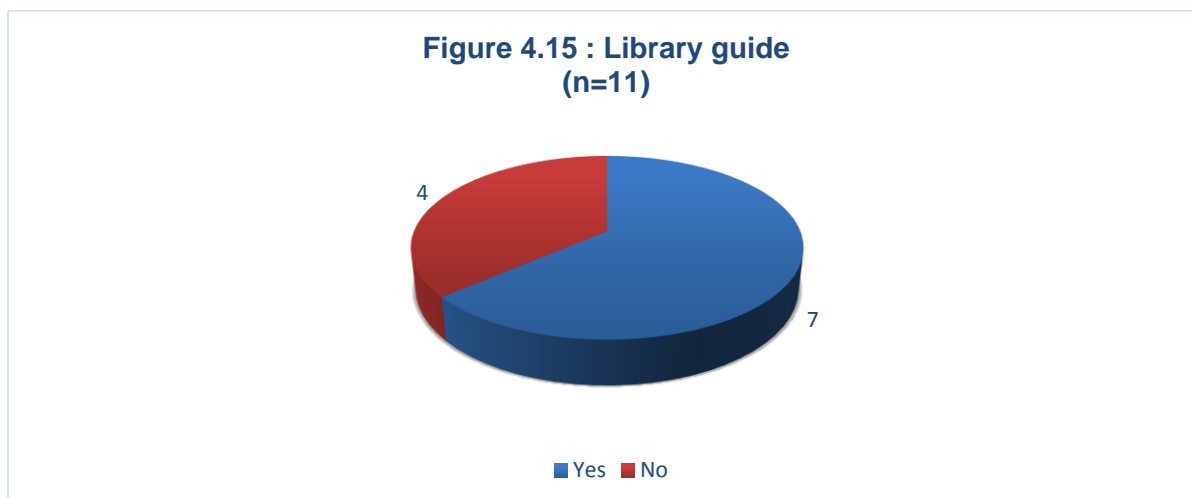
In Figure 4.15 responses on the existence of a library guide prepared for SLAs is illustrated. Of the 11 respondents, 7 (64%) indicated that they do have a library guide developed for SLAs, while 4 (36%) indicated that there is no library guide prepared for SLs. A notable percentage of 7 (64%) indicated that there is a guide for SLAs to refer to when doing their work. A probable reason could be that some libraries assume that providing training to SLAs is sufficient and a library guide may not be needed; however, it is crucial that SLAs have something to refer to when they encounter problems because they work under minimal supervision. International university libraries have student library assistants' handbooks embedded in their websites. These handbooks include a welcoming page, what is expected of SLAs, hours of work and time sheets. (Mann 2016; DeSales University 2016; Florida State University Libraries 2016). This study aimed to identify best practices and develop a model for employment of SLAs in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal and this could be a notable result informing the development of a model.

4.2.22 Contents of the library guide

Table 4.4: Contents of the library guide

(n=11)

Contents of Library Guide	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Customer care guidelines, Guidelines on how to answer the telephone Basic instructions on online public access catalogue (OPAC) searches	6	55%
Missing	**5**	**45%**

Table 4.4 was a follow up question to Question 21. On the previous question, 7 (64%) had indicated that a guide is available, of the 11 respondents 5 (45%) did not respond to this question while 6 (55%) indicated that the contents of the guide was information on customer care guidelines, guidelines on how to answer telephone and basic instructions on online public access catalogue (OPAC) searches. Literature in Martinez (2014: 553) states that having a check list or a guide may prove helpful so that every new employee has the same information. Supervisors cannot assume that new employees know any of the library functions because some students have never worked before. The new work experience might be intimidating; therefore, the guide should cover a great deal of information about a large academic library. In practice it is crucial for SLAs to have a library guide to refer to in the absence of the supervisor.

4.2.23 Types of duties performed by student library assistants

Figure 4.16 : Duties perfomed by SLAs (n=11)
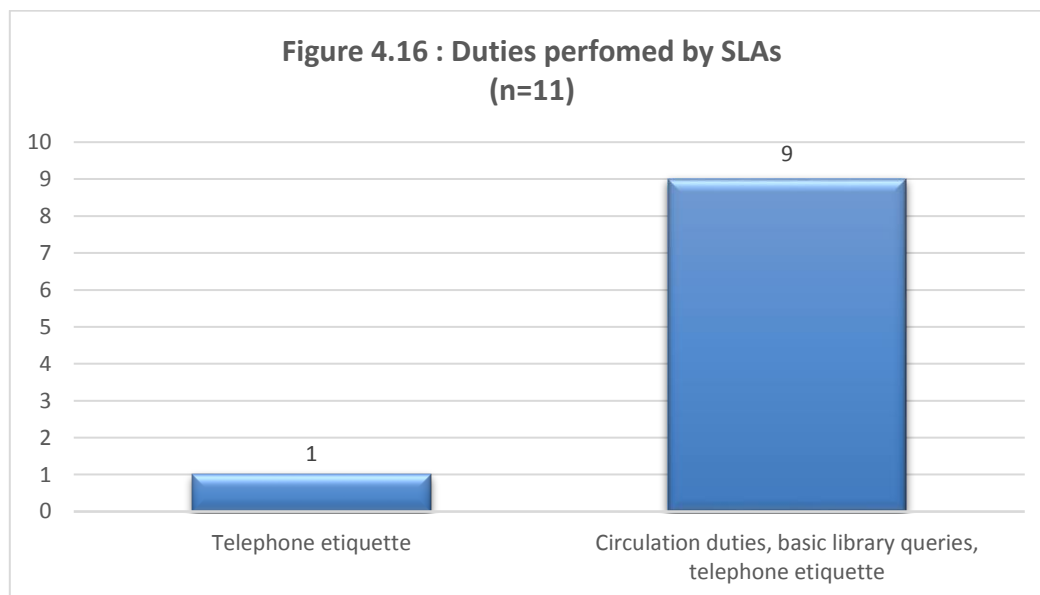
Types of duties performed by SLAs are illustrated in Figure 4.16; of the 11 respondents a majority, namely 9 (82%) respondents indicated that SLAs performed circulation duties, dealt with basic library queries and answered telephones and 1 (9%) stated that SLAs took telephone calls. It was interesting to note that none of the respondents selected shelving as one of the duties performed by SLAs when respondents were asked to indicate the aspects of duties on which students receive training. Student library assistants are assigned more or less general LIS duties to perform, amongst which are reference shifts, circulation, shelving and working in research commons. Logan (2012: 320) notes that student assistants are involved in core activities of the library and are valued for how they bring enthusiasm and fresh perspectives, and are proud of the responsibility they share for preserving and caring for important heritage materials.

4.2.24 Rating of student library assistants' performance in terms of the duties they perform

Table 4.5 Rating of SLAs in terms of duties they perform

(n=11)

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Total
Circulation duties		4	7		11
Shelving		4			4
Handling and solving problems			8	3	11
Answering telephones		4		2	6
Computer labs	1	4			5

Table 4.5 represents the ratings in terms of the generic duties performed by SLAs. Respondents were mandated to select more than one option. Of the 11 respondents, 8 (73%) indicated that SLAs are rated as average in handling and solving problems, 7 (64%) rated SLAs as average when performing circulation duties, 4 (36%) rated SLAs good when it comes to circulation duties, shelving, answering telephones and working in computer labs, 3 (27%) rated SLAs as being average and fair in handling and solving problems, 2 (18%) rated SLAs as performing fairly well in answering telephone calls and as being average in computer labs and 1 (9%) rated SLAs as excellent when working in computer labs. Interestingly SLAs were rated average and good across all duties they perform. These results confirm the findings revealed by Mthembu (2006) in her study "Evaluation of services offered by Student Library Assistants in selected campus libraries of DUT in the Durban area", namely that student library assistants are effective when performing their duties. However, this study hopes to document best practices and develop a model for employing student library assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal.

4.2.25 Benefits excluding remuneration received by student library assistants

This question enquired if SLAs received benefits when employed in the library. None of the respondents answered this question. This may be because there are no benefits

received by SLAs by virtue of the fact that they are part-time employees and there are no benefits attached to the positions they occupy.

4.2.26 Rate of pay

Table 4.6: Rate of pay

(n=11)

Institution	Rate per hour	Number of respondents	Percentage
UKZN	R35	1	9%
DUT	R40	6	55%
MUT	R45	4	36%
	Total	**11**	**100%**

Of the 11 respondents 1 indicated that the rate of pay starts from R35 per hour, 6 indicated R40 per hour and 4 indicated R45. The differences in the hourly rate of pay was determined by the number of years' experience working as a student library assistant. It was noted that all three institutions vary according to what they pay their SLAs when they start working. However, it was also noted that returning students are paid between R40 and R45.

4.2.27 Compliments about student library assistants

Figure 4.17: Compliments about SLAs (n=11)
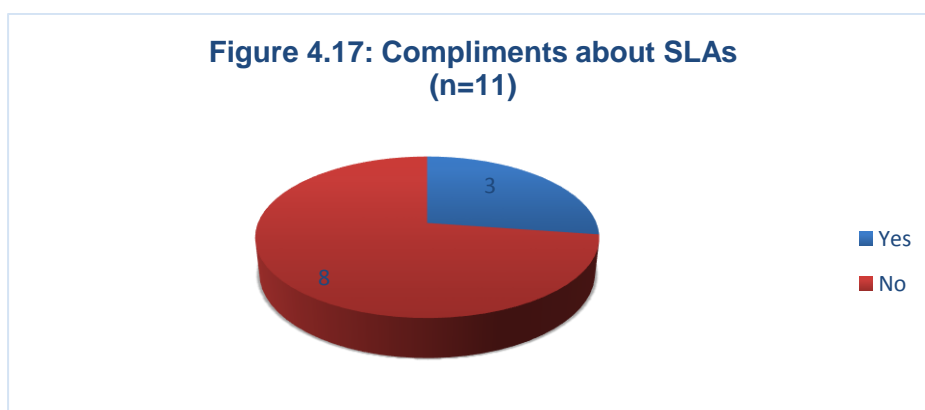
According to Figure 4.17, of the 11 respondents 3 (27%) indicated that they received compliments and 8 (73%) indicated that they did not receive compliments about SLAs. The compliments of those who indicated yes, are listed below:

59

- Student Library Assistants are polite, well-mannered and deal nicely with visitors.
- Some students already have some working experience which contributes to providing an efficient client service.

One can conclude that SLAs are efficient and professional when rendering a library service after hours.

4.2.28 Complaints about student library assistants

Figure 4.18 : Complaints about SLAs (n=11)
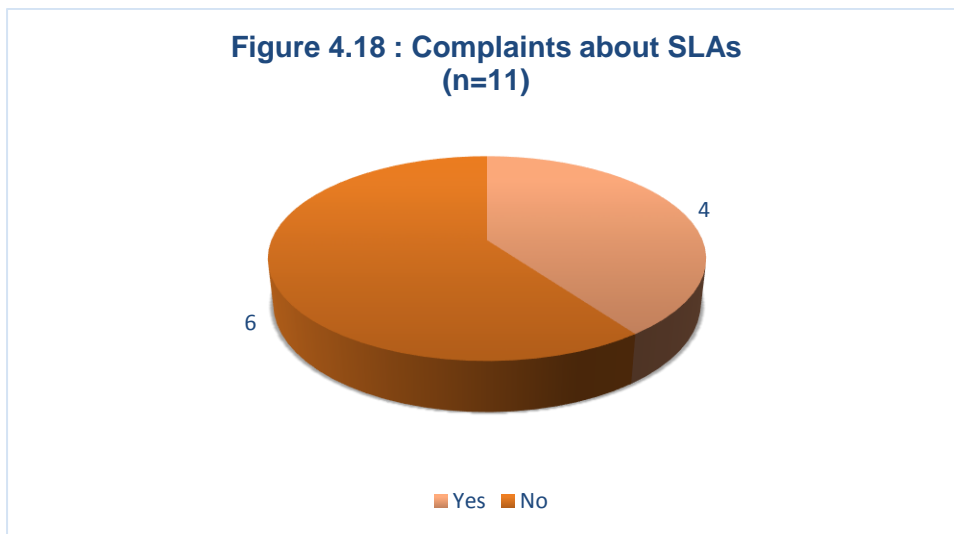
Figure 4.22 shows that, of the 11 respondents, 4 (36%) indicated that they had received complaints about SLAs and 6 (55%) indicated that they had not received complaints about services offered by SLAs. Although there were few complaints about services offered by SLAs, according to Mitchell and Soini (2014: 594), this could be minimised by providing adequate training which is fundamental to the success of academic library services where students are often the primary contact with patrons. The respondents who indicated they had received complaints about SLAs, listed the nature of the complaints as below. Student assistants

- tend not to return the library items on the system and stamp wrong return dates on books,
- misplace books on shelves,
- show lack of commitment and laziness, and

- are unable to deal with finance issues after hours.

Complaints can be reduced by providing adequate training, enforcing library rules and motivation.

4.2.29 Challenges encountered when working with student library assistants

All 11 (100%) respondents shared sentiments regarding the challenges they encounter when working with SLAs. The most common challenges of supervising student assistants are noted and listed below:

- Absenteeism during tests and examinations.
- Irresponsible while on duty in that they fail to manage their time.
- Lack of reporting skills, lack of knowledge of the library system and some show over-confidence.

Farrell and Driver (2010: 187) argue that by its very nature, the student assistant job is temporary. In a community and technical college environment, students will at most stay two or three years. As a result, the students do not view the job as a "real" job, but as a stepping stone to their chosen occupation. It is simply a way to pay the bills and make ends meet while attending college. According to Mitchell and Soini (2014: 593), the use of student assistants requires a high level of flexibility, particularly in relation to rostering and hours worked, in recognition of the fact that students' academic progress and success is their primary task. While this might not seem to be difficult, the problem begins during examination times. Rostering changes and unexpected turnover remain problematic. The high turnover of student staff has implications for training: the duration, frequency, and format of training are all important points to consider in shaping a training programme when students may only be around for a semester, an academic term, or a year. Other issues that stem from hiring students are highlighted by Stanfield and Palmer (2010), such as financial aid budgets, unions, retention, punctuality, attendance, and students socialising with friends while on shift. Supervising students is not the same as supervising regularly employed staff because of the need to consider the balance of work and academic study. Student assistants need attention in terms of workplace induction and training,

ongoing supervision, feedback and encouragement to be effective and confident in performing their roles (O'Neil and Comley 2010: 110). One of the aims of this study was to determine the challenges faced SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants. It is interesting to note that challenges faced by supervisors are common challenges nationally and internationally.

4.2.30 General comments on employment of student library assistants

The overall perceptions regarding the employment of student library assistants were documented as follows:

- Student library assistants become an asset to libraries once they are committed to the job.
- Student assistants become empowered with job experience and get exposure to the real world, especially students studying towards a LIS qualification.
- Student library assistants' employment is no longer fair because the positions are reserved for relatives and friends.
- "If LIS qualification was offered in my institution I would encourage LIS students to be given preference as they would use experience better in future" (Respondent 9).
- Both the library and the institution gain from the increased knowledge and productivity of the student assistants. The students become more confident of their abilities and obtain training that benefits them personally.

4.3 Responses of student library assistants

4.3.1 Gender

Figure 4.19: Gender of participants (n=115)
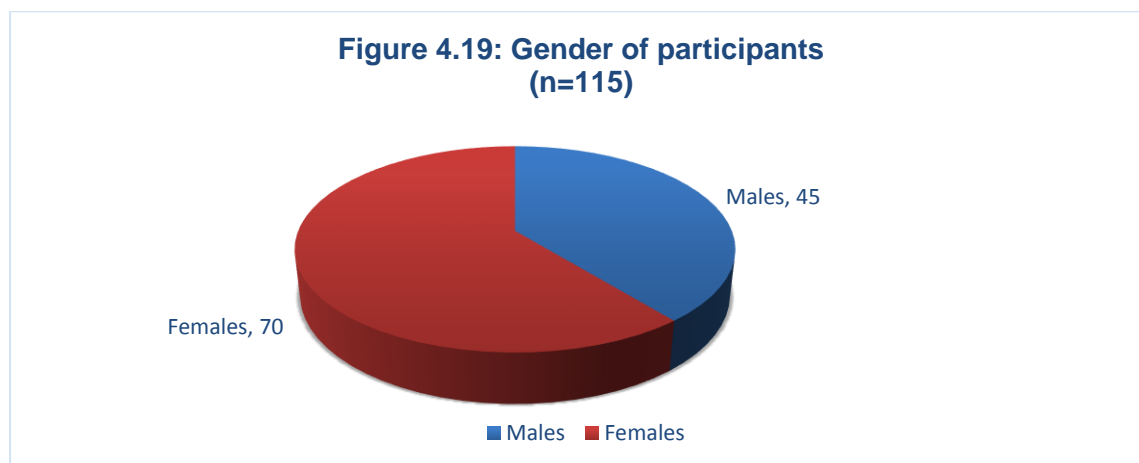
Figure 4.19 represents the gender of student library assistants who participated in this study. Of the total of 115 respondents, 70 (61%) were female and 45 (39%) were male. Librarianship is known to be a noble profession: this could be the reason why most female students gets attracted to library jobs. Ocholla (2002: 63) states that the profession of librarian in academic, public, private, schools, and special libraries is known as predominately a female profession. Although these results confirm this statement, it is noted that this notion is changing currently in that male students are increasingly taking up the profession compared to previous years.

4.3.2 Age category

Table 4.7: Age category

(n=115)

Age category	No. of respondents	Percentage
15-20 years	17	15%
21-25 years	77	67%
26-30 years	18	16%
Above 30 years	3	3%
Total	**115**	**100%**

Table 4.7 indicates that 77 (67%) of SLAs were between the ages of 21-25 years, 18 (16%) were between the ages of 26-30, 17 (15%) were between the ages of 15-20 and 3 (3%) were older than 30 years of age. It is noted that the most common age of student library assistants was between ages of 21-25 years. A probable reason could be that student library assistants are only employed in their second year of study and therefore it is more likely to find ages ranging from 21-25 at second-year level. Maxwell (2012: 52) in his article argues that universities prefer to employ student assistants from their second year of studying with the institution because there is hope that they will stay longer, provide better continuity to the positions, and generate higher return on investment (ROI) in the library.

4.3.3 Number of years working as SLA

Table 4.8: Number of years working as SLA

(n=115)

Years working as SLA	No. of respondents	%
0-1 year	63	55%
2-3 years	46	40%
4-5 years	6	5%
Total	**115**	**100%**

As illustrated in Table 4.8, of the total number of 115 respondents, 63 (54%) had been working as student library assistants for less than 1 year, 46 (40%) had been working as student library assistants between 2-3 years and 6 (5%) had been working as student library assistants for almost throughout their university years which is 4-5 years. It is noted that a large percentage (55%) of the 63 were students working in the library for the first time and 6 (5%) were returning students. Depending on experience and how students conduct themselves in the library, some students may have their contracts renewed. Reale (2013: 8) describes different types of students that she has come across over the years. She mentions the ones that are helpful and tend to be quiet. They eagerly accept tasks they are given and make valuable suggestions about how to do things. These students tend to love what they are doing and they excel in their jobs. This could probably lead to the extension of their contracts. These could be

the students that have worked in the library for 4-5 years as seen in Table 4.7 while pursuing their post-graduate studies with the institution.

4.3.4 University at which SLAs are studying

Figure 4.20 illustrates the university where student library assistants were registered. The results indicate that of the 115 student library assistants who participated in this study, 53 (46%) were from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 38 (33%) were from Mangosuthu University of Technology and 24 (21%) were from the Durban University of Technology. As can be recalled from the population, UKZN had employed a large number of SLAs compared to DUT and MUT. A possible reason could be that UKZN has a large student population compared to MUT and DUT and therefore employ and deploy more student library assistants on their respective campuses.

Figure 4.20 : Name of the University (n=115)
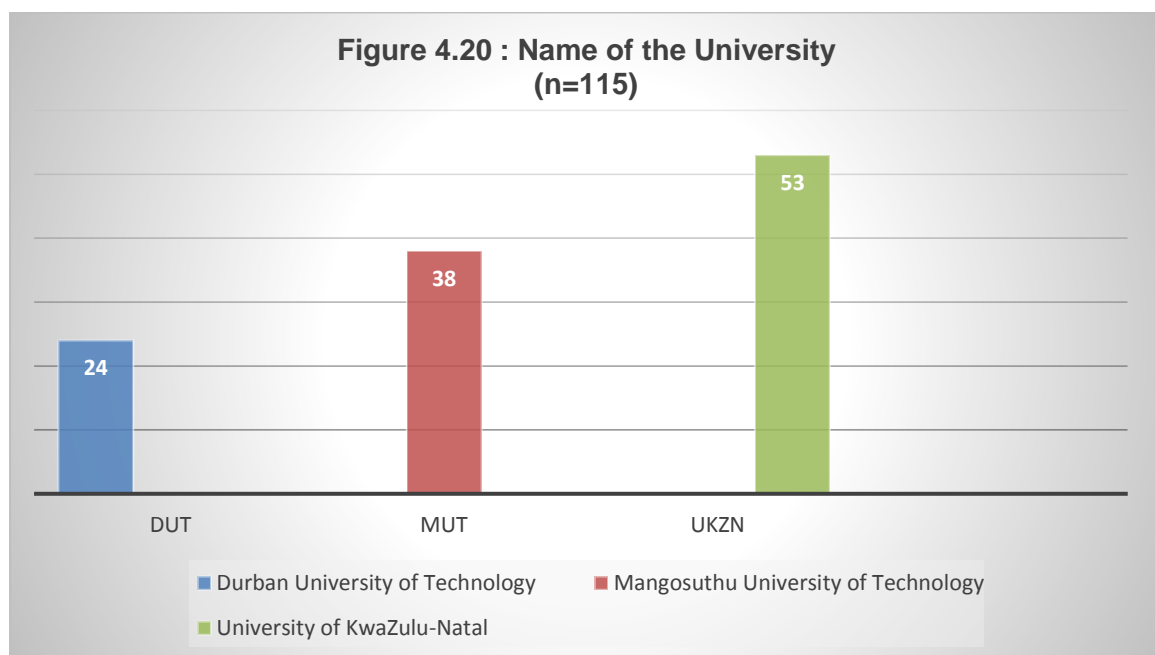
4.3.5 Level of study

According to Table 4.9, one hundred and fifteen responded to this question. Responses were grouped according to their level of study which is Master's, Honours, Bachelor's degree, Bachelor of Technology degree and National Diplomas. Respondents were from a variety of disciplines. Of the 99 respondents, 3 (3%) were doing their Master's in various fields, 7 (6%) were doing their Honours in various fields,

1 (1%) was a BTech student, 30 (26%) were doing their Bachelor's degrees in various fields and the majority of 58 (50%) were doing their National Diploma in various fields. It was noted that the majority of 58 (50%) of the respondents were enrolled for their National Diploma. A possible reason why the majority of respondents were enrolled for National Diplomas could be that out of the three universities under the study, two are the Universities of Technology and they offer National Diploma qualifications as well as Bachelor of Technology degree qualifications. It was also noted that while the results from 4.3.3 revealed that 6 (5%) respondents had worked as a SLA for more than five years, only 3 (3%) were Master's students. Although there were 7 (6%) respondents doing their Honours degree it may be that the remainder of the 3 respondents who have worked for more than five years were undergraduate students because it was alluded to in 4.3.3 that, depending on how students conduct themselves in the library, some may have their contracts renewed.

Table 4.9: Level of study

(n=115)

Qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage
Master's	3	3%
Honours	7	6%
Bachelor's degrees	30	26%
Bachelor of Technology degrees	1	1%
National Diploma	58	50%
No response	16	29%
Total	**115**	**100%**

4.3.6 Year of study

Table 4.10: Year of study
(n=115)

Level of Study	No. of respondents	Percentage
First years	0	0%
Second years	27	24%
Third years	69	60%
Fourth years	9	8%
Postgraduate	10	9%

Table 4.10 illustrates the level of study of student library assistants. Of the 115 respondents none were in their first year, 27 (24%) were in their second year, 69 (60%) were in their third year, 9 (8%) were in their fourth year and 10 (9%) were at post-graduate level. The reason no students were in their first year could be because student library assistants in KwaZulu-Natal academic libraries are employed from their second year of study. According to section 4.2.9, eight (73%) of supervisors indicated that in order to be employed as a student library assistant one should be a second- or third-year student. Maxwell (2012: 52) argues that many university libraries prefer to hire first-year students with the hope that they will stay longer, provide better continuity to the positions, and generate higher return on investments (ROI) in the library. However, the study revealed that all the institutions surveyed did not hire first-year students. Probable reasons could be that they were new, they needed to become familiar with the university life and during their first year they would not be able to cope with the work and study challenges and thus end up compromising their studies.

4.3.7 Methods used to advertise SLAs vacancies

Figure 4.21 : Methods used to advertise SLAs vacancies (n=115)
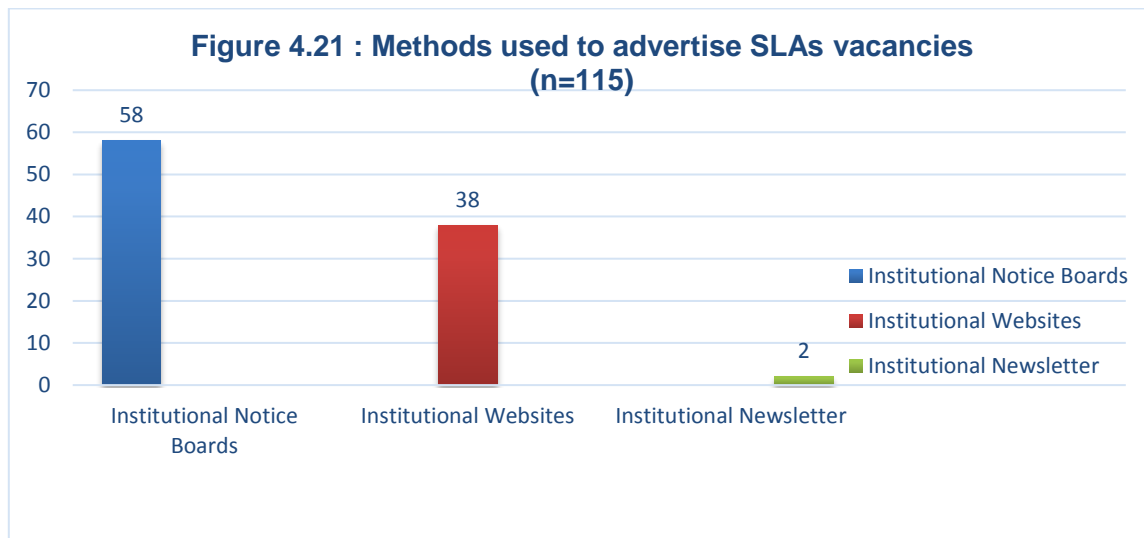
Figure 4.21 shows the advertising of SLA positions. Fifty-eight (50%) of SLAs stated that they used institutional notice boards, 38 (33%) used institutional websites and 2 (2%) used institutional newsletters. This may be because most notice boards are situated where students gather and sit during their free time. Another probable reason for selecting institutional websites as the second method could be that students are usually connected to the Internet with free Wi-Fi spots available on campus. Deniz and Geyik (2015: 896) argue that, although notice boards are the most cost-effective method of advertising, for most university students, the internet is a functional tool; for instance, one can easily interact with others and get information. Internet usage has become a way of life for the majority of higher education students all around the world. The 11 supervisors' responses were that 3 (27%) chose to use institutional websites and notice boards, 2 (18%) chose institutional notice boards as the method of advertising. It can therefore be concluded that SLAs also seem to favour both these methods of advertising, which are institutional websites and notice boards.

4.3.8 Requirements to apply for SLA positions

Figure 4.22 : Requirements to apply for SLA positions (n=115)
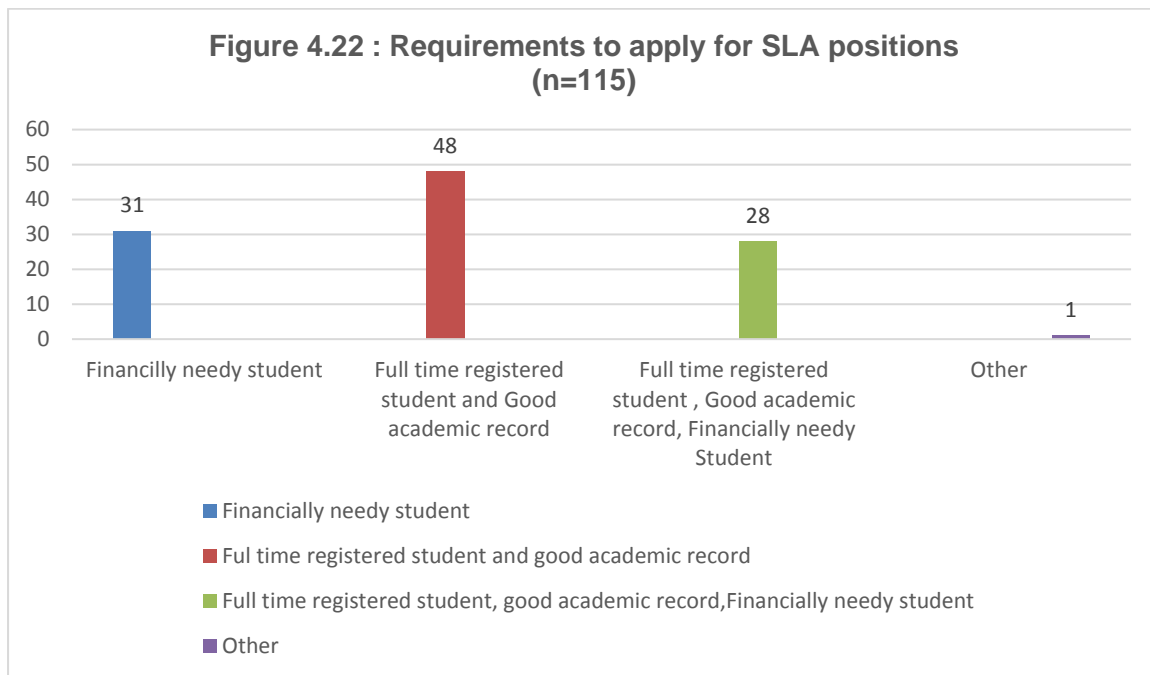
Figure 4.22 shows the requirements to apply for student library assistant positions. Of the 115 respondents, 48 (42%) stated that students needed to be a full-time registered student with a good academic record, 28 (24%) indicated that students must be fully registered with a good academic record and financially needy, while 31 (27%) stated that students should be financially needy and 1 (1%) indicated other, but did not specify what the requirement was. It is noticeable that 48 (42%) of the respondents stated the requirement to be a full-time registered student with a good academic record. However, these results were contrary to the responses given by the supervisors where of the 11 participants 8 (73%) stated that in order to be employed as a student library assistant one should be a full-time registered student and be in the second or third year of study, 1 (1%) said one needs to be a full-time registered student, 1 (1%) said one needs to be financially needy student and 1 (1%) said one needs to be a second- or third-year student. Although this is the case, the nature of these jobs is aimed at assisting those capable though financially needy students. O'Neil and Comley (2010: 105) support this by stating that the minimum requirement is that students should have successfully completed the first year of their course which will be verified by a good academic record. Manley and Holley (2014: 80) describe that to be employed as a library assistant at Marygrove Library, an applicant needed to

possess a 3.0-grade point on average; not only does this requirement narrow the pool of applicants, but it assumes that students who are serious about their studies will be serious about their jobs too.

4.3.9 Required documents

Figure 4.23 indicates that of the 115 respondents a large percentage, 112 (97%) selected academic record, matric certificate and proof of registration as the required documents when applying for SLA positions, 2 (2%) selected only a CV and 1 (1%) selected an application letter. Generally, during any recruitment and selection process, employers have to make sure that they have as much details of the candidate as possible; therefore, students too are asked to provide relevant documents. Requesting documentation can also be a test of whether or not applicants can follow instructions (Doyle 2016).

Figure 4.23 : Required documents (n=115)
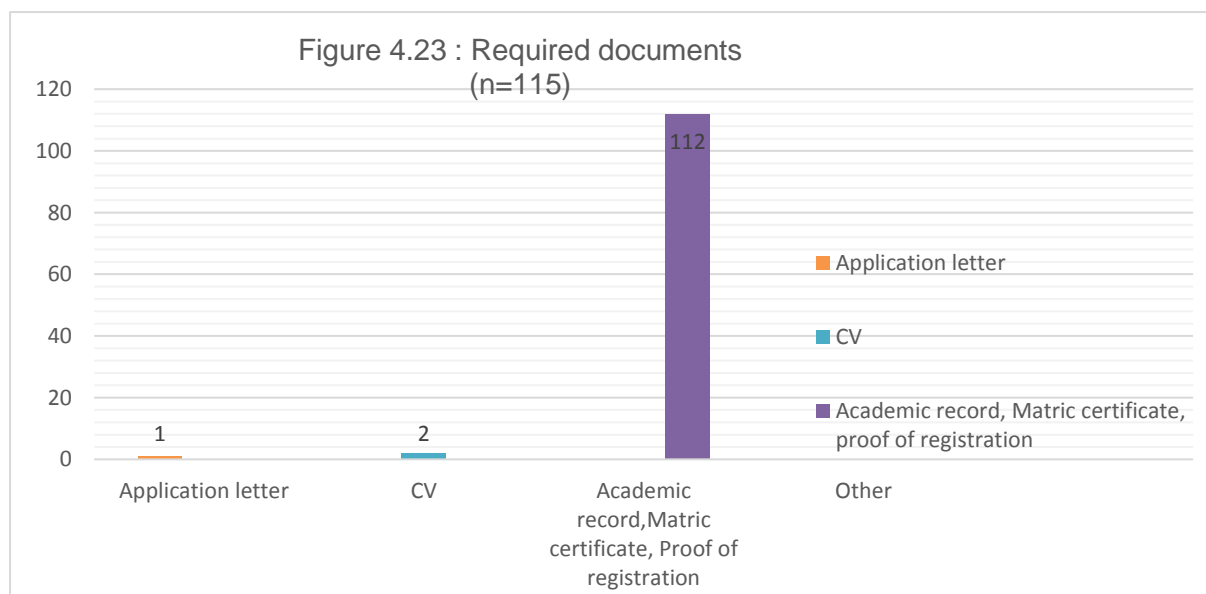
4.3.10 Job interviews

As can be seen in Figure 4.24 a majority 105 (91%) of respondents indicated they attended a job interview while 8 (7%) indicated that they did not attend an interview. This could probably be due to the fact that some students fill up the vacant posts later after the students that were initially employed had resigned and left during the course of the year. This then calls for an urgent filling of the gaps without following the entire

process. An interview is a valuable tool for the supervisor in assessing the applicant's suitability for the position. It is also the applicant's principal opportunity to gain knowledge concerning the duties and responsibilities of the position and the immediate and extended working environment (Human Resources 2016). As elucidated by Reale (2013: 7), interviewing the student is the best way not only to obtain first-hand information about students, such as their majors, their hometown, interests and their extracurricular activities, but also to give them enough information about the job to help them to decide if the library in fact is the place they want to be.

Figure 4.24: Job Interviews (n=115)
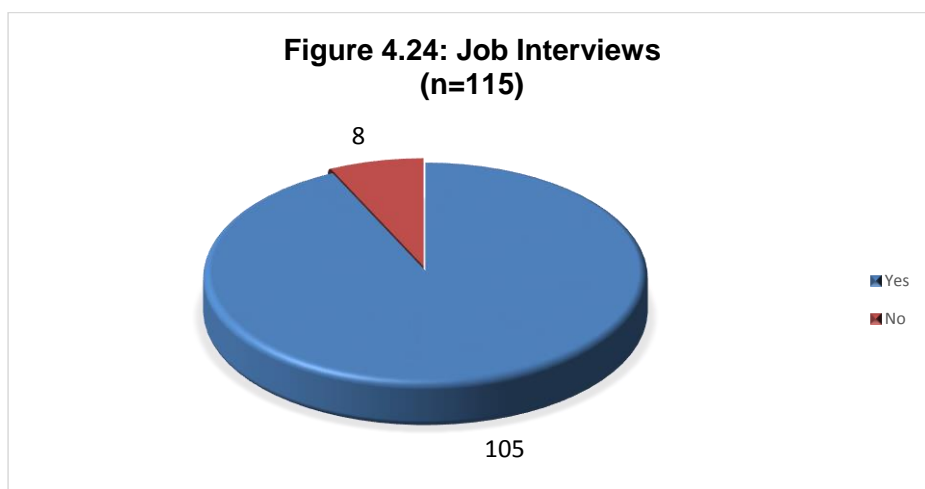
4.3.11 Present panel members

Figure 4.25 : Present Panel Members (n=115)
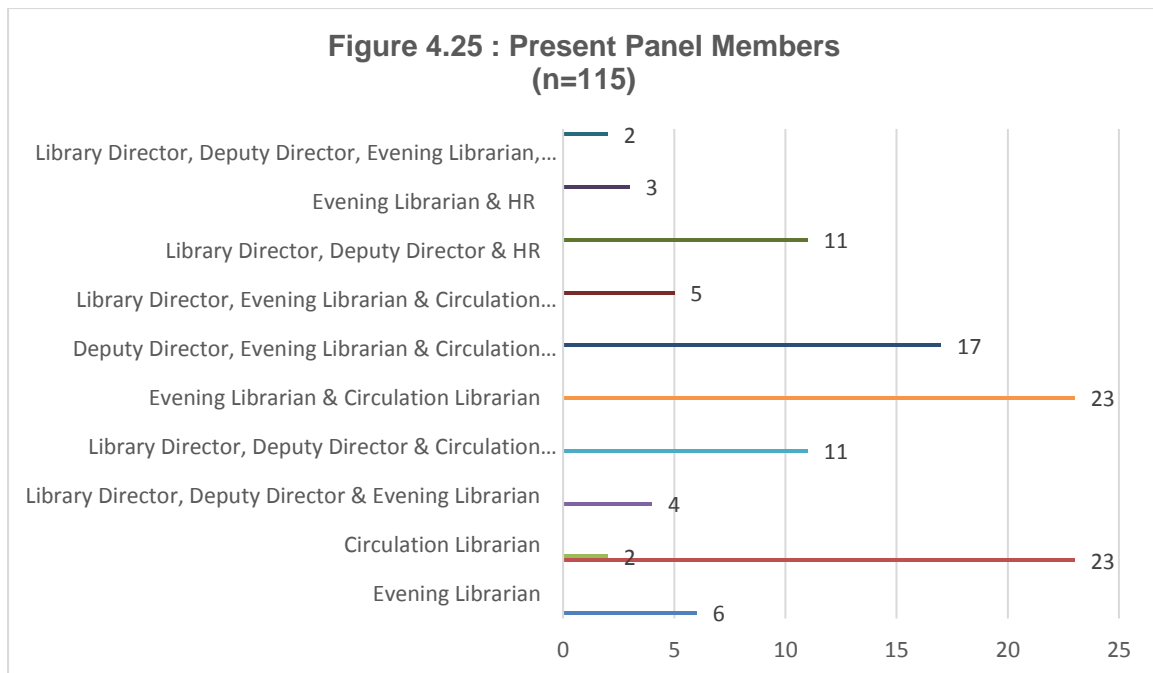
Figure 4.25 shows that twenty-three respondents (20%) indicated that the panel members consisted of circulation librarian and evening librarian, 17 (15%) indicated deputy director, evening librarian and circulation librarian, 11 (10%) indicated library director, deputy director, and circulation librarian while 3 (3%) indicated evening librarian and Human Resources, and 2 (2%) indicated library director, deputy director, evening librarian and circulation librarian. It was noted that evening librarian and circulation librarian were always present during the interviews. In section 4.2.11 it was noted from supervisor's responses that the presence of evening librarians was common to all responses and it is confirmed by students' responses. This could be because student library assistants' core duties are circulation activities and the circulation librarian needs to be present during the whole process of selecting and employing student assistants. Evening librarians work directly with student library assistants after hours; therefore, it is also crucial that they form part of the selection process.

4.3.12 Outcomes of the interview

Figure 4.26: Interview Outcome (n=115)
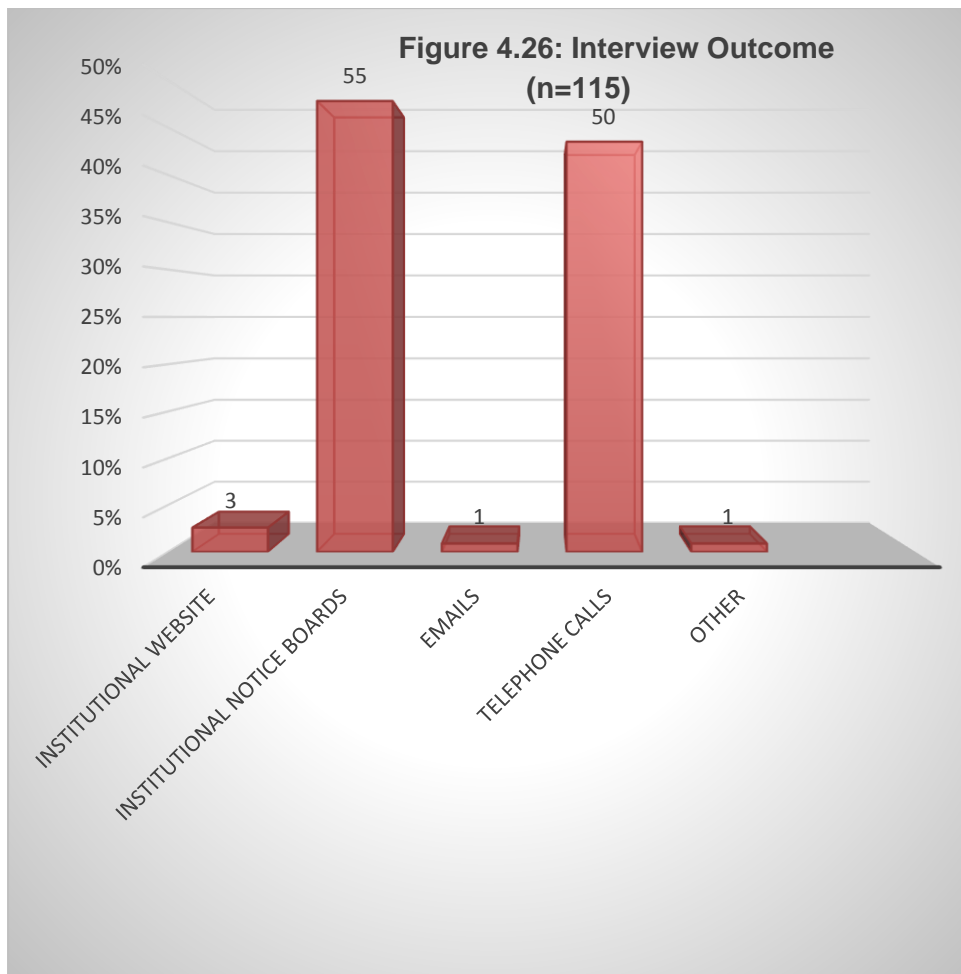
Figure 4.26 indicates that of the 115 total respondents, 55 (48%) were informed via institutional notice boards, 50 (43%) respondents had received telephone calls, 3 (3%) were informed via the institutional website, 1 (1%) was informed via an email and 1 (1%) by word of mouth. It is noted from the results that institutional notice boards and telephone calls were the most commonly used methods to inform students of the interview outcome. A possible reason for using the institutional notice board over other methods could be because it is cheaper, it reaches all students and those who do not have access to the Internet. Notice boards are normally situated where students would notice them during their free periods. Telephone calls are quicker, although more expensive, but one can be certain that the message has reached the right person.

4.3.13 Contents of the employment contract

Figure 4.27: Contents of contract (n=115)
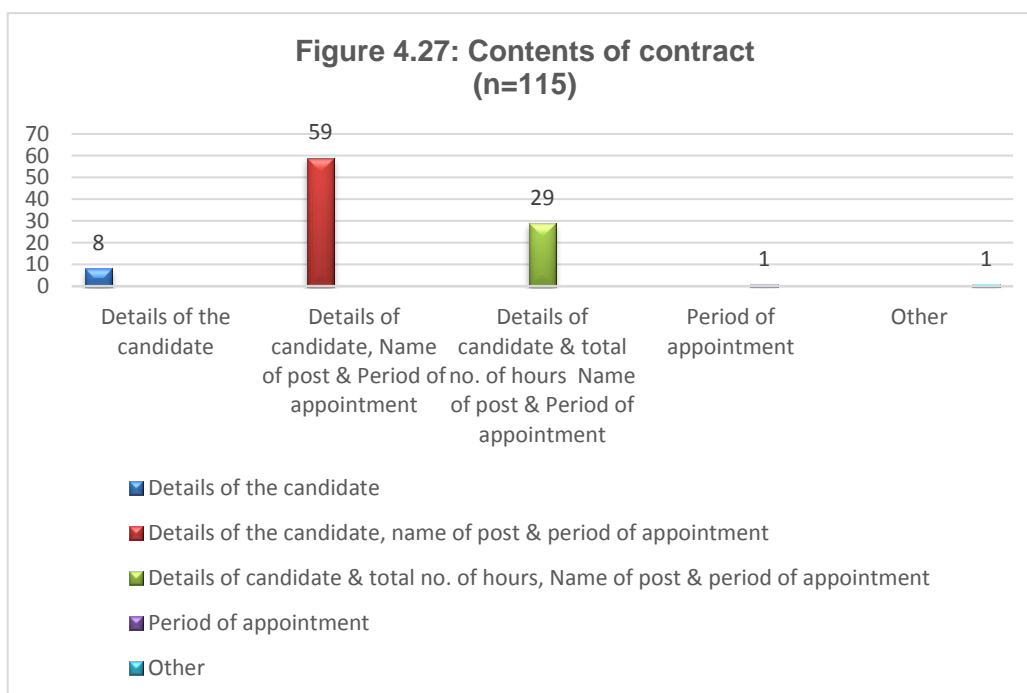
According to Figure 4.27, of the 115 respondents, 59 (51%) indicated that the employment contract contained the details of the candidate, name of post and period of employment, 29 (25%) stated that the contract contained details of the candidate, total number of hours to be worked, name of post and period of employment, 8 (7%) stated that the contract contained the details of the candidate while 1 (1%) indicated that the contents of contract was the period of appointment and 1 (1%) indicated other, but did not indicate what was in the contract. According to human resource practice, the contract contains the details of the candidate, name of post and period of employment (Nel et al. 2011). However, it is noted that 29 (25%) included the number of hours to be worked. One of the institutions in the study has shared their contract document with the researcher which included a predetermined number of hours to be worked by the student so as to balance the total number of hours spent studying and attending classes.

4.3.14 Orientation programme

A very large number, namely 104 (90%) of 115 respondents attended an orientation programme while 7 (6%) did not attend an orientation programme as illustrated in

Figure 4.28, an orientation programme is the initial programme that familiarises the newly-employed member with the environment. A possible reason for not attending such programme could be that some student library assistants are employed later in the year when the orientation period had passed.

Figure 4.28: Orientation Programme (n-115)

7

104

■ Yes ■ No
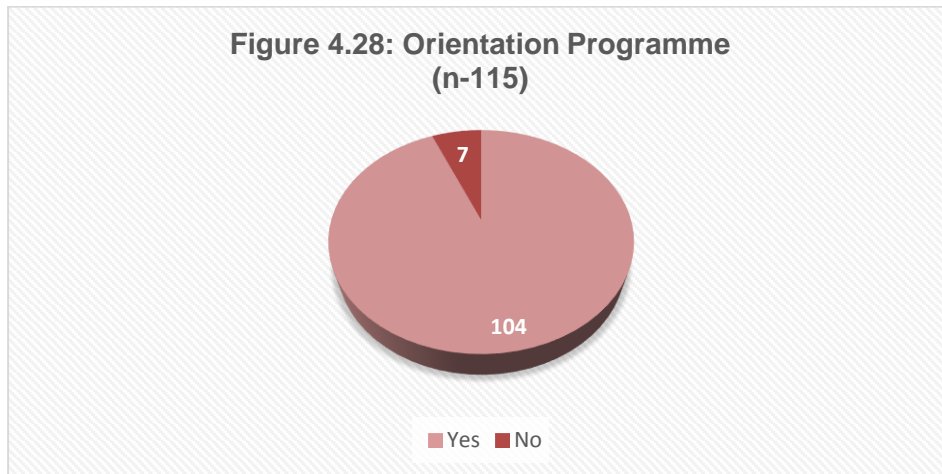
4.3.15 Person responsible for orientation programme

**Figure 4.29:
Person responsible for orientation programme
(n=115)**

Category	Value
Evening Librarians & Stack Attendants	1
Evening Librarians, Circulation Librarians,…	8
Evening Librarians, Circulation Librarians &…	8
Evening Librarians, Circulation Librarians &…	11
Circulation Librarians & Library Assistants	5
Evening Librarians & Circulations Librarians	8
Circulation Librarians & Subject Librarians	5
Library Assistants	5
Subject Librarians	6
Circulation Librarians	41
Evening Librarians	7

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45

Figure 4.29 presents results on the question on the person who conducts the orientation programme of SLAs. Of the 115 respondents, 41 (36%) indicated that the orientation programme was conducted by circulation librarians, 11 (10%) stated evening librarians, circulation librarians and library assistants, 8 (7%) stated evening, circulation and subject librarians, 7 (6%) specified evening librarians, 6 (5%) subject librarians, 5 (4%) circulation librarian, subject librarians and library assistants and 1 (1%) stated evening librarians and stack attendants. A significant finding is that circulation librarians are the key people when conducting orientation programmes. As it is not clear who the designated SLA supervisor is, anyone who works directly with SLAs is involved in the orientation programme. As mentioned by Martinez (2014: 553), new employees begin to gain context and understanding of their new work environment when they tour the library with their supervisor.

4.3.16 Structure of orientation

The structure of orientation is illustrated in Figure 4.30.

Figure 4.30: Structure of orientation (n=115)
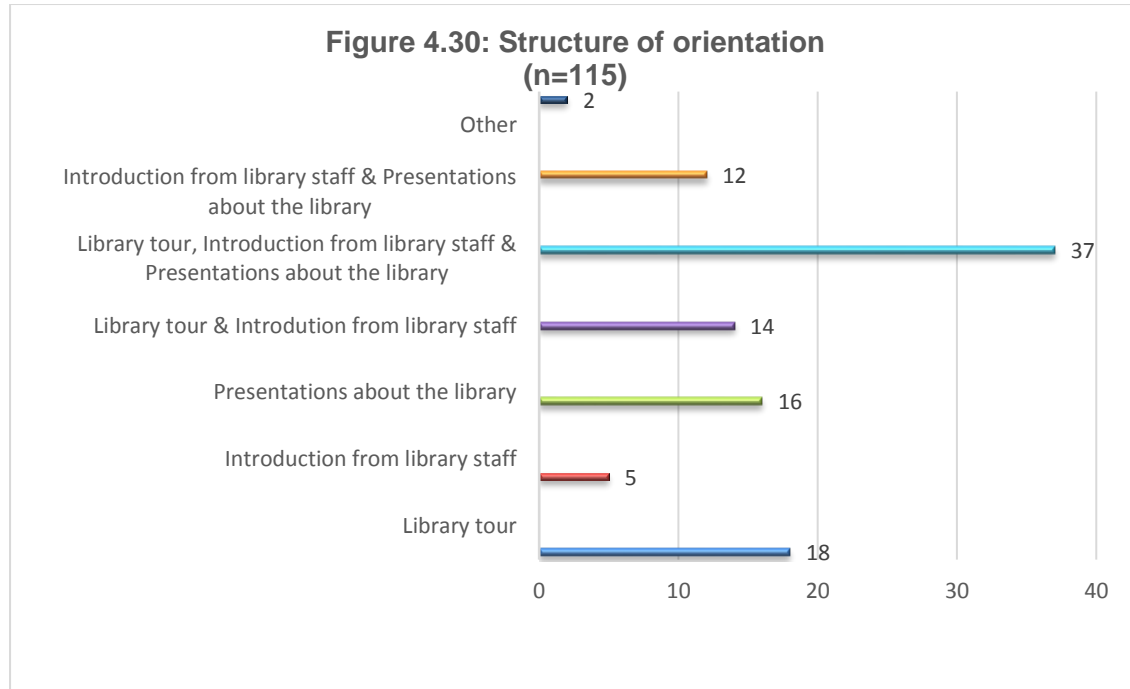
Of the 115 respondents, 37 (43%) indicated that orientation consisted of a library tour, an introduction to library staff and presentations about the library, 18 (16%) indicated

library tour, 16 (18%) presentations about services offered by the library, 14 (12%) library tour and introduction from library staff, 12 (10%) indicated introduction by library staff and presentations about the library, 5 (4%) chose introductions from library staff and 2 (2%) indicated other and did not specify the structure. The results, namely 37 respondents (43%), indicate that properly planned orientation should consist of a library tour, introductions from library staff and presentations about the library services. Martinez (2014: 554) is of the opinion that student employees need to understand each department's role in the library in order to understand how the functioning of each department relates to the library as a whole. A couple of purposeful tours will facilitate understanding. Therefore, a library tour gives students a better understanding of the library structure and its services.

4.3.17 Duration of orientation programme

Figure 4.31 : Duration of Orientation Programme (n=115)
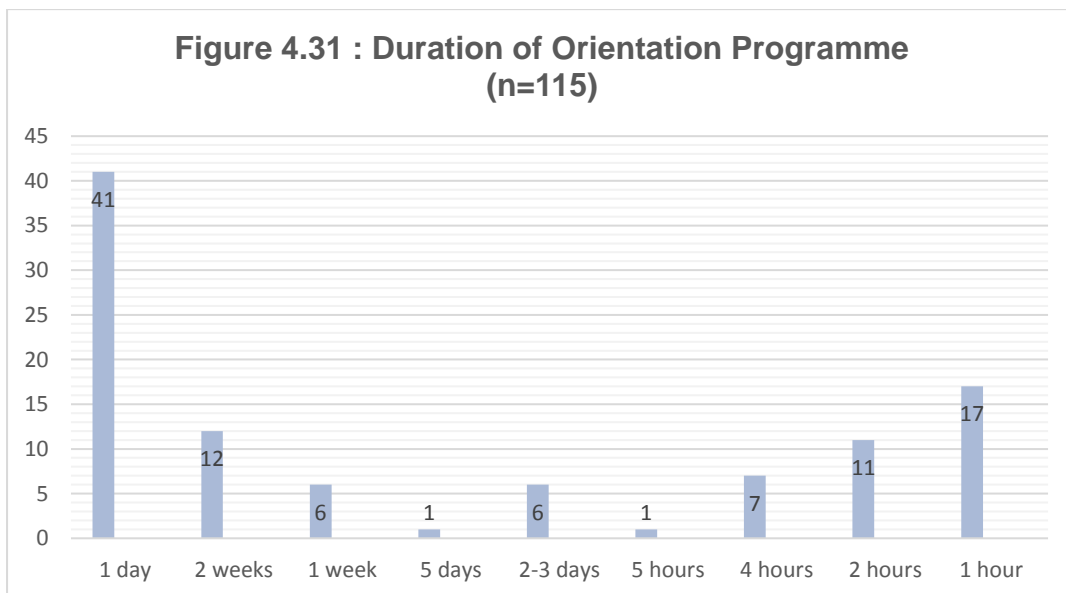
Figure 4.31 illustrates the duration of the orientation programme. Of the total of 115 respondents, 41 (36%) indicated that orientation was one day long, 12 (10%) indicated that the orientation took two weeks, 6 (5%) selected one week, 1 stated 5 days 6 (5%) stated 2-3 days, 6 (5%) selected one week, 1 stated that the orientation programme took 5 hours, 7 (6%) selected 4 hours, 11(10%) stated 2 hours and 17 (15%) indicated that the orientation took 1 hour. It is clear that the duration of the orientation programme varied across all institutions in the study. It was noted that 41

(36%) indicated that orientation lasted for a day. This could probably be due to different library sizes and structures that determine the duration of the library orientation programmes. Institutions where LIS is offered as a programme are most likely to take less time conducting orientation programmes of student library assistants.

4.3.18 Library orientation

Figure 4.32 shows that, of the 115 respondents 109 (95%) indicated that they attended library orientation and 5 (4%) stated that they did not attend library orientation. Many reasons could contribute to SLAs not attending library orientation. A probable reason could be that orientation clashed with their class timetables or it could simply be due to absenteeism. According to literature presented by Martinez (2014: 553), orientation to the library is the first step in effective training. General knowledge about the library should be addressed on the first day, from the location of various collections to the professional behaviour expected from employees. New employees begin to gain context and understanding of their new work environment when they tour the library with their supervisor.

Figure 4.32 : Library Orientation (n=115)

No, 5

Yes, 109

■ Yes ■ No
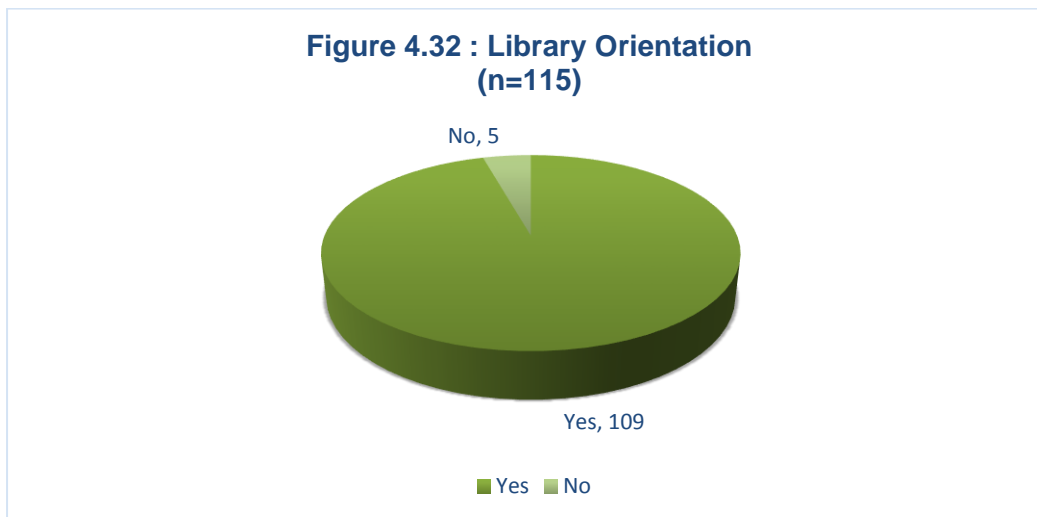
4.3.19 Aspects of library duties that training focused on

Figure 4.33 : Training aspects (n=115)
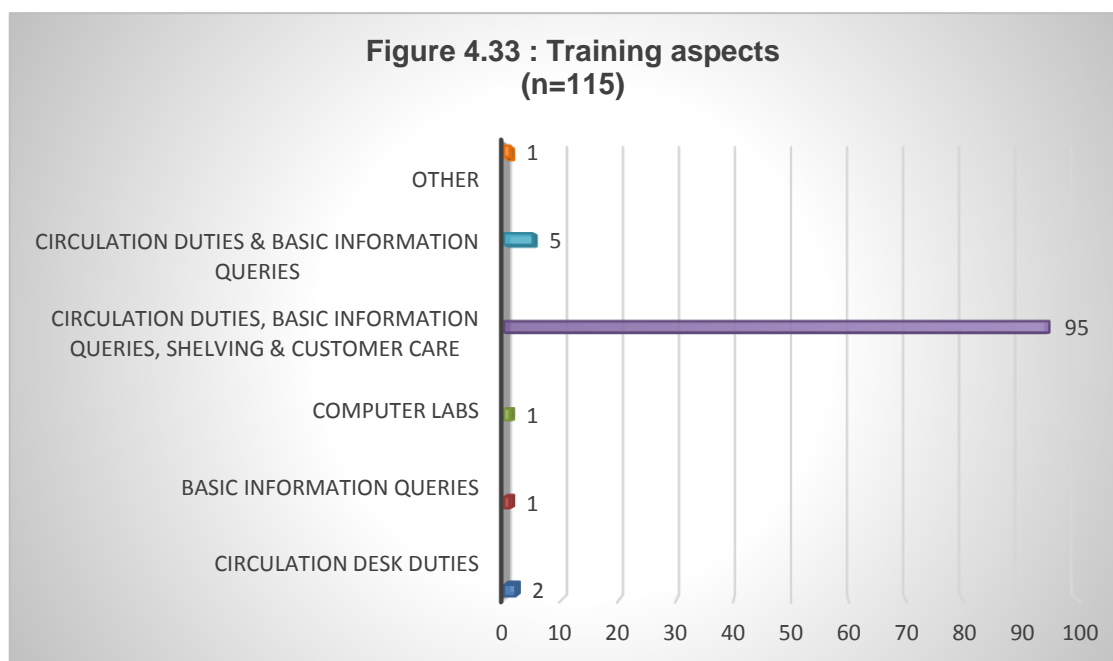
Figure 4.33 shows various aspects of library duties that training focused on. Of the 115 respondents, the majority of 95 (83%) respondents indicated that they were trained on circulation duties, basic information queries, shelving and customer care while 5 (4%) indicated that they were trained on circulation duties and on basic information queries, 2 (2%) indicated that they were trained on circulation desk duties only, 1 (1%) indicated basic information queries, 1 (1%) chose computer laboratories and 1 (1%) indicated other but did not provide details. It is noted from these results that an overwhelming 95 (83%) of respondents received training on important aspects of library functions which are circulation duties, basic information queries, shelving and customer care. A logical reason for these results could be that circulation duties, basic information queries and shelving are the core duties performed by student library assistants after hours. According to Farrell and Driver (2010: 189), the initial training for student assistants includes providing an insider's view of the operation of the library and introductions to each faculty and staff member, including a short description of the staff member's job responsibilities. Other training includes use of the library's circulation system, online research databases, security procedures, confidentiality, money handling procedures, and location of supplies, keys, and worksheets (Farrell and Driver 2010: 189).

4.3.20 Duration of training

Table 4.11: Duration of training

(n=115)

Three weeks	Two weeks	One week	1-4 days	1-4 hours
3	16	41	26	18

Results were analysed and grouped according to number of hours, number of days and number of weeks spent on training. The results were then presented in the form of a table. Table 4.11 illustrates the results of the minimum time spent on training being between 1-4 hours with 18 (16%) respondents and the maximum time spent being 3 weeks with 3 (3%) respondents. Twenty-six (23%) indicated that the duration of training was between 1-4 days, 41 (36%) indicated 1 week and 16 (14%) indicated 2 weeks. Forty-one (36%) indicated that training lasted one week. Although training duration varied, in order for a new employee to function effectively in a new job, training needs to take place. The first few weeks of work for the new student employee should be an organised and efficient time of orientation and deliberate step-by-step training. Kathman and Kathman in Martinez (2014: 553) state that, "By not giving adequate attention to training, supervisors run the risk of not only the inefficient use of valuable resources, but also a bad employment situation for the student, the supervisor, and the library (Martinez, 2014: 553).

4.3.21 Improvement of training programme

While a majority of respondents stated that the training was perfect and did not need improvements, a minority raised the following concerns:

- Training duration should be extended.
- SLAs should be trained individually or in pairs not in groups.
- Manuals should be provided for future reference after the training is completed.
- Training should be conducted every semester.
- More training should be done on library systems, databases and library facilities.
- SLAs should be given a chance to ask questions during training sessions.

- Training should be conducted by staff working in that particular department.

It can be concluded from these responses that different mechanisms in conducting training should be considered and that training programmes should be extended.

4.3.22 Number of hours worked in a day

Table 4.12: Number of hours worked in a day
(n=115)

5-10 hours	2-4hours	1 hour
12	31	1

The number of hours worked were between one hour to ten hours in a day. The majority, namely 31 (27%) respondents worked between 2-4 hours in a day. Those could probably be the undergraduate students while 12 (10%) stated that they worked between 5-10 hours in a day. One respondent indicated 1 hour per day. A probable reason for variations in the number of hours worked could be determined by the seniority of the student library assistants and the number of years working as a student library assistant. Richardson, Evans and Gbadamosi (2014: 304) and McVicar and McKee (2002) suggest that working part-time can adversely affect academic performance, especially if in excess of 15 hours per week. How individuals balance their respective work activities with full-time study appears to be crucial to their academic performance. Texas A & M University makes a statement that student employees must work an average of 20 hours per week (Texas A & M University, 2013: 4).

4.3.23 Number of days worked in a week

Table 4.13: Number of days in a week
(n=115)

1-3 days	4- 5 days
34	11

Table 4.13 illustrates the number of days worked in a week. Thirty-four (30%) respondents worked between 1-3 days while 11 (10%) respondents worked between 4-5 days in a week. The reasoning behind this result could be the number of years working as a student library assistant and the level of experience. The more years of working as an SLA the more experienced they become and the more they are trusted to work and provide good service. A manual compiled by Texas A & M University (2013) states that a student employee's first responsibility is to his or her academic pursuits. Therefore, libraries need to be flexible to accommodate the student's academic schedule and responsibilities, as this will dictate their availability to work.

4.3.24 Rate of pay per hour

Table 4.14: Rate of pay (N=115)

Rate per hour	Number of respondents	Percentage
R50	5	4%
R45	5	4%
R42	1	1%
R40	99	86%
Other	2	2%
No response	3	3%
Total	**112**	**100%**

Of the 115 respondents 112 responded to this question. Findings indicated variations in the rates of pay starting from a minimum rate of R40 an hour to a maximum of R50 an hour. As shown in Table 4.14, ninety-nine respondents indicated that their rate of pay was R40, one indicated that the rate of pay was R42, five indicated that their rate of pay was R45, five indicated that their rate of pay was R50 and 2 indicated that their rate of pay was personal. It was noted that the highest rate paid to student assistants was R50 per hour; this rate may apply to returning students assistants who are well experienced in the job. According to Chapter 4, Section 4.2.26, Table 4.6 one respondent indicated R35 as a rate of pay received by student assistants. However, none of the student assistants mentioned this rate in their responses. This shows a

discrepancy with what was indicated by supervisors. This could mean supervisors were not adequately aware of the rates paid to student library assistants. This could possibly be because salaries were the responsibility of HR. Internationally students are paid an hourly rate based on duties they perform and years of experience. The minimum rate is $5.15 per hour and the maximum is $6.50 per hour, meaning their minimum rate is R67.20 and maximum rate is R84.82 when converted to the South African Rand (University of Florida 2016).

4.3.25 Benefits excluding remuneration received by student library assistants
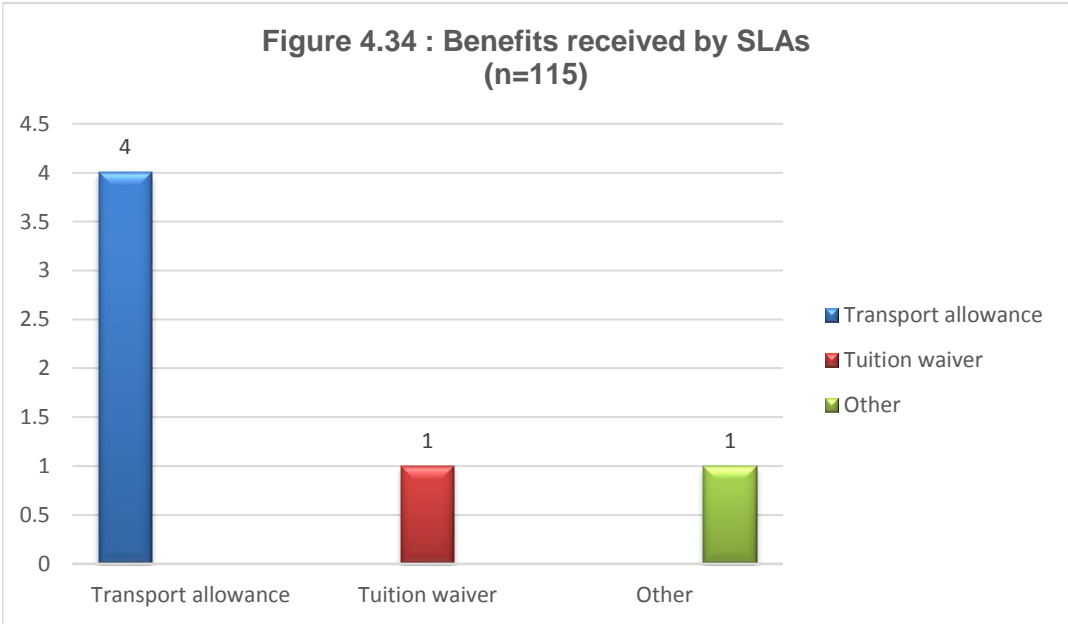
Figure 4.34 illustrates that of the 115 respondents 4 (3%) stated that they received transport allowance, 1 (1%) indicated a tuition waiver and 1 (1%) selected other, and the benefit received was longer periods for borrowing books. A probable reason for these results could be that the nature of student library assistants' employment does not come with benefits since they are part-time employees. Jacobson and Shuyler (2013: 548) highlight that besides the financial incentives for working, students also benefit by developing skills that will serve them well in the classroom and in later careers, for example, new, challenging experiences on the job can help students build

their confidence and develop skills in time management, organisation, interpersonal communication and leadership.

4.3.26 Salary deductions

Figure 4.35 : Salary deductions (n=115)
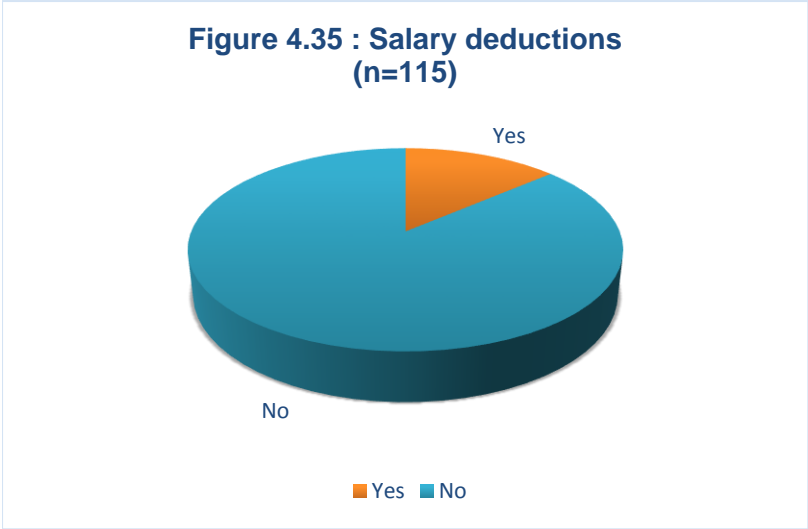
As illustrated in Figure 4.35, of the 115 respondents 15 (13%) revealed that there was a deduction made by the institution from their salaries and 95 (83%) stated that there were no deductions made from their salaries. This could be informed by different policies that govern the institutions. Some institutions see employing student library assistants as a way of helping students to reduce the debt owing to the university while some see it as the way of equipping students in general and preparing them for the real world of working. Therefore, it may be possible that a portion that is deducted from student assistant's salaries goes towards repayment of student's university fees.

4.3.27 Challenges

Figure 4.36 : Challenges faced by SLAs (n=115)
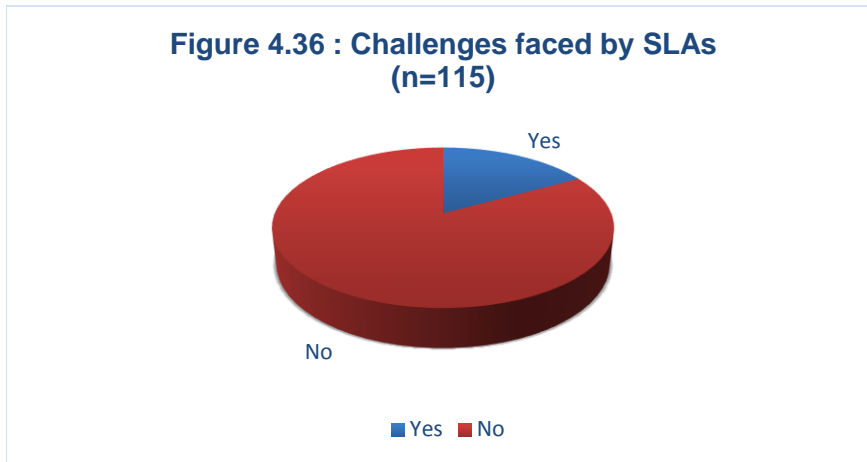
Figure 4.36 shows that of the 115 respondents, 19 (17%) faced challenges and 93 (81%) did do not have challenges while working as student library assistants. As mentioned in Chapter 1 Section 1.2, one of the aims of this study was to determine the challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with them. Responses from SLAs stated the following challenges:

- Library systems are too complicated and have too many restrictions.
- Permanent staff members do not respect SLAs
- Fellow students demand favours from SLAs
- Transport is a problem at night
- Points of duty are not rotated

In summary, it can be concluded from the responses that SLAs do face challenges related to the nature of their work.

4.3.28 Value of working as a SLA

Student library assistants shared their sentiments regarding the values of working as a SLA. The following views were captured. Woking as a SLA

- adds valuable exposure and working experience,
- assists financially,
- enhances and empowers with set of skills that are required in the real world (communication skills, problem-solving skills, computer skills, interpersonal

skills, time management, accuracy, work under pressure), and

- a good knowledge of books is acquired.

4.3.29 General comments

The student library assistants shared the following sentiments regarding their employment as student library assistants:

- Working as a student library assistant is beneficial to both the library and the student because without SLAs, extension of the library services would not be possible in the evenings.
- Working in the library is lays the groundwork for building personal character, work ethics and professionalism.
- Working as a SLA increases network opportunities.
- Rate of pay should be revised because SLAs do not receive any benefits.
- The library environment is conducive for work.
- Working as a SLA is an advantage for LIS students to gain relevant experience while studying.
- More credit should be given to SLAs since they are a valuable asset to the library.
- Work experience is essential, even if you are a not a LIS student.
- Working as a SLA is challenging at first, but as the year progresses its gets easier, rewarding and fulfilling.
- Working as a SLA is beneficial for people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- SLAs should get clear communication and clear orders.
- Working as a SLA motivates you to do better in your studies.

In summary, when students are employed in the library they receive help with financing their education and develop important skills that will be useful in securing meaningful employment after they graduate.

4.3.30 Summary

This chapter analysed in great detail findings that were obtained from the questionnaires that were distributed to respondents. The objectives of the study were to survey the recruitment and selection procedure of SLAs, establish the number of hours worked and the rate of pay of SLAs and determine the challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants. Issues that this research aims to answer amongst others are: the recruitment and selection practices were used when employing SLAs, training provided to SLAs, number of hours worked by SLAs across all academic libraries under investigation, remuneration and challenges faced by SLAs and challenges encountered by supervisors when working with student library assistants.   Findings were supported by relevant literature review.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings of the survey of a comparative study of employment patterns of student library assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter discusses the main findings of the study in the context of the objectives of the study as well as in the context of reviewed literature. Based on the presented discussions, the study draws conclusions and makes recommendations. The objectives of the study were to:

- survey the recruitment and selection procedure of SLAs
- establish the number of hours worked and the rate of pay of SLAs
- determine the challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the study had to answer the following questions:

- What recruitment and selection practices were used when employing SLAs?
- Was the training provided to SLAs adequate?
- Did SLAs work the same number of hours across all academic libraries under investigation?
- How were the SLAs compensated?
- What were the challenges faced by SLAs and challenges encountered by supervisors when working with student library assistants?

5.2   Conclusion

This section presents the conclusion drawn from the results in Chapter Four.

5.2.1 Advertising of student library assistant posts

Reale (2013: 7), mentioned in Chapter 2, highlighted that initially the common practice internationally was that student assistants were recruited broadly via the university's student recruitment service and by word of mouth. Nowadays students are recruited from target groups, including post-graduate students, and priority is given to library studies students. This study in Chapter 4, section 4.2.7 shows that supervisors prefer to advertise and recruit SLAs using institutional websites and institutional notice boards. Student library assistants make use of institutional websites and notice boards when checking for SLA positions. These results are an indication that SLAs also seem to favour both these methods of advertising, which are institutional websites and notice boards.

5.2.2 Interviews conducted with SLAs

All the supervisors (100%) stated that interviews were conducted for SLA positions and a large percentage (91%) of student library assistants indicated that they did attend interviews as part of their recruitment and selection process. This practice is common in the literature reviewed, namely that interviews are not held only to obtain first-hand information about the students, such as their majors, their hometown, interests and extracurricular activity, but also to give students enough information about the job to help them decide if the library is in fact the place they want to be (Reale 2013: 7). This study has revealed that a small portion of student library assistants did not attend interviews due to being employed in the middle of the contract as a replacement for students who had left the job during the year.

5.2.3. Students studying towards a Library and Information Studies qualification to be given preference over students from other programmes

Of the 11 respondents (Chapter 4 Section 4.2.8), nine (82%) respondents were of the opinion that students studying towards a LIS qualification should be given preference when it comes to employment of SLAs. O'Neil and Comley (2010: 105) also state that some libraries believe that a combination of returning students, library studies students

and postgraduates appears to deliver more mature student employees. However, since a LIS qualification is not offered in all universities in KwaZulu-Natal, this statement becomes subjective. However, two of the respondents mentioned that all students can perform library work as long as they are well trained. Logan (2012) is of the opinion that library studies do not teach everything individuals need to know to be a good librarian and that knowledge comes from on-the-job experience.

5.2.4. Training provided to SLAs

This study has revealed that training is provided to newly employed SLAs. There is much emphasis on training in the literature consulted. In order for students to perform duties excellently, they need to receive thorough training (Erasmus et al. 2010). One of the objectives of this study was to find out if training was adequate. Results in Chapter 4 section 4.2.15 indicated that 8 (73%) stated that training occurred one time upon hiring only. The students' responses (Section 4.3.20) indicated that the maximum duration of orientation programmes was three weeks; however, Mitchell and Soini (2014: 600) emphasise that regular and ongoing monitoring and rapidly adjusted training as needed not only increases students' and librarians' satisfaction, but also maintain students' interest in the job.

5.2.5 Number of hours worked by SLAs

Results indicated that SLAs worked for a range of between 1-10 hours a day depending on the seniority and the number of years working as a student library assistant. From the results one can conclude that only a postgraduate student could work a minimum of 10 hours a day. Folk (2014: 181) emphasises that the use of student library assistants requires a high level of flexibility, particularly in relation to rostering and hours worked due to the fact that a student's academic progress and success is their primary task.

5.2.6 Remuneration of SLAs

This study revealed that SLAs received a minimum of R40 per hour to a maximum R50 per hour. Again, this could be based on the number of years' experience working as a student library assistant. This study further found that pay was not the only factor attracting and keeping student assistants in their job, but flexibility, work environment and meaningful work did. One of the values mentioned by SLAs in Chapter 4, section 4.2.28 was that working as SLA enhances and empowers one with a set of skills that are required in the real world (communication skills, problem-solving skills, computer skills, interpersonal skills, time management, accuracy, and work under pressure). The influence of the supervisor extends beyond pay and can affect students' performance and level of satisfaction.

5.2.7 Challenges faced by SLAs and supervisors working with student library assistants

Results as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.29 revealed that all 11 (100%) supervisors do experience challenges when working with student assistants. According to literature reviewed in Chapter 2, Farrell and Driver (2010: 187) argue that by its very nature, the student assistant job is temporary. As a result, the students do not view the job as a "real" job, but as a stepping stone to their chosen occupation. It is simply a way to pay the bills and make ends meet while attending college. The challenges that are experienced internationally seem to be common nationally as well, such as the issue of rostering and high unexpected turnover during examination times. Other issues that stem from hiring student assistants as highlighted by Stanfield and Palmer (2010) are punctuality, retention, attendance and students socialising with friends while on duty.

Of the 115 student respondents, 19 (17%) indicated that they do face challenges and 93 (81%) indicated that they do not encounter challenges while working as student library assistants. The challenges stated by SLAs included that library systems were too complicated and have too many restrictions, thus making it difficult for them to perform their duties, permanent staff members do not respect SLAs, fellow students

demand favours from SLAs, transport becomes a problem at night and points of duty were not rotated (the same students working on shelves and the same working at the circulation desk). Student library assistants raised valid challenges that hinders them in performing their duties well.

5.3 Recommendations of the study

Based on the discussions and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

5.3.1 Advertising of SLA posts

The study has revealed in Chapter 4 section 4.2.7 that academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal, when advertising student library assistants' positions, make relatively more use of institutional websites compared to other methods of advertising. The study also noted that a large percentage of student library assistants make use of institutional notice boards when checking for student library assistants' posts. Therefore, it is recommended that supervisors advertise where students look when searching for posts, in this case in institutional notice boards. This study can further recommend that academic libraries make use of social media platforms as endorsed by (O'Neil and Comley 2010), who continues to state it helps to target ideal candidates, have a large pool to select from and recruitment happens at a low cost because social networks such as Facebook charges on a pay-per-click basis.

5.3.2 Interviews conducted with SLAs

It is recommended that when employing student library assistants all employment procedures according to institutional policies should be followed including conducting interviews with all candidates. According to the model developed for Texas A & M University (2013: 7) for the supervisor, interviewing is a time to gather information about the candidate. For the student, interviewing is an invaluable lesson. A student's professional development begins with the application and interview process. This study in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.10 found that there were shortcomings when it comes to interviews conducted with student library assistants. This can be addressed by

ensuring that all potential students undergo recruitment and selection procedures as stipulated in the university's Human Resources policy. This should also apply when recruiting SLAs to replace the ones who have left during mid-term. It is best practice to interview as many students as possible to get the best suitable for the position.

5.3.3 Training provided to SLAs

Literature conducted in this study in Chapter 2 section 2.4 confirmed that training is a pertinent aspect when it comes to the employment of student library assistants. Mitchell and Soini (2014: 594) confirm that training student library assistants effectively is fundamental to the success of academic library services where students are often the primary contact with patrons. Student library assistants play an ever more integral role in the operation of university libraries; thus, training them is essential and having an effective training programme is imperative. Reale (2013:16) argues that students often want to do well and want to be perceived as capable, but if libraries do not provide them with training, they put them in the unfair position of failing. Lack of training is a failure on the library's part and not on students'. This study has revealed that training is provided to newly employed SLAs upon hiring only; therefore, the duration of training is regarded as inadequate. It is recommended that academic libraries do look at providing adequate and ongoing training to SLAs. Mitchell and Soini (2014: 600) mention that supplying students with regular and on-going monitoring and rapidly adjusting training as needed not only increase student and librarian satisfaction, but also maintain students' interest, and provide relief for overburdened librarians and budgets. Although the results in Section 4.2.15 of 11 respondents 8 (73%) stated that training occurred once upon hiring and 3 (27%) indicated that training took place as the need arose those results were not including the duration of training which is discussed in Section 4.2.19 and Section 4.2.20 which confirms that there is a follow up training provided to SLAs when the need arise. It is also recommended that new procedures and technology that emerges during the year are reviewed and incorporated in the training throughout the year to keep students on par with latest technologies and ensure that they can perform their duties well without any hindrance. Students that libraries employ nowadays are born in the technology era and they learn

by doing; therefore, for effective learning and instruction to take place, training should incorporate interactive quizzes as opposed to verbal instructions.

5.3.4 Library guide

The study has revealed in Chapter 4 section 4.2.21 that not all academic libraries who participated in this study have a library guide prepared for SLAs. The library guide helps students become familiar with the workings of the library with a specific focus on the circulation processes. The guide contains information that students must have when reporting for work, library rules, work schedules, policies, dress code, circulation procedures, shelf and shelf reading procedures. Martinez (2014: 553) states that having a checklist or a guide might prove to be helpful so that every new employee acquires the same information on how to go about performing a certain task. Supervisors cannot assume new employees know any of the library functions because some students have never worked in libraries before, so the new work experience may be intimidating; therefore, in a large academic library the guide should cover a great deal of information. In addition, it is recommended that all academic libraries have a library guide for students to refer to when they encounter challenges in the absence of the supervisor in the evening.

5.3.5 Benefits received by SLAs

Due to the nature of student employment, it does not come with benefits because students are part-time employees; however, it is recommended that SLAs be rewarded at the end of the contract for their hard work in the library. Some of the good rewarding systems as indicated by Texas A & M University (2013: 18) are in the form of certificates or badges, vouchers and sometimes written testimonials that they can use when applying for their first jobs, having a student employee award week and student nomination for a student employee of the year.

5.4 Model for employing student library assistants

At the Texas A & M University (2013: 4) the process of employing student library assistants is funded by the library on an annual basis, enabling students to work in the library on casual contracts during extended hours for a maximum of 20 hours per week to provide the following services:

- Render circulation duties after-hours

- Provide basic information queries

- Assist with online public access catalogue (OPAC) searches

- Man computer laboratories

- Shelve library materials

- Assist in Learning Commons (an online place to conduct research)

This initiative appears to have been highly successful in both providing benefits for the students employed and the challenges faced by libraries when it comes to staffing. The nature of student library assistant employment is interim or temporary and incidental to the pursuit of a degree or certification. At the same time, employers should not expect any less in performance or accountability just because an employee is a student.

This study was conducted amongst academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal, namely Durban University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This study revealed that student employment now accounts for about 25% of staff in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. Texas A & M University (2013: 18) has revealed a good model that can be adopted by and shared at universities in South Africa. Based on the factors outlined in the earlier paragraphs, in keeping with the aim of the study, a flow chart is presented that illustrates good employment practices of student library assistants.

In using the best practices obtained from this study and adopting aspects of Texas A & M university model, the following South African model is developed.

Figure 4.37 Flowchart of employment practice of student library assistants

Model for Employing Student Library Assistants

Step 1	Library Management (with the Supervisor)
Step 1.1	Needs
Step 1.2	Job Profile
Step 1.3	Budget
Step 2	Advertisement
Step 3	Recruitment and Selection
Step 4	Interview
Step 5	Student Library Assistants Orientation and Training
Step 6	Employment of Student Library Assistants
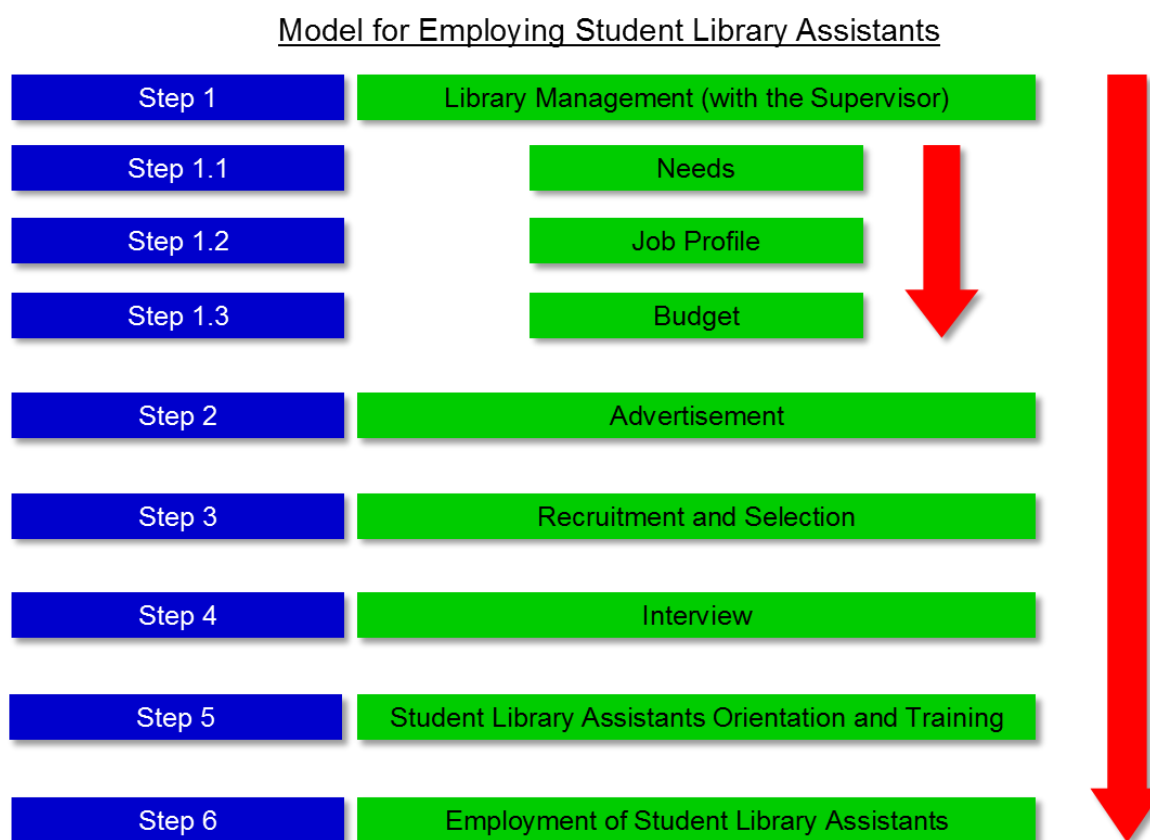
5.4.1 Model for employing Student Library Assistants

Step 1

This model is developed from the best practices and the flow chart explains the recommended process which starts from the Library Management

5.4.2. Needs analysis – Step 1.1

Employing SLAs in academic libraries is a trend that is followed both nationally and internationally. This is due to financial constraints that libraries face within institutions (Wu 2003: 141). Employing students tends to be the more cost-effective practice rather than to employ full-time staff (Radebe 2014). Students from all faculties are eligible to apply; however, within the institutions where the Library and Information Studies programme is offered, preference is given to those students who are studying

towards the LIS qualification. Library management working with the supervisor must contact Human Resources regarding the employment of student library assistants and must formulate the job profile as well as the job description and forward it to HR. This function is not dependent on any other activity or any department.

5.4.3. Job profile – Step 1.2

Creating a job profile of a student library assistant is the responsibility of a Library Management within academic libraries, working together with the evening librarian or evening supervisor. Factors to consider when determining administrative needs are:

- That student employee's first responsibility is to his or her academic pursuits. Libraries need to be adaptable to students' academic schedules and responsibilities.
- Student assistants should not be used to replace full-time positions.
- The resources available to hire student assistants should be determined.
- The best approach is to determine how many students are needed and determine the duties they should perform and the number of hours available per student according to stipulations of the Human Resources department.

This step is crucial in ascertaining what tasks will be performed by SLAs once they are employed.

5.4.4 Budget – Step 1.3

Library management together with Human Resources establish if there are funds available to appoint student assistants before creating an advert. If funds are available Human resources than notifies the Library management and together they create an advert for the vacancies. If funds are not available the process then stops with HR notifying the Library management.

5.4.5. Advertising of student library assistant positions - Step 2

In principle, the Human Resources department is responsible for recruitment and selection, employment training and development of staff, compensation, benefits, performance management and discipline, personnel records, health and safety of

employees, and efforts to improve quality and productivity, according to Nel et al. (2011: 6). The following methods are the most useful when advertising SLAs positions:

- Institutional websites
- Institutional notice boards
- Libraries' social networks (Facebook, Twitter and library blogs)

5.4.6 Recruitment and selection of student library assistants and determining the rate of pay – Step 3

Nel et al. (2011: 23) refer to recruiting as the process of attracting potential job applicants from the available labour force. Supervisors must work in conjunction with Human Resources department when recruiting and selecting student assistants. Once SLAs are employed, the Human Resources department assists in developing employment contracts and files SLAs' contract records. Rates of pay and the number of hours worked by student assistants are also determined by the Human Resources department, guided by policies of the university.

5.4.7 Interviewing student library assistants – Step 4

Human Resources together with library management and supervisors of student library assistants should be members on the panel during interviews. The following principles apply:

- All students selected should be invited for interviews
- All candidates should be asked the same questions in the same manner
- Each candidate should be rated immediately during the interview
- All candidates should be notified of the results thereafter
- Students who fill positions in the course of the year should also undergo a similar process.

5.4.8 Orientation and training of student library assistants – Step 5

Circulation librarian, subject librarians, library assistants, evening librarians and stack attendants are involved in orientating student assistants; however, circulation

librarians and evening librarians are the key role players when conducting orientation programmes. Martinez (2014: 553) state that new employees begin to gain context and understanding of their new work environment when they tour the library with their supervisor. Therefore, orientation plays an integral part in student library assistants' lives. All SLAs must undergo ongoing orientation in the following areas: circulation desks, computer labs, information desk, shelves, answering basic information queries, answering of telephone, and orientation should not be limited to customer care service only.

Training. The effective training of student library assistants is fundamental to the success of academic library service where students are often the primary contact with patrons. Often student assistants are trained by staff members working in a particular section of the library, the reason being that every section has its own ways of doing things. Staff working in that section will have experience and be aware of the challenges they encounter, which they will then share with student assistants. When training student assistants, the following should be kept in mind:

- Adequate and ongoing training throughout the year
- Interactive training programmes
- Training should follow current technological trends
- Review of training programmes annually.

Library guide. As part of training, students should be provided with a guide containing information that students need when reporting for work, library rules, work schedules, policies, dress code, circulation procedures, shelf and shelf reading procedures. This guide must be a pocket-size guide, easy to read, and be used as a reference tool when students encounter problems after hours. A similar guide should be made available in an electronic format and be incorporated in the library workflow system.

5.4.9 Employment of student library assistants – Step 6

Student library assistants resumes duties based on what is drafted in their employment contract which includes hours to be worked in a day, total number of hours in a week and their rate of pay per hour.

5.5 Ways of rewarding SLAs in the absence of benefits

It is standard practice in libraries that SLAs, since they are part-time employees, do not enjoy benefits. Good human resources practice is for employers to reward employees one way or the other. Some of the rewards for SLAs are the following:

- Certificates of service
- Badges
- SLA of the month awards
- Free stationery for SLAs
- Free library branded T-shirts
- Goodie bags once a quarter
- Minimal retail vouchers
- Attending a free conference or seminar

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List of Appendices

Appendix A

GATE KEEPER'S LETTER

I am a Masters student in Library and Information Studies at the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at Durban University of Technology (DUT). I am currently conducting a comparative study on employment practices of Student Library Assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu Natal in fulfilment of my Master of Technology requirement.

Your assistance is kindly requested to grant me access to administer questionnaires in your library in order to ascertain relevant information for the above research study. The questionnaires will be issued out to Student Library Assistants as well as their supervisors. It is estimated that the questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes of their time. This study aims to compare and develop a model on employment practices of Student Library Assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu Natal. Findings will be shared amongst all academic libraries in KwaZulu Natal.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Queen Mthembu

Student no: 20354296

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Supervisors

Questionnaire on employment practices of Student Library Assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu-Natal

Please answer all questions. Please tick the appropriate box.

1. Please state your gender.

Male	
Female	

2. Which of the following Institutions are you currently employed at?

Name of the University	Choice
Durban University of Technology (DUT)	
Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)	
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)	
University of Zululand (UNIZULU)	

3. Kindly state your designation?

    ……………………………………………………

4. Please indicate the number of years in your current position.

    …………………………

5. How long have you been supervising Student Library Assistants?

Number of Years Supervising	Tick
0-1 year	
2-3 years	
4-5 years	
6 years and more	

6. Is it important to employ Student Library Assistants?

Yes	
No	

    Please elaborate.

    ……
    ……
    ………

7. How do you advertise Student Library Assistant posts at your Institution? (**You may tick more than one option**)

Institutional Website	
Institutional Notice boards	
Institutional Newsletters	

Word of mouth	
Other, specify	

8. Who is eligible to apply for Student Library Assistants positions?

Students studying towards LIS qualifications	
Registered students from all courses	
Other, specify	

9. What are the requirements to be employed as a Student Library Assistant? (**You may tick more than one option)**

Full time registered student	
Part time registered student	
Financially needy student	
Good academic record	
Second or third year student	
Other, specify	

10. As a Supervisor do you think students studying towards a Library and Information Studies qualification should be given preference over students from other programs?

Yes	
No	

10.1 If you answered **Yes** please elaborate on your choice of answer by choosing from the options below. (**You may tick more than one answer**)

LIS students are easy to train	
LIS students need library experience	
Library work is more valuable to LIS students	
LIS students understand the nature of library service	
LIS is not offered in my institution	
Other, specify	

10.2 If you answered **No** to **Question 10** please share your reasons.

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………

11. Are interviews conducted for Student Library Assistants posts?

Yes	
No	

12. If **Yes**, who sits on the interview panel? (**You may tick more than one option)**

Library Director	
Library Deputy Director	
Evening Librarian	
Circulation Librarian	
Human Resources Representative	
Union Representative	
Other, specify	

13. If the Human Resources Department (HR) is involved in the employment of Student Library Assistants, what is the role of the HR? **(You may tick more than one option)**

They sit in interviews	
They assist in selection and recruitment of Student Library Assistants	
They develop employment contracts	
They file Student Library Assistants records	
Other, specify	

14. Do you provide training to newly employed Student Library Assistants?

Yes	
No	

If you answered **Yes** to **Question14** answer **Question 15 to Question 20**, If **No** then proceed to **Question 21**

15. When does the training occur?

One time only (upon hiring)	
Every Semester	
As needed	
Other, specify	

16. How is the training structured? (**You may tick more than one option)**

One on one basis	
In groups of Student Library Assistants	
In groups of Student Library Assistants and library staff	
Other, specify	

17. Which aspects of library services/ facilities are Student Library Assistants trained on? (**You may tick more than one option)**

Circulation desk duties	
Basic information queries	
OPAC searches	
Online databases (e.g. SABINET, Science Direct)	
Computer laboratories	

Shelving of library materials	
Answering of telephonequette	
Other, specify	

18. Who is involved in the training of Student Library Assistants? (**You may tick more than one option)**

Subject Librarians	
Circulation Librarians	
Evening Librarians	
Library Assistants	
Stack Attendants	
Other, specify	

19. How long is the training provided to Student Library Assistants?

0-1 week	
2-3 weeks	
4 weeks and more	
Other, specify	

20. Is there a follow up training conducted to Student Library Assistants during their period of employment?

Yes	
No	

21. Is there a library guide prepared for Student Library Assistants?

Yes	
No	

22. If you answered **Yes** to Question **21** what is contained in the library guide? **You may tick more than one answer.**

Customer care guidelines	
Guidelines on how to answer the telephone	
Basic instructions on OPAC searches	
Contact numbers of key people in the library	
Brief summary of library resources and how to use them	
Other, specify	

23. What type of duties do Student Library Assistants perform? **(You may tick more than one choice)**

Circulation desk duties	
Basic information queries	
OPAC searches	
Online databases (e.g. SABINET, ScienceDirect)	
Computer laboratories	
Shelving of library materials	
Answering of telephonequette	
Other, specify	

24. How would you rate Student Library Assistants performance in terms of the following duties they perform? Please rate using the codes below:

1	Poor	2	Fair	3	Average	4		Good	5	Excellent

Points	1	2	3	4	5
Circulation desk duties					
Shelving library materials					
Handling and solving problems					
Answering telephones					
Computer laboratories					

25. Do Student Library Assistants receive benefits such as the ones listed below? **(You may tick the ones they receive)**

Transport allowance	
Tuition weaver	
Housing allowance	
Other, specify	

26. How much are Student Library Assistants paid an hour?

………………………………………

27. Do you ever receive compliments about Student Library Assistants?

Yes	
No	

If you answered **Yes**, please describe the nature of these compliments.

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28. Do you ever receive complaints about the service offered by Student Library Assistants?

Yes	
No	

If you answered **Yes**, please describe the nature of the complaints.

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………..

29. What are the challenges you encounter when supervising Student Library Assistants?

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30. Please provide general comments with regards to the employment of Student Library Assistants.

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Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix C

Questionnaire for student library assistants

Questionnaire on employment practices of Student Library Assistants in academic libraries in KwaZulu Natal

Please answer all questions. Please tick the appropriate box.

1. Please state your gender.

Male	
Female	

2. Which age category do you fall within?

15-20 years	
21-25 years	
26-30 years	
Above 30 years	

3. Please state the number of years working as a Student Library Assistant.

0-1 year	
2-3 years	
4-5 years	
Over 5 years	

4. Which University are you currently studying at?

Name of University	**Tick**
Durban University of Technology (DUT)	
Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)	
University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN)	
University of Zululand (UNIZULU)	

5. What is the field of your study? (e.g. ND: Human Resources; ND: Library and Information Studies etc.)

    ………………………………………………………………………….

6. What level of study are you registered for?

First year	
Second year	
Third year	
Fourth year	
Postgraduate	

7. How were you informed about the Student Library Assistant position?

Institutional Website	
Institutional Notice Boards	
Institutional Newsletter	
Social Networks	
Other, specify	

8. When you applied for the Student Library Assistants position what were the requirements?
You may tick more than one option.

Full time registered student	
Part time registered student	
Financially needy student	
Good academic record	
Other, specify	

9. What documents were required when applying for the post of Student Library Assistant?
You may tick more than one option.

Documents	Choice
Application letter	
Curriculum Vitae	
Academic record	
Copy of Matric certificate/ Grade 12	
Proof of registration	
Other, specify	

10. Were you invited for a job interview?

Yes	
No	

11. If **Yes**, who was present in the interview panel? (**You may tick more than one choice)**

Library Director	
Library Deputy Director	
Evening Librarian	
Circulation Librarian	
Human Resources Representative	
Union Representative	
Other, specify	

12. How were you informed of the outcome of the interview? (**You may tick more than one answer)**

Results were published on the Institutional Website	
Results were published on the Institutional Notice Boards	
Results were sent via Emails	
Candidates were informed via telephone calls	
Other, specify	

13. When you were employed, did you sign an employment contract?

Yes	
No	

14. If you answered **Yes** to question 13, what was contained in the contract? (**You can tick more than one option**)

Details of the candidate	
Name of post	
Duties to be performed	
Period of appointment	
Total number of hours to be worked	
Other, specify	

15. Once you were employed did you attend an orientation programme?

Yes	
No	

If **No**, continue to question 19.

16. Who conducted the orientation programme? (**You may tick more than one option)**

Evening Librarians	
Circulation Librarians	
Subject Librarians	
Library Assistants	
Stack Attendants	

17. How was the orientation structured? **(You may choose more than one option)**

Library tour	
Introduction from library staff	
Presentations about the library	
Other, specify	

18. How long was the orientation programme?

…………………………………………………………………………

19. Did you attend library training?

Yes	
No	

20. If you answered **Yes** to Question 19, what aspects of the listed library duties were you trained on? (**You may tick more than one option)**

Circulation desk duties	
Basic information queries	
OPAC searches	
Online databases (e.g. Sabinet, Science direct)	
Computer laboratories	
Shelving of library materials	
Answering of telephonequette	
Other, specify	

21. What was the duration of the training provided?

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22. How can the training programme be improved?

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23. How many hours do you normally work in a day?

……………………………………………

24. How many days do you work in a week?

……………………………………………

25. How much are you paid per hour?

……………………………………………

26. Which of the listed benefits do you receive? (**You may tick more than one option**)

Transport allowance	
Tuition weaver	
Housing allowance	
Other, specify	

27. Does your institution deduct any of your salary towards the payment of your tuition fees?

Yes	
No	

28. Do you encounter any challenges as a Student Library Assistant?

Yes	
No	

If you answered **Yes**, please state what are the challenges.

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……..
……

29. Does working as a Student Library Assistant add value to your life? **Please elaborate.**

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……
………..

30. Please provide general comments about working as a Student Library Assistant.

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Thank you for your co-operation.