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The winner of the Most Popular Poster Category at the 2023 INORMS Congress Dr. Patrina Monde Mabuku (right), the SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management (SGSP-IWRM) Post-Doctoral Researcher pictured with Dr. Colin Stanley, Acting NUST Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research, Innovation and Partnerships (left).

POSTCARD

Doctoral Student Support: A SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management Model

Doctoral Student Support: A SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management Model

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1 Introduction

The SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management (SGSP – IWRM) is a PhD academic programme that was developed by Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL) in response to a need for adequate human resources in water management and sciences particularly in SASSCAL member countries (Figure 1) and SAOC in general. The programme is fully funded by the German Government through the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and it is hosted by the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in collaboration with International Centre for Water Resources and Global Change – ICWRIGC (<https://ra.gy/1172>). The programme currently has 13 students from the five SASSCAL member countries who are registered in four PhD programmes as indicated in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

2 Problem statement

It is estimated that 40% of the students who begin their doctoral programme fail to complete (Golden, 2015). According to Garner and Powers (2009), attrition rate is greatest in first year and mostly for female students due to uncertainties of the future. Doctoral programme can be challenging requiring dedication, perseverance and support to succeed. In order to succeed, doctoral support system can play a critical role in students academic and personal life.

3 Objectives

The objectives of the study was to determine the support provided by the SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management to the thirteen registered PhD students and to determine how satisfied they are in receiving the support.

4 Methodology

Data was collected and analyzed using the following:

- Online-survey to 10 students
- Face-to-face interview with 2 SGSP staff members
- Literature review
- Data analysis using descriptive statistics (Excel)

5 Results

Financial support

Students are provided with financial support which covers the following:

- Tuition & registration fees
- Monthly stipend
- Research funds
- Health insurance
- Research support
- Medical insurance
- Boarding fees
- Study permits

Overall financial support satisfactory level of SGSP students: 75% of students indicated a "neutral" response while 25% of students indicated "satisfied" response.

Academic support

Most of the students are satisfied (50%) and very satisfied (20%) with the academic support provided. Even though 30% of the students had thoughts of dropping out, the programme still has 100% of the students.

Support Category	Satisfied (%)	Very Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Satisfied (%)
Overall Academic Support	70	30	0	0
Supervisory Support	75	25	0	0
PHD Supervisors	75	25	0	0
Collaboration	75	25	0	0
Research and Public Lectures	75	25	0	0
Technical Seminars	75	25	0	0
Workshop Seminars	75	25	0	0

Cultural, Social, & Psychological Support

Cultural support

- Cultural heritage through cultural festival
- Cultural wear, traditional cuisine, dance and music

Social support

- Social welfare services to tackle social problems
- Relationships, rape and sexual harassment cases, student counselling and INWANGS Coordination Services

Psychological support

- Promoting good mental health
- Stress management, self-worth, violence against women and children, and alcohol and substance abuse

One of the students has indicated using psychological support provided and was satisfied with the service.

6 Conclusions & Recommendations

Creating a supportive and inclusive environment for SGSP-IWRM PhD students can help them succeed academically and personally, and can contribute to the overall success of the programme. SGSP provides financial, academic, social, cultural and psychological support which continues to benefit the SGSP-IWRM PhD students. For instance, financial support can alleviate financial stress and allow students to focus on their studies. Moreover, psychological support can help students manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. Social support may help students feel connected and supported.

In addition, academic support provided helps students in their research and learning which also benefits the wider NUST and other stakeholders. Even though the satisfactory rate of the students in all academic support was above 70%, some challenges such as hassle of submitting proposals to Higher Degree Committee and language barrier were reported.

It is recommended that additional students support initiatives such as: lecturing or teaching assistantship, more interaction with experts in their respective faculties and getting a mentor other than their supervisors should be considered. Furthermore introduction of experiential learning or internship could provide professional experience to the students. Finally, English Language bridging course for the first 6 months for the Angolan nationals should be considered.

7 References

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9 Acronyms

- 1. SAOC: Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management
- 2. SAOC: Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management
- 3. NUST: Namibia University of Science and Technology
- 4. SGSP: SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme
- 5. IWRM: Integrated Water Resources Management

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SASSCAL Graduate Studies Programme: IWRM

