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**A Critical Analysis of Public Administration Doctorates in South Africa
1994 – 2007**

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**A minor dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of Masters of Social Science in Public Affairs and Administration**

**University of Cape Town
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Department of Political Studies
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DECLARATION:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the works of other people has been attributed, and cited and referenced.

SIGNATURE

C.K.Milne

DATE *26 October 2009*

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Abstract:

This study has presented a critical analysis of Public Administration doctorates in South Africa between 1994 and 2007. The methodology utilised is that of content analysis of completed Public Administration doctoral abstracts (116 in total). These were classified according to analytical and descriptive research variables, which included type of doctorate, year of completion, research focus, research purpose, methodology and contribution to knowledge. The findings of this analysis have been presented in light of making tentative statements regarding the state of research. The analysis of the doctorates was shown to mirror the findings of the international and local studies with regards to the state of Public Administration research. Doctorate research primarily focuses on practice, the methodology employed is mostly desktop and the research does not appear to significantly contribute to knowledge. It is the findings regarding knowledge that is of greatest concern as contributing to knowledge is one of the key requirements, established by universities, in attaining a research doctorate.

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

1.1 Introductory Overview

Public Administration is often not accepted as a mainstream social science subject and as a result is misunderstood as an academic field. In relation to this is a general misunderstanding of what constitutes the field of Public Administration.

In reality Public Administration has developed as both an academic discipline and a practice; however, in comparison to the practice the discipline is fairly new (Hanekom and Thornhill, 1993: 30; Frederickson and Smith, 2002: 2). Public Administration, therefore, needs to balance being both a social science and being a practice. However, there is a tension between Public Administration the academic, theoretically based field and Public Administration the professional practice. This is of fundamental concern since this dual identity has a substantial influence on the range and direction of research within the field of Public Administration (McNabb, 2002: 15).

The broad research area that this dissertation is concerned with is that of the state of the research in Public Administration. There have been a number of international and local studies conducted regarding the state of research in this area.

Various international studies, mainly American, regarding the general state of research have included work by Box, 1992; Hummel, 1991; White, 1986; White and Adams, 1994. There have also been a few British studies, including Greenwood and Eggins (1995) and Elcock (2004) which have all come to the same conclusion regarding the poor state of research in the field of Public Administration. There have been a number of specific studies regarding the state of research in Public Administration as represented by publications in journals; this includes the work of Houston and Delvan, 1990; Perry and Kraemer, 1986; and Stallings and Ferris, 1988. In general this work has concluded that research in Public Administration is in a weak state.

In the South African context there has been a general call for an improvement in “the current theory, teaching and practice of Public Administration” (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 23). This came out of the Mount Grace Conference in 1991 held by the New Public Administration Initiative with the aim to assist in the transformation of the field (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 8-9). The conference concluded that the field of Public Administration is in crisis because of its descriptive nature, the lack of analytical techniques and the dominance of a single approach to the study of Public Administration, the administrative process approach, as well as race and gender inequalities associated with Apartheid (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 23).

The state of research as represented by South African journal publications in Public Administration has also been looked at through a number of studies. Hubbell (1992) investigated journal publications between 1986 and 1990 through a content analysis of the *Journal of Public Administration*. The result of the analysis was that most of the articles published generally did not include any type of critical analysis and could be classified as following the administrative process approach (Hubbell, 1992: 13).

Clapper (2000: 58), through an examination of South African Public Administration publications, came to a conclusion regarding the limited content of publications on the ‘theory of practice’ and the poor state of research. The work by Wessels on articles from the *Journal of Public Administration* from 2000 – 2004 discussed the need to generate appropriate knowledge in Public Administration (2006: 1513). Cameron and McLaverty (2008) conducted an analysis of the *Journal of Public Administration* and *Administratio Publica* from 1994 to 2006 to establish the state of academic research in the field. The results showed that research in the field lacks theory testing or theory development and there is a lack of cumulative knowledge (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 69).

There appears to be substantial concerns regarding the quality of research both internationally and in South African Public Administration. Doctoral research is one aspect of the larger debate concerning research in Public Administration (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996: 441).

There have been a number of United States of America studies assessing the state of the research at the level of the doctorate. This includes work by McCurdy and Cleary 1984; Stallings 1986; and White, 1986; Adams and White, 1994; Cleary 1992. The conclusion of these studies was that doctoral research was also of a poor quality (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996: 442).

While there has been substantial work done on the broad state of research in Public Administration there appears to be, in the South African context, only a limited amount of work done on the state of doctoral research. Wessels (2008) is the only study investigating doctoral research in South African Public Administration, however, this work is not focused on the quality of the research but “a profile of Public Administration postgraduate research in terms of institution, type of qualification and category of topic” (Wessels, 2008: 97).

The objective of this dissertation is to build on the South African research. It is of importance to build on this work as doctoral research impacts on research in the broader field. The quality of the doctorate is important to the field as this is one way that the field of Public Administration is reproduced (Thornhill, 2008a: 2).

It is also of importance to assess the quality of doctorates in the post 1994 context given the climate within which Public Administration had to function prior to 1994. The politics of South Africa was substantially altered with the end of Apartheid. It is important to investigate whether doctorates are reflective of these changes as research undertaken in Public Administration has ramifications on the governance of South Africa due to the partial focus of Public Administration as a practice.

It is in this vein that the analysis of the doctorates will be based on the international studies framework but these will be adapted in order to be more relevant to the South African context. The main research that forms the framework of this analysis is the work done by McCurdy and Cleary (1984). This study formed the foundation of the debate regarding the state of doctoral research. In order to adapt this for the South African context the most recent work on research in South African Public Administration by Cameron and McLaverty (2008) will also be used.

1.2 Research Questions

The primary research question of this minor dissertation is to investigate the quality of doctorates in the field of Public Administration in South Africa from 1994 to 2007. This is done in order to draw inferences regarding the state of research in Public Administration in South Africa. There are a number of sub-research questions and associated variables that assist in answering the main research question and these are discussed in greater detail below.

1.2.1 What are the Topics that are being Researched by Doctoral Students?

The question of what topic is being researched by doctoral students is largely a descriptive question so as to establish the focus of the research being conducted. The international study conducted by McCurdy and Cleary included the question relating to the topics under the ‘importance’ criteria for analysing doctorates (1984: 50). This study utilised this research question relating to the topics and the variable of ‘topic’ in an analytical manner through the notion that by discovering what topic is being researched, it is possible to discover whether the topic under study was of importance to the field of Public Administration (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984:50).

This minor dissertation builds on the South African work done by Cameron and McLaverty (2008). Therefore, the variable is used in a more descriptive manner and is classified according the sub-variables developed by Cameron and McLaverty. This facilitates the discovery of the popularity of doctoral topics in South African Public Administration. Some inferences of the importance of these topics can also be drawn from this analysis. The sub-variables that are used to address the question relating to topic of study are as follows, Public administration research and theory; administrative reform; public management and administration; public policy; ethics and accountability; development and citizen participation; human resource management; financial management; intergovernmental relations; information, communication, technology and E-governance; service delivery; local government reorganisation and other (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80-82).

1.2.2. What Type of Methodology was Used?

The question of type of methodology utilised relates to the type of research methods and approaches that are used in Public Administration (Perry and Kraemer, 1990: 354). This question was addressed by looking at the research design, unit of analysis and the data that was collected in the thesis. Three sub-variables are used to identify the different methods, that of desktop, qualitative and quantitative methods. A doctorate was classified as desktop if the main focus was secondary research, qualitative if data was collected in a semi-structured way and quantitative if research involved the use of numbers, statistical steps or experiments (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 85-86).

1.2.3. What was the Research Purpose of the Doctorate?

McCurdy and Cleary (1984) included a criterion of purpose, which was used to refer to whether the doctorate actually had a research purpose (1984: 50). This variable is expanded upon in this dissertation to include the framework of Cameron and McLaverty (2008) which has based this variable on the international work by Stallings and Ferris (1988). Therefore, for this dissertation's analysis of doctorates the question of what was the research purpose of the thesis includes three mutually exclusive variables of conceptual, relational and evaluative. Doctorates were categorised as conceptual if the main aim of the doctorate was to identify and conceptualise the research problem. Doctorates which focused on causal relationships between variables would be allocated into the relational category. The doctorates which evaluated or analysed policy or programmes would be classified as evaluative (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 84).

1.2.4. Was the Thesis Orientated More Towards Theory or the Needs of Practice?

McCurdy and Cleary use the variable of 'impact' to assess whether the doctorate tested theory. They asked the question of whether the work explicitly strengthened or weakened or established conditions that would indicate that the theory is applicable (1984: 50).

The question of whether the thesis is orientated more towards theory or practice is of particular interest with regards to the analysis of doctorates in Public Administration. The reason for this is that Public Administration encompasses both an academic field as well as a practice. There is a concern that Public Administration needs to place greater emphasis on developing theory (Frederickson and Smith, 2003: 3). This is also of particular interest in the South African context where there is debate around the concern that Public Administration is focused too much on ‘nuts and bolts’ at the expense of theory (Cameron, 2005).

1.2.5. Did the Doctorate Significantly Contribute to Knowledge in the Field?

Significantly contributing to knowledge in the field of Public Administration is one of the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree (Thornhill, 2008a:3). Therefore, in an analysis of doctorates it is of importance to assess whether the thesis has indeed contributed to knowledge in the field. It is the intention of this dissertation to make inferences about the state of research in the field. This question is of significance in assessing whether the research done for the obtaining of a doctorate meets one of the base requirements of doctoral research. If the doctorate fails to meet this then some tentative conclusions can be drawn regarding the potential weak state of research in Public Administration at the level of the doctorate.

1.3 Methodology and Research Design

The unit of analysis of this dissertation is that of the completed research doctorate or thesis¹. The research doctorate has a number of different names in the South African context; however, they all have commonalities that allow for comparison and analysis. The doctorate is characterised as a source of knowledge in the field, and is regarded as an essential component to the research output of universities (Wessels, 2008: 116; Felbinger, Holzer and White, 1999: 459-463).

¹ The terms thesis and doctorate will be used interchangeably throughout this paper to refer to the completed research for the attainment of a doctorate degree.

The research problem of this dissertation is the state of research in Public Administration with the doctorate forming one component of research. The doctorate will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two through the detailing of the historical emergence of the research doctorate and the introduction of it into the South African academic context.

In order to address the topic under discussion, an analysis of secondary research will be undertaken. This is necessary so as to establish what previous work on this topic has discovered. Previous studies also directly inform the research questions that are asked in this minor dissertation as they influence the criteria that are used in the analysis of doctorates in South Africa.

Although it is not a requirement of a masters' minor dissertation to conduct primary research this project engages with primary data. As part of a National Research Foundation project, looking more generally at the quality of Public Administration research in South Africa, a database of completed Public Administration doctorates was developed. This dissertation draws on this database for the analysis of doctoral research in Public Administration.

The researcher consulted the National Research Foundation's Nexus online database system to compile a list of completed theses in the field of Public Administration, Public Management and Public Policy. The basis of the database was an online search of the Nexus database system for current and completed South African research projects from 1994 to 2007.

The search was done for completed doctorates both with and without abstracts included. This provided a list of completed doctorates with the researcher's name, title of project, the degree programme, the year of completion and the institution. Those abstracts that were not included were acquired through inter-library loans. This minor dissertation is predominantly analysing doctorate abstracts, however, a sample of the doctorates will also be analysed.

A research trip was undertaken to the National Research Foundation, in order to clarify that the doctorates included are only those degrees that were attained for a qualification of Public Administration, Public Management and Public Policy. Doctorates that were concerned with Public Administration topics but were conducted under other departments or schools were excluded from the database. This was done so as to make sure that only the doctorates produced within the academic field of Public Administration were included.

The database was then analysed according to the criteria of topic, research focus, methodology, research purpose and contribution to new knowledge. A final database was created from which to address the research questions and infer conclusions regarding the state of research in the academic field of Public Administration in South Africa.

1.4 Research Limitation

There are some general concerns regarding the use of Nexus as a source for completed doctorates in Public Administration. There are some recent doctorates that have not yet been entered into the online system and are therefore missing from the dataset. It is possible that some of the completed theses have not been ascribed a keyword, whereby they are searched on the system, this could result in theses being excluded from the results of an online search. However, Nexus is still regarded as a good starting point for analysing research at the level of the doctorate (Visser, 2004: 30). There is also no guideline regarding the allocation of keywords as one of the indices for Nexus. This is often left to the person doing the coding to decide. Therefore, some theses may be included in a subject search even though they do not actually relate to the subject being searched (van der Berg, 2008).

1.5 Chapter Outlines

Chapter Two:

Chapter two of this dissertation is the literature review. This chapter presents work done both at local and international level regarding the state of research in Public Administration in general and in particular doctoral research. The overarching concerns are discussed and then a detailed description of relevant studies is presented. There are a number of issues that are raised in this chapter including the dual role of Public Administration as a practice and a field as well as the need for theory in the field. This chapter assists in establishing a theoretical understanding of Public Administration research.

Chapter Three:

Chapter three describes the methodology used in the analysis of the doctorates. A detailed discussion regarding the way in which this dissertation's research was conducted is also included in this chapter. The variables that are used in addressing the research questions of the dissertation are presented. The key variables are also discussed in relation to the international studies on which they are primarily based as well as the limited local studies which have been used to contextualise the analysis to a South African environment.

Chapter Four:

Chapter four is primarily concerned with the findings of the research as described in chapter three. The findings of this study are presented and analysed in this chapter. The main objective of this chapter is to answer the set research questions and to assess whether inferences can be made regarding the nature of Public Administration research in general.

Chapter Five:

The concluding chapter is concerned with providing an overview of this dissertation's research in relation to the broader debates around Public Administration research and to make suggestions regarding future research in Public Administration.

1.6 Summary

This introductory chapter has established that the analysis of Public Administration doctorates is an important component in the broad discussion surrounding the state of research in Public Administration. Research is one way in which the field reproduces itself and the doctorate is the beginning of this process.

The objective of this dissertation was shown to be a critical analysis of completed doctorates in Public Administration from 1994 to 2007. The purpose of the analysis is to draw inferences regarding the state of research in Public Administration in South Africa. This chapter has established the overall framework from which the analysis contained in this dissertation will develop. The primary research questions from which inferences are made regarding the state of research involve the variables of focus, methodology, research purpose and contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER TWO:

Literature Review – Contextualising Public Administration Research and the Doctorate within Academia

2.1 Overview

The aim of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the concept of Public Administration as well as the term doctorate. Public Administration is recognised as both a practice and a theory. This has conceptual ramifications for the field and therefore needs to be discussed. These conceptual concerns will be discussed in terms of developing an understanding of what constitutes Public Administration.

In relation to the term doctorate, when it is utilised in this dissertation it will be shown to primarily refer to a research doctorate. An understanding of the research doctorate will be developed through looking at the historical emergence of the doctorate. This will be followed by a description of the contemporary doctorate, including the development of the professional doctorate. The development of the research doctorate is strongly tied to the emergence of universities where the two main functions of these institutions was the production of knowledge and providing education for certain professions. It will be shown that both of these functions influenced, and indeed continue to influence the doctorate, particularly the doctorate in Public Administration. It is also important to establish an understanding of the doctorate in order to provide at least one of the criteria for analysing doctorates, specifically the variable of ‘contribution to knowledge’.

It is also the aim of this chapter to discuss the state of Public Administration research. The history of the field will be traced, which will take the form of a discussion surrounding both international and local developments. Through this discussion Public Administration will be shown to be perceived as a weak academic field. The specific focus of this dissertation is South Africa, therefore, a more detailed discussion on the field in contemporary South African will be provided. An overview of studies on research in Public Administration will also be provided. The key studies on research in Public Administration will be briefly discussed so as to establish an understanding of the state of research. Following this a more detailed discussion will be provided of the studies conducted on research at the level of the doctorate.

There are a number of international studies in this regard, however, in the South African context there is only one study, that of Wessels (2008). The framework for the analysis in this dissertation has been influenced by previous studies on research in Public Administration. Therefore, although the substantive discussion surrounding the studies will be provided in this section they will be referred to throughout the dissertation.

The concept of the doctorate will now be discussed. When the key term of doctorate is used in this dissertation it will be shown to primarily be referring to a research doctorate, which can in turn be referred to by a number of nomenclatures.

2.2 Understanding the Doctorate

The unit of analysis of this dissertation is the completed doctorate, specifically that of the research doctorate. Although the most common form of doctorate degree is the Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)² the various types of research doctorates as well as the professional doctorate will be discussed. This is done in order to have a thorough understanding of this key concept and to show the commonalities that exists among all research doctorates. An understanding of the research doctorate will be developed through looking at the historical emergence of the doctorate. In the current context, as well as historically, research doctorates have been offered almost solely by universities, including universities of technology, therefore, included in this section is the historical emergence of universities. The understanding of the doctorate is further facilitated by a discussion of the contemporary doctorate, including the development of the professional doctorate. The requirements for the attainment of a doctorate in the field of Public Administration in South Africa will also be discussed with specific reference to analysis of those doctorates.

² Refer to figure 4.2 in chapter 4 of this minor dissertation.

2.2.1 The Emergence of the Research Doctorate

The history of the doctorate degree can be traced back to medieval Europe in the twelfth century. It was during this time that the first formally structured universities developed and the first doctoral degrees were granted. There is consensus that the first degree was awarded in Paris, France *circa* 1150. The first doctorate degree followed shortly and was awarded about ten years later in Bologna, Italy. This doctorate allowed graduates to practice their specialisation as well as teach their chosen field without having to undergo any further examinations (Noble, 1994: 7-8).

It was approximately a century later in Paris that the first PhD, a doctorate in the faculty of philosophy was granted. This form of doctoral degree was the doctorate that was to gradually become accepted across Europe (Noble, 1994: 9). The awarding of this historical version of the doctorate degree took the form of a verbal public defence of a thesis. It was also based on a broad base of knowledge covering a number of topics within the arts and philosophy. It was awarded to mature students who were viewed to be at their intellectual peak. The process of attaining a doctoral degree changed through the times and became more structured, with a written thesis component in a particular faculty or field (Noble, 1994: 8 and 10).

Historically, university education, and in particular a doctorate degree was not considered practical or vocational. Although the doctorate allowed the graduate to practise and teach, the primary purpose of the doctorate degree, up until the end of the eighteenth century, was the transference of the existing intellectual body of knowledge. The purpose of the doctorate was to develop the students' mind in such a way that they would be equipped to undertake any kind of occupation. This was, and to a certain extent is still, particularly evident in the English tradition of doctoral degrees (Ben-David, 1977: 10-11).

The contemporary doctorate, in the form of the research degree, was developed in Germany, with the establishment of the University of Berlin between 1810 and 1812. The neo-humanist reforms, which were led by Willem von Humboldt, were instrumental in the development of the research doctorate degree as it is recognised today. The focus of the doctorate became research with the purpose of creating new knowledge as opposed to the transference of existing knowledge (Noble, 1994:6).

The German model of the doctorate spread to other continents in the late nineteenth century. It gained prominence relatively quickly in the United States of America. The expansion of this form of the doctorate was facilitated by the high numbers of American students who attended German universities. The first American university to introduce the doctorate based on the German model was Yale, in 1861. The American model differed from the German research doctorate as it contained the additional element of coursework (Bailey, 2001: 24, 29-30). The inclusion of the coursework component is said to be a response to the practical needs of the country at the time therefore introducing a vocational and profession orientated slant to the doctoral degree (Bartelse, 1995: 4-5).

In the 1880s Britain introduced its first research doctorates, up until this point in time only masters degrees were offered at universities, this was in the tradition of the medieval Paris system. The doctorate shaped on the German research doctorate was only introduced in Britain in 1917 (Simpson, 1983: 6). It was at this time that the British doctorate moved from being a syllabus and examination based degree to a research based degree on a thesis and original research (Simpson, 1983: 46-48). The first doctorate granted under this condition was at Oxford University; however, instead of naming it a PhD, as was the tradition at other universities in other countries, it was called a Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) (Simpson, 1983: 135). This difference in naming of doctorates is also evident in universities in South Africa. This nomenclature will be explored in greater detail under the section discussing South African doctorate degrees.

The historical doctorate, in medicine and law, can be viewed as professional degrees. In comparison the professional doctorate for some fields, such as Public Administration, is a fairly recent development. In terms of the tension within Public Administration as having both practical and theoretical components it is necessary to discuss the professional doctorate.

2.2.2 The Emergence of the Professional Doctorate

The first doctorates that could be classed broadly as professional doctorates were the doctorates that were attained in the professions of both medicine and law. The emergence of the professional doctorates for other professions first arose in the United States in the early 1900s. The idea of education for a profession was seen by many as an acceptable academic development as under the German model professional training consisted primarily of research in the basic field (Ben-David, 1977: 60-61). Therefore, there was a strong relationship between academic research in a field and professional training.

The professional doctorate has gained prominence more recently, in the 1980s and 1990s, in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada (Bailey, 2001: 114). There does not appear to be a uniform understanding between countries or even universities in the same country, regarding what constitutes a professional doctorate (Powell and Long, 2005: 7). This inability to conceptualise the professional doctorate is due to the discrepancies between universities emphasis on teaching versus research as well as the way in which the doctorate is assessed (Powell and Long, 2005: 9).

However, there are a number of common characteristics of professional doctorates. Through providing the characteristics that are common to professional doctorates it is also possible to see how this degree differs to that of the research doctorate. The common characteristics of professional doctorates include, but are not limited to, the following. A coursework component to the degree is completed in conjunction with the thesis. It must be noted that this is different to the coursework included in the American research doctorate. The research involved in attaining a professional doctorate is very closely related to the associated profession. The intended aim of the research conducted in a professional doctorate is to acquire knowledge with the aim of entering into specific occupations (Ben-David, 1977: 3). The research doctorate is regarded as having a specific necessarily, narrowly defined disciplinary focus, whilst the professional doctorate focuses on the relationship between the degree and the profession (Powell and Long, 2005: 7).

The extent to which the professional doctorate is being implemented in the South African context will be briefly discussed in the section detailing South African doctorates.

2.2.3 The Historical Emergence of the South African Doctorate

At the turn of the twentieth century much of South Africa's education system was based on the British model, including university level education. The developments taking place at postgraduate level in Britain was a strong contributing factor for the introduction of research doctorates in South Africa (Bailey, 2001: 24). The first university in South Africa was established in 1873, the University of the Cape of Good Hope. Up until this point South Africa only had a number of colleges with a Board of Examiners who were responsible for examination. This board was appointed in 1858 and was primarily concerned with examination for the subjects of law, surveying, literature and science (Ritchie, 1918:172). The University of the Cape of Good Hope was an examining university, similar to that of London University, and could bestow academic degrees (Ritchie, 1918: 216). The first doctorates were awarded by the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1899 and these were honorary degrees. The University began to confer research doctorates at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first research doctorate was awarded in 1907 (Ritchie, 1918: 810). South African doctoral degrees followed a similar structure to that of the British model with the focus being on thesis-based research as opposed to the American model incorporating coursework (Bailey, 2001:35).

The doctorate in the field of Public Administration will be discussed in the following section. The first doctorate in Public Administration appears to be in the subjects of development administration and politics and was granted in 1923 by the University of Pretoria. The topic of the thesis was "The history of native policy in South Africa from 1830 to the present day" (National Research Foundation, 2009).

2.2.4 The Doctorate in Public Administration

Nearly all of the doctorates that are attained in contemporary South Africa are research orientated and conclude with a thesis. Doctorates in Public Administration also follow this general structure. The thesis is generally under the title of PhD, although there are other titles. One such nomenclature is the DPhil. The use of DPhil follows from its use at Oxford and Cambridge Universities in England. Universities of Technology also offer doctoral-level degrees which are called Doctor of Technology (DTech). There are also doctorates that are named, in another British tradition, for the particular faculty in which the research doctorate is attained (Phillips and Pugh, 2000: 20).

Although there are differences in the naming of these research doctorates they are essentially the same degrees, they all culminate in a thesis. There does not appear to be an overarching definition of what constitutes a doctorate. However, by investigating the rules and regulations for the attainment of a doctorate at the different institutions it is possible to gain an understanding of the doctorate in South Africa.³ In order to clarify what is understood when the doctorate is granted specifically in relation to Public Administration, this dissertation reviewed the rules and regulations for the admission and attainment of a degree in this field. This review took the form of an online investigation; however, due to not all university websites having the relevant rules and regulations readily available the review is not exhaustive but still provides significant information.

Although the doctorate degree in South Africa has a number of different nomenclatures including, DAdmin, PhD, DLitt et Phil, DPhil, DPA, DTech and DCom it is evident that they have a number of similar criteria. There are a number of fundamental factors that seem to form the basis for a research doctorate in South Africa, generally and in relation to Public Administration, Public Management and Public Policy.

³ The idea for developing an understanding of the South African doctorate through a review of online institutional rules and regulations originated in Bailey (2001).

The doctorate degree is the highest degree that can be obtained in the field of specialisation. A previous masters degree either in the specified field or a general masters degree is a requirement for entrance into a doctorate. The doctorate must also culminate in a thesis. It is clear from the below extracts for the requirements of attaining a doctorate degree in Public Administration that the thesis should “show signs of *original* and *independent* work which makes a significant contribution to *existing knowledge* based on the *production of knowledge*”(Bailey, 2001: 39).

“The thesis must constitute a substantial contribution to knowledge in the chosen subject”
(University of Cape Town, 2009: 24).

“The doctoral study programme comprises a thesis written under supervision that makes an original contribution to the field of Public Management and Governance”
(University of Stellenbosch, 2009:61).

“A dissertation must be proof of a candidate’s ability to work independently and must contain proof of a candidate’s ability to conduct original research that contributes to the development of new knowledge and expertise” (University of Pretoria, 2009a: 59).

“The purpose of this programme is to develop the competence to conduct independent research under expert guidance in the field of public management. Such research should contribute significantly to the body of knowledge through the understanding, application and evaluation of existing knowledge” (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2009).

“The doctoral study programme comprises a thesis written under supervision that makes an original contribution to the field of Public Management and Governance” (University of Johannesburg, 2009).

“A thesis must show proof of original work and must be a decided contribution to the knowledge of and insight into the subject” (University of South Africa, 2009: 35).

These above statements point to the importance of the core concepts which revolve around the need for a successful doctorate to undertake independent research in the development of knowledge in the field being studied.

These key concepts are included in the research questions used by this dissertation to analyse the state of research in Public Administration. The extent to which the core concepts are present in the research should provide an indication of the quality of the research being conducted at the level of the doctorate. The key requirement for attaining a doctorate degree is specifically evident through the research question ‘does the doctorate significantly contribute to knowledge?’

There are a few variations that exist between the tertiary institutions in some of the requirements. One of the variations is that some amount of coursework has been included; an example is the University of Pretoria. The University of Pretoria offers a number of doctorates in the field of Public Administration: DAdmin, DPhil and PhD. The University requires that students complete a coursework component for the attainment of a PhD in Public Management and Administration. However, it does not make up more than half of the requirement of the degree (University of Pretoria, 2009a:65).

The University of Pretoria also seems to be the closest to providing what could be described as a professional doctorate due to the degree being practice orientated (Thornhill, 2008b). This can be said due to the admission requirements for one of their doctorate programmes, namely the PhD, including the need for the candidate to “...have extensive managerial experience, preferably in the public sector, of at least four years...” (University of Pretoria, 2009b).

In order to provide an analysis of the doctorates in the field of Public Administration and draw tentative conclusions regarding the state of research it is necessary to have an understanding regarding the broad state of the field. This is established by first discussing the state of the field in contemporary South Africa. Secondly the previous studies conducted on the state of Public Administration research internationally as well as locally will be looked at. Finally, specific studies regarding the research at the level of the doctorate will be analysed.

An understanding of the term Public Administration is a crucial introduction to this discussion as the way in which the words are used denotes different aspects of Public Administration. There are, therefore, a number of conceptual issues that need to be dealt with in order to understand what is meant by the term Public Administration.

It must be noted that when the term Public Administration is used in this minor dissertation it is primarily being used to denote the academic field of study.

2.3 Understanding Public Administration

This dissertation does not want to fall into a conceptual trap that by merely providing a definition the full scope and content of the field will be understood (Pauw, 1999: 17). This is particularly important in regards to the specific field under consideration that of Public Administration, as the nature and scope is complex and multifaceted (Rowland, 1986: 68). The conceptual understanding of both the field and the practice has been shown by a number of academics to be very diverse (Bain, 1986: 11). This is not to say that a basis for understanding the concept should not be provided. “If we did not know the meaning of the concept *public administration* we would never be able to recognise it” (Pauw, 1999: 20). Therefore, there are a number of the conceptual concerns that need to be dealt with as they assist in forming an understanding of the term Public Administration.

Public Administration is sometimes divided into separate words in order to define the term. However, by doing this it changes the meaning of the concept and puts the focus on the individual words. The individual meaning of the words ‘public’ and ‘administration’ are given substantial significance to the extent that whether the word ‘administration’ or ‘management’ or ‘policy’ is used it can indicate differing scopes of the field (Pauw, 1999: 14). It is the view of this minor dissertation that the words together ‘Public Administration’ constitute the concept under review and is therefore inclusive of ‘Public Management’ and ‘Public Policy’ where the same subjects are often studied under these different headings.⁴

In addition to the separation of the words, for conceptualisation reasons, there is also significance given to the capitalisation of the words. It appears to be the general understanding that Public Administration represents the subject or the field, whilst public administration represents the content of the subject as well as the practice (Pauw, 1999: 10).

⁴ Although aware of the debate regarding the perceived differences between ‘Public Administration’, ‘Public Management’ and ‘Public Policy’ a detailed discussion of the debate is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Bozeman (1993) and Hughes (2003).

Another conceptual aspect of Public Administration that needs to be addressed is that not all academics view Public Administration as a field. This aspect needs particular attention as it is the purpose of this minor dissertation to analyse the research done in this field at the doctorate level. Under this notion Public Administration is not an academic field but rather an applied science that is only referred to as a field for teaching purposes (Thornhill, 2008a: 1). It is the focus of this minor dissertation that a field of Public Administration within social science does indeed exist where teaching only forms one part of Public Administration. Theory development and contribution to knowledge also contribute to it being a field.

Public Administration has been established as encompassing both an academic field and a practice; however, in comparison to the practice the field is fairly new (Hanekom and Thornhill, 1993: 30 and Frederickson and Smith, 2003: 2). In order to provide a complete overview of the academic field of Public Administration, it is necessary to outline its historical development. A brief overview of the historical background of the field internationally will be provided followed by an overview of the history of the field in South Africa.

2.4 History of Public Administration as an Academic Field

Even if the most minimal understanding of 'field' is taken, teaching, recording and transferring knowledge, Public Administration can be referred to as an academic field. Public Administration is a relatively late field in social science in comparison to other fields in the faculty. As a result it was necessary to develop Public Administration as a separate field – “an area of study with its own body of knowledge that was at least attempting to develop its own theories” (Thornhill, 2008a: 2). This is of importance in the analysis of doctorates in Public Administration where one of the questions that previous studies on the state of research have utilised is whether the research is concerned with theory.

2.4.1 An International History of Public Administration as an Academic Field

The beginnings of an academic field in Public Administration can be traced to Germany. The granting of a professorship in the field of training people for the public service was established in 1729. The dominating aspect of the field in Germany was administrative law. There were also attempts to develop the field in a number of European states such as France, where during the nineteenth century there were publications on Public Administration that diverged from the focus on law (Hanekom and Thornhill, 1993: 30-31). In Britain, universities were resistant to the field and as a result the training in Public Administration occurred historically in polytechnics (Greenwood and Eggins, 1995: 144).

The languages in which the field was established in Europe acted as a barrier to the transference of the field and the resistance in Britain resulted in the European perspective not establishing itself beyond these borders. As a result the field is said to have formally originated in the United States of America (Hanekom and Thornhill, 1993: 30-31).

It is of interest to note that both the research doctorate and the academic field of Public Administration can be traced back to Germany. In terms of influences, South Africa has not shown to follow the same path as Britain in regards to Public Administration as it has to the doctorate. Universities in South Africa have been influenced by the research doctorate as it exists in Britain yet the British tradition of Public Administration is that it is located in training institutions. This could potentially lead to a situation where there is a construct of attaining a doctorate degree from a university in a subject that is viewed as not being appropriate for that structure. However, the academic field of Public Administration in South Africa is influenced to a greater degree by the United States of America, even though the universities in South Africa have not generally adopted a coursework component for the attainment the doctorate degree. A more detailed investigation into the field as it developed in the United States of America is now provided.

The study of Public Administration as an academic field is said to be traced back to the publication by Woodrow Wilson of *The Study of Administration* (1887). This article together with the publication of a number of subsequent works in the early twentieth century is said to represent the academic origins of Public Administration (Cox, Buck and Morgan, 1994: 5). The field established itself substantially in the United States between 1910s and the late 1920s with the introduction of formal training programmes at universities. With the publication of L.D. White's *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* the field received further momentum in 1926. White is widely recognised as the author of the first textbook in Public Administration. *Scientific Management* by Frederick W. Taylor and *Notes on the Theory of Organisation* (1937) by L.H. Gulick and L. Urwick introduced additional material into the field through the scientific management approach (Cox, Buck and Morgan, 1994: 7-8).

The field was further developed and even reshaped through the criticism of above mentioned works in a post World War II context. These critics represent some of the most influential works in contemporary Public Administration. These works included Herbert A. Simon *Administrative Behaviour* (1948), Dwight Waldo *The Administrative State* (1948) and Paul Appleby *Morality and Administration in Democratic Government* (1972) (Cox, Buck and Morgan, 1994:9-12).

The field continued to evolve in the international arena, particularly in the American context, with the popularity and influence of management. Public Administration began to use techniques of Business Administration in order to research management practice in the public sector. This generic management influence within the academic field is evident in the research by academics in Public Administration on system theories such as Katz and Kahn in *Organisations and the Systems Concept* (1966) (Cox, Buck and Morgan, 1994: 12-13 & Shafritz, Hyde and Parkes, 2004:206).

The 1960s also brought about changes in the academic field of Public Administration which continue to have had an effect on the field to this day. In 1968 the first Minnowbrook Conference was held (Waldo, 1971: xvii).

One of the main concerns that led to the holding of the first Minnowbrook Conference in 1968 was that neither the field nor the practice of Public Administration was reacting appropriately to society at that point in time. The Vietnam War, the civil rights movement and the war against poverty was the context within which the conference took place (Waldo, 1971: xiii).

It was within this atmosphere that the conference was said to be characterised by a move towards normative theory, philosophy and social concern, while simultaneously there was a move away from positivism. There was also a particular disinterest in certain Public Administration techniques such as planning, budgeting and operations research (Waldo, 1971: xvi).

Minnowbrook Conferences have been held every 20 years since 1968. During the time between Minnowbrook I in 1968 and Minnowbrook II in 1988 there was a substantial development in the academic field with an increase in the number of degree programmes and the number of students within the field. Minnowbrook II in 1988 was characterised by anti-bureaucratic and anti-governmental tendencies and support for market solutions to bureaucracy failure (Frederickson, 2008: 5). The reasoning for this was the emerging dominance of New Right policies and the New Public Management movement (Cameron and Milne, 2009: 383).

Minnowbrook III in 2008 was held in the spirit of the original Minnowbrook Conference. The focus of Minnowbrook III was how Public Administration, Public Management and Public Policy can better respond to the current times (Syracuse University Department of Public Administration, 2008). The continued growth of the academic field of Public Administration was evident. In comparison to the previous two Minnowbrook Conferences there was an increase in professional associations, journals and other conferences (Frederickson, 2008: 7). Although Minnowbrook III has only recently taken place it is likely that it could possibly mark the return of Public Administration, given the current context of market failure and the intervention of Western governments in the private sector (Cameron and Milne, 2009: 385).

The field of Public Administration in the South African context needs to be discussed as it is the focus of this dissertation to analyse doctorates in the field in this country. This discussion will include both the history of Public Administration as an academic field as well as the field in the contemporary context.

2.4.2 History of Public Administration as an Academic Field in South Africa

The first course in the field was offered at the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1918, it was on 'native law and administration' (Picard, 2005: 193). The intellectual basis that was presented for segregation was influential in South Africa and this effected the direction of the field. Universities focused on native administration training programmes. Between World War I and World War II South African programmes in Public Administration were linked with the colonial administration training courses of Britain (Picard, 2005: 194-195).

Historically, only certain universities offered studies in Public Administration. The field was only taught at Afrikaans-speaking universities and ethnically based universities; the only English-speaking institution to offer the subject was the University of Cape Town (Cameron, 2008: 45). South African Public Administration departments were traditionally designed as programmes of study to instruct graduates on how to function for the state. Public Administration degrees and diplomas, therefore, resulted in graduates with technical skills without the ability to deal with the political reality of the time (Schutte, 1997: 293).

Public Administration as an academic field in South Africa had a very limited historical legacy on which to build. The field has been characterised as a close-knit group of academics. Up until the early 1990s the academic field was best described as being dominated by a single approach to the field, the administrative process approach (Rowland, 1989: 58). The emergence and entrenchment of this approach can be accredited to one dominant academic of the field; J. J. N. Cloete and more specifically his book *Inleiding tot die Publieke Administrasie* (1967).

J.J.N. Cloete dominated the field of Public Administration in a number of ways. Cloete not only trained most of the lecturers in this field up until a certain point in time but he was also the editor of the *Journal of Public Administration* and thus the guardian of published knowledge within the field (Hubbel, 1992: 3).

This generic administrative process approach focused on the idea that public administration can be divided into six processes – policy-making, organising, financing, personnel administration, work methods and procedures as well as control and rendering of accounts (Cloete, 1984: 3). Due to its narrow focus and for many years the general uncritical acceptance of it, this approach caused the stagnation of the field in terms of intellectual content. This is based on the dominance of the generic administrative approach that can be seen in the literature, articles and books, discussions and teachings and curricula on Public Administration of this time (Rowland, 1989: 58 and 60).

One reason for the generic administrative process becoming the dominant approach was that it ignored the apartheid politics of the day and therefore, “provided a safe house for the discipline” (Schwella, 1999: 335). However, the administrative process approach of J.J.N. Cloete was criticised that as a theory it was outdated even before it was introduced into the context of South Africa (Schwella, 1992: 25).

There are a number of other criticisms levelled against the generic administration approach, these include but are not limited to the following. This approach is reductionist as it simply condenses the entire domain of public administration down to administrative processes. This approach is also accused of reification as it treats its theoretical constructs and concepts as substantially existing and thus equates this approach to reality (Groenewald, 1992: 60).

The administrative process approach is also said to have relevance problems as it did not, during the time when it was most dominant, make mention of or take into account the nature of South African system of governance and administration- Apartheid (Schwella, 1999: 334).

International writings within the field were mostly ignored in the administrative process approach. Specifically, the notion that politics cannot be excluded from administration and facts cannot be excluded from values put forward by Waldo was ignored (Cameron, 2008: 46). An extension of this was that the approach was criticised for being atheoretical, this is of particular concern as it was this approach that was seen as the basis of the academic field in South Africa (Mokgoro, 1992: 30-35).

Hanekom and Thornhill's book *Public Administration in Contemporary Society: A South African Perspective* (1982) marked a departure from the traditional approach. There is debate whether this was a slight or major departure. However, it not only contributed additional material to the South African field but also specifically addressed Public Administration as an academic field (Thornhill, 2008: 11-12 and Cameron, 2008: 45).

The administrative process approach was challenged to a greater degree, as the Apartheid government went into decline, by a number of Public Administration academics in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Cameron, 2008: 46).

2.4.3 Public Administration as an Academic Field in Contemporary South Africa

In the late 1980s and 1990s there were a number of contributions made to the academic field of Public Administration in South Africa. This section will provide an overview of these authors and perspectives. These authors include Gildenhuys, Schwella, Rowland and Fitzgerald. It is important to note that these may not be the only academically relevant actors that contribute to the approaches but these authors have been highlighted by the literature as heading up these different approaches. It is also of importance to note that the academics that criticise these approaches also provide an important contribution to the development of the field of Public Administration.

The approach put forward by Gildenhuis is one that focuses on teaching public administration where the inclusion of normative social, political and economic values needs to occur along with the teaching of public management theories. In so much as this approach diverges from the generic administrative process approach it deserves a mention as a contribution to Public Administration thought in the contemporary context of South Africa (Schwella, 1999: 343).

Schwella suggests an open system approach to the study of public administration where “Public Management is one of the perspectives that can be taken” (Schwella, 1999: 344 and 347). This approach is seen by some as diverging from the traditional approach. However, the open system approach has been criticised as still implicitly accepting the generic administrative or management processes as the underlying basis of the field (Schwella, 1986: 66, Cameron, 2008: 47 and Schwella, 2000: 110). There is a view that as a contribution to the field in South Africa this approach has merit, however, it is a modification of David Easton’s systems theory, which has largely been discredited internationally within social science (Cameron, 2008: 47).

Rowland advocates a ‘radical re-appraisal’ approach that is centred on the need to introduce critical and new thinking into Public Administration so that academic thought on this subject can be focused on developing a general theory of Public Administration (1986: 67-69). Although, Rowland’s approach provides a direction for the development of thought in the fields it is argued that it is not radical and nor is it new as it is related to the works of both Gildenhuis and Schwella (Schwella, 1999: 347-349).

Fitzgerald provides an approach to public administration that draws from international academic actors – Osborne and Gaebler and the ideas contained within *Reinventing Government* (1992). This approach centres on the idea that development issues must be the focus for transformation and that equity and management needs must be taken into account (Fitzgerald, 1995: 289 – 293).

The above-mentioned approaches are implicitly influenced by management ideas. Public management such as New Public Management is also an approach in itself and as such should be discussed.

New Public Management can be classified as a collection of ideas based on private management principles and the use of market mechanisms (Cameron, 2008: 49). However it is argued that the use of market-based ideas in Public Management is anti-intellectual as this approach was driven, at least internationally, by practitioners and private sector consultants as opposed to academics (Argyriades, 2001). However, given the nature of Public Administration as both a theory and a practice it is possible to infer that practitioners are academically relevant actors and therefore this approach may not be as anti-academic as stated by some.

It has previously been stated that management ideas are dominating contemporary approaches and as such Public Management or New Public Management has become the dominant approach in the academic field. The rise of New Public Management is an international development that has had an impact on Public Administration (Hood, 1991: 3). However, the dominance of this approach is not a view supported by all. Some academics maintain that the generic administrative process approach still maintains its dominance in many institutions and therefore still impacts the way in which South African Public Administration is taught and research is done in the field (Schwella, 2000: 38). Internationally, the dominance of this trend is also questioned (Hood, 1991: 16).

With the beginning of change within the political regime in the late 1980s and early 1990s a number of initiatives were started to try and reform the field from its state of contextual isolation. One of these was the New Public Administration Initiative (NPAI) (Schwella, 1999: 337). The formation of the NPAI was driven by a group of progressive Public Administration academics. The aim of this initiative was to assist in transforming the field. The Mount Grace Conference in 1991 was held by the NPAI, the focus was on the need for a more progressive approach to South African Public Administration (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 8-9). One of the conclusions of the Mount Grace Conference was that “the current theory, teaching and practice of Public Administration is in crisis” (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 23).

This crisis is attributed to its descriptive nature, the lack of analytical techniques and the dominance of the administrative process approach as well as race and gender inequalities associated with Apartheid. The field is fragmented because of random divisions within the field such as between Public Administration and Development Administration. It was concluded that descriptive Public Administration needs to be supplemented by rigorous scientific analysis (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 23). Through the analysis contained in chapter four of this minor dissertation it will be possible to see to what extent research, at the level of the doctorate, is reflective of the changes called for or whether it is still descriptive and lacking rigorous research.

The second conference – Mount Grace II in 2000 – continued the discourse around the re-evaluation of the field in terms of what had occurred in the academic field of Public Administration and in the area of public administration practice since the 1991 conference (Thornhill, 2008a: 15).

Although the field of Public Administration is now more politically legitimate, there is a view that research scholarship has not progressed since the early 1990s. There is concern regarding whether Public Administration has advanced in terms of being a knowledge-based field (Cameron, 2008: 48, 62). There are a number of factors that potentially contribute to this post 1994 state of the field. There has been a movement of academics from academic institutions to the public service, parastatals and local government. This transference of knowledge within the field has a negative impact on the state of the academic field. This change in the field is especially notable of black Public Administration academics (Cameron, 2008: 61).

With this post-apartheid focus on capacity building and the associated initiatives the training and developing of people for the public service has become the focus of the work of many academics. Research has been put aside for the training of new South African public servants (Cameron, 2008: 61). This situation could be said to have lead to a weak field within Public Administration.

The extent to which the field is in a weak state is expanded upon in the following section through an investigation of studies regarding the state of research in Public Administration. It is through the publication of research that the field of Public Administration is developed. There are a number of ways that academic knowledge can be preserved and used, through books, accredited and well established academically acknowledged journals and the presentation of work at conferences (Thornhill, 2008a: 6). The state of research in Public Administration is further investigated through looking at studies on journal publications.

2.5 The State of Research in Public Administration

There are a number of international and local studies on the general state of research in the academic field of Public Administration. The key studies in this regard will be briefly discussed so as to establish an understanding of the state of research broadly speaking. Following this a more detailed discussion will be provided of the studies conducted on research at the level of the doctorate. There are a number of international studies on doctorates; however, in the South African context there is only one study, Wessels (2008). The framework for the analysis in this dissertation has been influenced by previous studies on research in Public Administration. Therefore, although the substantive discussion surrounding the studies will be provided in this section they will be referred to throughout this minor dissertation.

2.5.1 International Studies on the State of Public Administration Research

International studies regarding the general state of research is largely represented by studies regarding publications in Public Administration journals. This includes the work of Perry and Kraemer, 1986; Stallings and Ferris, 1988; Houston and Delvan, 1990 and Box 1992. In general, these studies on the state of journals concluded that research in Public Administration was in a poor state.

Perry and Kraemer (1986) assessed the state of research through an analysis of publication in the journal; *Public Administration Review* between 1975 and 1984. Their primary focus was research methodology and the outcome and quality of the research. The broad conclusion of this study was that there was a lack of mainstream social science research being conducted which hindered the development of knowledge in the field. The study also concluded that the focus of research was problem solving research at the expense of theory development (Perry and Kraemer, 1986: 219).

Stallings and Ferris (1988) investigated the state of research through looking at articles published in *Public Administration Review* from 1940 to 1984. Stallings and Ferris criticised the Perry and Kraemer study (1986) on the grounds that their variables were not mutually exclusive (1988: 586). Therefore, Stallings and Ferris adapted the methodology of their study in order to overcome this concern regarding the variables (1988: 581). The conclusions reached by Stallings and Ferris were still similar to that of Perry and Kraemer (1986). The research in the journal showed limited testing of theory and in terms of methodology conceptual research, which is viewed as secondary or descriptive, is the most common form of research (Stallings and Ferris, 1994: 115-117).

The two above mentioned studies primarily focused on *Public Administration Review*. This is a potential fault as this would assume that this one journal is representative of publications in Public Administration. With this concern in mind Houston and Delevan analysed the articles in six journals other than *Public Administration Review*. Houston and Delevan also concluded that research in Public Administration was weak as the articles investigated were limited in terms of testing theory (1994: 134-136).

It appears that the studies all reach similar conclusions regarding the poor state of research. This weak state of research was attributed to the lack of mainstream social science research methodology as well as the over emphasis on the profession of public administration at the expense of testing and developing theory in the field (Box, 1992: 62).

However, Box (1992) investigated articles published in *Public Administration Review* during the period of 1985 to 1989 and analysed them according to whether they tested or built upon a theory, dealt with a Public Administration topics and were concerned with the professional practice of the field (Box, 1992: 66).

Box found that although the previous studies were correct in their concern regarding the limited inclusion of theory in the articles they had been excessively negative in their evaluation of the state of research (1992: 68). In part this pessimistic evaluation of research was ascribed to the assumption that Public Administration should conform to particular empirical methods in order to develop knowledge (Box, 1992: 69).

The previous studies have primarily originated in the United States of America; however, the concern regarding the state of the field has also been dealt with by British publications. These articles have concluded that there has been decline in Public Administration research in Britain. In conjunction with this situation is a decrease in the number of courses being offered in the field which conceivably leads to fewer students completing a doctorate in Public Administration (Elcock, 2004: 3 and Carmichael, 2004: 8).

In a study conducted regarding the teaching of Public Administration in Britain Greenwood and Eggins (1995) confirm the concerns expressed by others in the field. Among this study's conclusions was that although Public Administration had always involved both theory and practice, teaching of the field now focused to a greater degree on the applied component as opposed to the theoretical aspects. Skills and techniques have been promoted at the expense of traditional academic matters and theory, which has resulted in splitting the fields focus. All of which have been said to have a negative impact on the state of the field (Greenwood and Eggins, 1995: 146 and 147).

2.5.2 International Studies on the State of Doctorate Research

Doctoral research is an aspect of the larger debate in Public Administration concerning the state of research in the field (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996: 441). There have been a number of American studies assessing the state of the research conducted at the level of the doctorate. This includes the work by Adams and White, 1994; Cleary 1992; McCurdy and Cleary 1984; and White, 1986. The conclusion of these works was that doctoral research was also of a poor quality (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996: 442).

The study by McCurdy and Cleary (1984) formed the foundation of the international debate regarding the state of doctoral research. Their work also substantially influences the framework for the analysis contained within this minor dissertation. This study looked at 142 Public Administration doctoral abstracts. The criteria that McCurdy and Cleary used for analysing the doctorates included, but were not limited to, the following; research purpose, validity, the testing of theory, and importance of topic (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984: 50).

The criteria of validity indicated whether the doctorate was designed in a way that would encourage confidence in the findings of the research. For example experimental design and statistical techniques were classed as valid, whilst case studies were not (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984: 50).

The study included a criterion of 'importance' under the variable topic. By discovering what the topic is being researched, it was viewed possible to discover whether the topic under study was of central importance to the field of Public Administration (1984:50). The McCurdy and Cleary study included a criterion of 'purpose'. Purpose refers to whether the doctorate actually had a research purpose (1984: 50). McCurdy and Cleary use the variable of 'impact' to assess whether the doctorate tested theory, they asked the question of whether the work explicitly strengthened, weakened theory or established conditions that would indicate that the theory is applicable (1984: 50). In general very few of the doctorates analysed met all the criteria and 18 percent of all the doctorates did not meet any of the criteria. The general findings of their work showed that a very limited number of the doctorates met the criteria and were therefore lacking in the systematic study approach characterised by social science. In terms of validity only 21 percent of the doctorates were classified as valid and 58 percent of the doctorates attempted to test a theory. Only 45 percent of the doctorates dealt with a topic which was classed as being of importance to the field of Public Administration. In terms of the evaluatory criteria of purpose, 21 percent of the doctorates appeared to have no purpose at all they only described an existing process. The study found that 15 percent of the doctorates were orientated towards practice and 58 percent did not test a theory or a causal proposition (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984: 51-52).

A study regarding the state of doctoral research was also conducted by White (1986). White assessed over 300 abstracts of doctorate research between 1980 and 1981. The assessment was based on similar although not identical criteria to that of McCurdy and Cleary's 1984 study (White, 1994: 141). The results of White's study were also similar to McCurdy and Cleary, even though he was more generous in his evaluations; that doctoral research in Public Administration was of a poor quality. Only 39 percent of the dissertations showed any testing of theory. Approximately half of the dissertations did not make use of mainstream social science research methodology and therefore were not classed as contributing to the development of knowledge in the field of Public Administration (White, 1994: 154).

Cleary reapplied the methods and criteria that he had used with McCurdy in their 1984 study to a new dataset of doctorates in 1990. The 1990 study included 165 dissertations and found that only 32 percent were concerned with a topic of importance. The validity of research at this level, although showing an improvement over time, was still poor. Only 21 percent of doctorates made use of careful research design. A very slight improvement was also shown in regards to the extent to which doctorates tested an existing theory, 21 percent. The area in which there appeared to be some improvement in the quality of research was that of purpose, where the doctorate set out to conduct basic research. Only 20 percent of the doctorate research showed no research purpose or conclusion. Although this study found that there had been an improvement in the overall quality of research at the doctorate level in Public Administration there was only a limited degree of improvement in the topic, validity and theory testing within doctoral research (Cleary, 1994: 57-58).

Adams and White (1994) conducted a study regarding the quality of doctorate research in relation to five other comparable academic fields. The assessment was conducted on 201 abstracts on the basis of method and quality. Quality included criteria such as relevance to theory, obvious flaws in research, importance of topic and overall quality. Methodology included whether the research utilised different types of qualitative and quantitative techniques. This study indicated that doctorates in Public Administration showed low quality research and limited conformity to mainstream research methodology. Comparatively, Public Administration showed the highest percentage of research concerned with practice, 22 percent. It was also shown that these practitioner orientated doctorates were of low quality with little or no relevance or importance to Public Administration and a high degree of obvious research flaws (Adams and White, 1994: 565, 567-569, 571-572, 575).

A discussion surrounding local studies on the state of Public Administration research will now follow. It will be shown that the local studies mirror the findings of the international studies.

2.5.3 Local Studies on Public Administration Research

The South African studies on Public Administration research, in general, also involve investigating journal publications. This includes studies by Brynard, 1986; Hubbell, 1992; Clapper 2000; Wessels, 2006; and Cameron and McLaverty, 2008. These studies on the state of journals also concluded that research in Public Administration was in a poor state. Historically journal publications appear to be dominated by articles focused extensively on the practice of public administration. Thornhill (2008) conducted a search in the archives of the *Journal of Public Administration* and concluded that of approximately eighty articles published from 1970 to 1980, that the majority, nearly seventy, related only to the practice of public administration. References made to the science or field of Public Administration was limited to less than ten articles (Thornhill, 2008a: 13).

An investigation into possible research topics in Public Administration was conducted in 1986, by P.A. Brynard. The aim of the investigation was to provide a survey of the field and the academic and operational topics for further studies that would be relevant to both the field and the public sector. However, the published results of this were mostly ignored by academics and scholars alike (Thornhill, 2008a: 4).

Hubbell (1992) investigated the state of research in Public Administration between 1986 and 1990. Hubbell conducted a qualitative content analysis of 83 articles in the only Public Administration journal at this point in time, the *Journal of Public Administration* (1992: 4). The result of the analysis was that most of the articles published did not include any type of critical analysis and could be classified as following the administrative process approach (Hubbell, 1992: 13).

Clapper, through an examination of South African Public Administration and Public Management publications, came to a conclusion regarding the limited content of publications on the theory of practice and the poor state of research (2000: 58).

Wessels (2006) looked at articles published in the *Journal of Public Administration* from 2000 to 2004. This article investigated research in Public Administration and concerns regarding knowledge production (Wessels, 2006: 1499).

The Wessels study has been criticised. The variable of topic appears to have been the primary focus of the study and therefore the study generally is viewed as being too descriptive (Cameron, 2008: 78). The category of topic as used in the Wessels study regarding journal publications was informed by the standards for the Standard Generating Body of the Public Administration and Management for the National Qualifications Framework (Wessels, 2006). Therefore, using state orientated requirements for assessing academic research. The criticism of this is that it equates the knowledge needs of academia with that of the needs of the state (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 78). However, the topics were chosen based on the study's objective of whether research was addressing the core needs of government (Wessels, 2006: 1499).

Cameron and McLaverty conducted a quantitative analysis of *Journal of Public Administration* and *Administratio Publica* from 1994 to 2006 in order to establish the state of academic research in the field. The results showed that research in the field lacks theory testing. The findings of this study showed that over 85 percent of journal articles analysed were practice-orientated and therefore did not contribute to theory development (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 69 and 88). The study also showed that there was limited original work being presented in journal articles as the majority were involved in desktop research methodologies. This was demonstrated in the findings where 67.4 percent of articles in *Journal of Public Administration* and 79 percent of articles in *Administratio Publica* were classified as being involved in desktop research (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 87 and 91). This work, in conjunction with international studies, forms the basis of the framework for the analysis of doctorates contained in this minor dissertation and will therefore be discussed in greater detail throughout the dissertation.

2.5.4 Public Administration Doctorate Studies in South Africa

While there has been substantial work done on the broad state of research in Public Administration there appears to be, in the South African context, limited studies on the state of doctoral research. Wessels (2008) is the only work investigating doctoral research in South African Public Administration; however this work is not focused on the quality of the research but is rather “a profile of Public Administration postgraduate research in terms of institution, type of qualification and category of topic” (Wessels, 2008: 97).

Since it is the objective of this minor dissertation to critically analyse Public Administration research at the level of the doctorate it is necessary to discuss the only South African study on doctorate research in some detail.

The Wessels study could be classified as largely descriptive in nature with the exception of the analysis of category of topic. The study was concerned with completed research at the masters and doctorate level from 2000 to 2005 (Wessels, 2008: 102). In relation to the profile of type of qualification the findings of the study showed that there were a variety of doctorates offered; DPhil, DAdmin, DCom, DLitt et Phil, DPA, DTech and PhD (Wessels, 2008: 102). The category of topic in this study appears to have gone beyond the apparent descriptive nature of this study. Wessels looked at topic as it related to the important issues in Public Administration (2008: 109). The category of research topic built on Wessels' 2006 study on publications in the *Journal of Public Administration* from 2000 to 2004. The findings for this variable was that the most common category was ‘managing public service delivery’ followed by ‘public organisational development and management’ and ‘human resource management’. The findings of the work on the state of research at the level of the doctorate corresponded with the findings of the 2006 study (Wessels, 2008: 111). However, the same criticism, as previously mentioned, that was levied against his 2006 study must be applied to this study as the same topics of research were utilised in both studies; state orientated requirements were used for looking at academic research.

2.6 Summary

An understanding of the research doctorate was developed through looking at the historical emergence of the doctorate, followed by a description of the contemporary doctorate, including the development of the professional doctorate. The development of the research doctorate is strongly tied to the emergence of universities where the two main functions of these institutions were the production of new knowledge and providing education for certain professions.

South African doctoral education was shown in general to closely mirror the developments taking place in Britain. The academic field of Public Administration was strongly influenced by the developments taking place in the United States of America. It appears that the doctorate in Public Administration in South Africa follows that of research doctorates found in both America, mostly without the coursework component, and Britain with research culminating in a thesis that contributes to knowledge development in the field.

Public Administration as a concept has been understood as being based on both theory and practice. Through a historical overview it was shown that Public Administration in South Africa started as a discipline of training people for the public service. The state of the academic field of Public Administration was also discussed. Historically South African Public Administration was dominated by only one approach, the administrative process approach. This is widely regarded as one of the main reasons for the historical stagnation of the field. Contemporary Public Administration was shown to have changed to become more legitimate with the change in politics and the emergence of democracy.

The state of research in South African Public Administration was discussed through an overview of international and local studies. There appears to be substantial concerns regarding the quality of research in South African Public Administration as well as international Public Administration. At the international level studies show that doctorate level research is in a poor state. The only South African study including doctorates, by Wessels, is primarily descriptive in nature and does not draw direct inferences regarding the state of the research.

CHAPTER THREE: **Methodology and Research Design**

3.1 Overview

The main aim of this dissertation is to provide a critical analysis of the research being conducted at the level of the doctorate in Public Administration. The analysis is of completed doctorates in the field of Public Administration over a period of fourteen years, between 1994 and 2008. This analysis, from which inferences are made regarding the state of research in Public Administration, focuses on methodology, focus, purpose and knowledge. In addition to this the year of completion, type of doctorate and topic are also looked at in order to develop a full picture of doctorate research in South Africa.

The focal point of this chapter is to provide the framework of the analysis of doctorate level research in South Africa. The analysis is a basis for a discussion around the inferences that can be made with regard to the quality of Public Administration research at the doctorate level.

The framework from which the analysis of doctorate level research in Public Administration is conducted is applied to a database. This database is composed of completed doctorates in the field of Public Administration. The completed doctorates are represented by abstracts in the database. The process of developing this database of 116 doctoral abstracts will be discussed in this chapter as well as the research questions that provide the basis for the descriptive and analytical investigation into doctorate level research.

3.2 Data Collection

The data used in this dissertation was attained through a content analysis of completed doctorates. The main component of the completed doctorate that was analysed was the associated abstract. These abstracts were obtained through a search of the National Research Foundations online Nexus database, university websites that contained copies of doctorates as well as in print form from interlibrary loans. A detailed description of the development of the database from which the content analysis was conducted will follow in this chapter.

Desktop analysis of research was also undertaken in order to address the previous studies of the topic under discussion. This research also directly aided in the formation of the research questions addressed in this minor dissertation as it provided most of the criteria used in the analysis of doctorates in South Africa.

A brief discussion surrounding the methodology of content analysis is necessary so as to fully explain the process of developing the findings as well as to highlight the advantages and potential limitations in using this methodology.

3.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis is described as a coding operation where information is categorised according to a conceptual framework (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster and Prozesky, 2001: 388). This categorisation allows for the data to be measured and interpreted and from this it is possible to analyse the data (McNabb, 2002: 24). Content analysis is primarily a research technique for analysing text (Bowen and Bowen, 2008: 689). Content analysis is understood as being “an empirically grounded, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent” (Krippendorff, 2004: xvii). This makes it a suitable methodology to be employed by this minor dissertation as it facilitates the analysis of the doctorates in terms of looking at their characteristics as directed by the research questions (Bowen and Bowen, 2008: 689).

It is also a useful means of conducting research as it allows for inferences to be made. Content analysis is therefore an appropriate methodology as this minor dissertation intends on making inferences regarding the state of research in Public Administration. Content analysis assists in addressing research questions from the texts being investigated. The answers to these questions and the inferences made are “more systematic, explicitly informed and (ideally) verifiable than what ordinary readers do with texts” (Krippendorff, 2004: 25).

The main advantage of using content analysis is that it allows qualitative text to be quantified into a clear format through a structured method. The primary disadvantage of using content analysis is that there could be in-built bias in the process where the information of the text is isolated from the context within which it is found thus losing its contextual meaning (McNabb, 2002: 414). This concern is dealt with by this minor dissertation by establishing the historical and contemporary context of the field of Public Administration, as it is this field within which the doctorates being analysed are completed.

3.4 The Database

A database of 116 doctorates was developed through which to analyse the state of the research. The basis of the database was an online search of the National Research Foundation online Nexus database system for current and completed South African doctorates. The search was limited to a fourteen year time frame, from 1994 to 2007.

This particular time frame is utilised for a number of reasons. It was viewed to be of importance to look at the research primarily in a post 1994 environment. The politics of South Africa was substantially altered with the end of Apartheid and with the strong relationship between politics and Public Administration⁵ it is important to investigate the research being undertaken in Public Administration in this new context.

The previous chapter discussed the state of research in Public Administration and touched on the politics of the time. In the early 1990s the field, as represented by the Mount Grace Conference, was concerned that due to the dominance of the generic process approach and the inequalities of apartheid the field of Public Administration was in crisis (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 23).

⁵ The relationship between politics and Public Administration has been at the heart of the discipline since the early days, see Goodnow, F.J. 1900. *Politics and Administration: A Study in Government*. New York: Russell & Russell cited in Shafritz, J. M., Hyde, A.C. and Parks, S. J. 2004. *Classics of Public Administration*. United States of America: Wadsworth.

There were a number of resolutions put forward at Mount Grace I regarding the studying and teaching of Public Administration in light of the changes occurring in South Africa. These resolutions included that Public Administration needed to have a more normative focus, that a more rigorous scientific analysis was needed in research and that a developmental focus should be established (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992: 23-24). This represents the context in terms of the state of research in the South African field of Public Administration. Whether the research produced at the level of the doctorate is reflective of these post 1994 concerns was of interest and therefore the time frame for analysis began in 1994. The end date of content analysis of 2007 was chosen due to the concern that enough time needed to have elapsed to ensure that all the doctorates that had been completed had been included in Nexus.

To make sure that the doctorates included in the database related to the field of Public Administration the following subject fields were searched; Public Administration, Public Management, Public Policy, Municipality, Intergovernmental Relations, Service Delivery, Administrative Reform, E-governance, Public Finance, Ethics, Accountability, Developmental Administration, Citizen Participation, Public Administration Research and Theory. This search resulted in a database of 461 potential completed doctorates. This database included raw data in the form of completed doctorates including the researcher's name, title of doctorate, the degree programme, the year of completion and the institution.

However, since it is the purpose of this dissertation to analyse the research conducted at the doctoral level in the academic field of Public Administration it was necessary to exclude those theses that were not completed in a department of Public Administration, Public Management or Public Policy. A research trip was undertaken to the National Research Foundation in Pretoria. This was done in order to gain clarity regarding the way in which the doctorates are included in Nexus and the way in which the doctorates are coded according to subject. It was at this point that the possible fault was raised regarding the coding of doctorates.

There was a possibility that a thesis could be on a topic that falls within the field of Public Administration but is not being completed for the attainment of a degree in Public Administration. These doctorates were excluded from the database as only those completed in a department relating to Public Administration, Public Policy and Public Management are the concern of this dissertation. This was possible to ascertain as the National Research Foundation online Nexus database mentions the department in which the thesis is completed. The raw data therefore only contained doctorates produced within the academic field of Public Administration. This resulted in a database of 135 completed doctorates in Public Administration.

The Nexus database includes abstracts from some of the completed doctorates. Where the abstracts were not included they were acquired through inter-library loans and from university websites. There were no abstracts available for 19 of the doctorates. The reasons for this included the university concerned did not have a copy of the thesis, the doctorate was lost, the doctorate was out on loan or there was no record of the doctorate at the university.

The abstracts were then analysed according to the variables of year, type, topic, research focus, methodology, research purpose and contribution to knowledge. Therefore, a final database of 116 abstracts was created from which to address the research questions of this dissertation and to infer conclusions regarding the broader research problem, that of the state of research in the academic field of Public Administration in South Africa.

Abstracts have been chosen as the primary unit of analysis as they provide an insight into the doctorates methodology, topic, the purpose of the research and research focus. Abstracts have also been chosen due to this paper being produced for the purpose of a masters mini-dissertation with the associated time and other constraints. The use of abstracts for the content analysis of completed doctorate research is not without precedent as most of the international studies on this topic make use of abstracts. However, after a discussion with a few academics in the field it is noted that there is a potential limitation in the South African context as there are no requirements for what needs to be included in an abstract of a doctorate. Therefore, although the content analysis is of abstracts a sample of ten percent of the 116 theses have been looked at and coded in order to verify the findings. Therefore, twelve full theses were analysed in relation to the five analytical variables.

This created an additional database of 60 criteria from which to confirm the validity of the findings of the analysis of doctoral abstracts. When the analysis of the full theses was compared to the analysis of the abstracts there were no discrepancies evident in the findings. Therefore, although concern has been raised regarding the use of abstracts for analysis in the South African context, this exercise shows that there is validity in using abstracts.⁶

The variables that are used in order to analyse the database are described in greater detail below.

3.5 The Variables used in the Analysis

The variables used in the analysis include the year of completion, type of doctorate, research topic, focus, methodology, purpose and contribution to knowledge.

The variables that have been chosen for the content analysis were influenced by previous international and local studies on the topic. The studies on the broad state of research in Public Administration as well as the state of research at the level of the doctorate in Public Administration have underpinned the rationale for the use of specific variables. The international nature of the majority of the studies on this topic substantially influences the variables used in this dissertation, specifically in regards to studies regarding doctorate level research as there is only one study in South Africa. The international influence found within the variables of this dissertation have been tempered by being adapted to the South African context. These variables have, to a certain extent, already been discussed in chapter two through an investigation into previous studies regarding the state of research in Public Administration. These variables will be discussed in greater detail below, with reference to previous studies but with the focus on the variables as they have been used in this dissertation.

⁶ See annexure 3

The analysis contained within this dissertation makes use of both descriptive and analytical variables. The variable of type of doctorate, year of completion and research topic are largely descriptive in nature in order to provide a background to the analytical component of the study. The analytical variables are research focus, methodology, purpose and contribution to knowledge.

3.5.1 Type of Doctorate

The variable of type of doctorate has been discussed briefly in the previous chapter. There are a number of different types of research doctorates in the field of Public Administration offered by various institutions this includes DAdmin, PhD, DLitt et Phil, DPhil, DPA, DTech and DCom. DAdmin is a doctorate of Administration, PhD stands for Philosophiae Doctor which is a doctorate of Philosophy, DLitt et Phil is a doctorate of Literature and Philosophy, DPA is a doctorate of Public Administration, DTech is a doctorate of Technology and DCom is a doctorate of Commerce. The doctorates under analysis have already been classified as one of the above listed degrees; therefore, it is not the purpose of this dissertation's analysis to classify the doctorate degrees but to provide a picture regarding the frequency of the occurrence of the different doctorate degrees.

3.5.2 Year of Completion

The variable of year is a descriptive variable that indicates the number of doctorates completed each year from 1994 to 2007. In line with the variable of type of doctorate, the year in which the doctorate was attained is included to provide an overall image of doctorate research in South Africa. This also indicates the frequency of completed doctorates.

3.5.3 Research Topic

The variable of research topic is primarily a descriptive variable that allows the analysis to establish what topics are being researched at the doctorate level. It is therefore being used as Perry and Kraemer proposed where research topic as a variable focuses on the "distribution of research in the field" (1986: 217). However, there is an analytical component to this variable as well.

The topic provides insight into dominant topics being studied in the field. This variable answers the question: ‘what topics are being researched by doctoral students in their doctorates?’

The South African study by Wessels (2008) on doctorate and masters research used the variable of topic as the primary variable of the study and it was used descriptively. This study included the following categories under topic; policy analysis and development; development management; public organisational development and management; managing public service delivery; human resource management; financial management and procurement; information, knowledge, communication and technology management; public management ethics; public administration and management history, theory and research; disaster studies; intergovernmental relations; public participation and other (Wessels, 2008: 110-111). There is a concern regarding the way in which these topics were classified. Some of these topics appear to overlap such as public organisational development and management with human resource management. There is also a lack of clarity as to what constitutes these topics such as managing public service delivery. Does managing limit the topic in relation to service delivery, what about other aspects of service delivery? In general these topics appear to be overly concerned with a particular process, that of management.

The local study regarding the state of research in the field by Cameron and McLaverty (2008) also uses this variable in their analysis of journal articles. This dissertation makes use of the variables as developed by Cameron and McLaverty.

Previous studies, such as Perry and Kraemer’s 1986 study, were criticised for using categories that were not mutually exclusive (Stalling and Ferris, 1994: 123). Although this was in reference to the variable of methodology it also a concern when coding the variable of topic. A doctorate may be classified under more than one sub-variable for topic. Therefore, the primary subject of the doctorate was used to categorise it based on the sub-variables.

The different sub-variables or the different topics that are used in the content analysis are as follows, Public Administration research and theory; administrative reform; public management and administration; public policy; ethics and accountability; development and citizen participation; human resource management; financial management; intergovernmental relations; information, communication, technology and E-governance; service delivery; local government reorganisation and other (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80-82). Some of these sub-variables utilised are similar to the topics presented by previous studies where they are generic public administration topics that are valid across different Public Administration eras. However, additional topics more relevant to the current time period were included, such as information, technology and communication (ICT) and e-governance. In terms of the South African context additional topics were included in a post-1994 environment such as local government reorganisation (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 79)

There is a broader debate in relation to this variable regarding what the important topics are in Public Administration. There is the view that those issues in Public Administration that are of importance are those that are promoted by government and in the South African context those issues that are contained in the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Wessels, 2008: 99). An extension of this view is that the important topics for doctorate research should be "...a reflection of the needs of the practice of public administration, namely the South African government in all its spheres" (Wessels, 2008: 117).

It must be noted that there are differing views on what is classified as the important topics. Cameron and McLaverty indicated that the importance of the topic, and by extension academia, cannot be equated with what the state requires (2008: 78). However these views are not necessarily mutually exclusive and indeed if Chapter 10 of the constitution and in particular the principles governing Public Administration are looked at, it is clear that there is an overlap between the views expressed by Wessels (2008) and Cameron and McLaverty (2008). The topics of ethics and service delivery are examples of this. The point of departure for the two foci is the rationale behind why the topics are viewed as important which goes to the heart of Public Administration being both a practice and a field.

It appears that the views of Wessels (2008) and Cameron (2008) are juxtaposed against each other with regards to Public Administration as a practice and theory. This dissertation differs slightly from both of these views.

There are merits to both approaches, however, it is not the view of this dissertation to promote one over the other. It is clear that practice and theory can have an influence over each other. Mosher (1956: 169) considered a profession to be characterised as striving towards the development of knowledge. Theory is also viewed as a potential guide to practice (Wilkerson, 1990: 607). However, this relationship is not always evident in Public Administration as at times it is marked by a separation of theory and practice (Bolton and Stolcis, 2003).

The sub-variables utilised by this minor dissertation in addressing the question relating to what topic is being researched at the level of the doctorate is now provided in greater detail.

Public Administration Research and Theory

This sub-variable is centred on the development of Public Administration research and theory. If a doctorate contributed to topics such as Public Administration research, administrative theory, bureaucratic theory, organisational theory or research methodology then it has been included under this sub-variable (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80). This sub-variable relates directly to the notion of knowledge development, which is one of the key components of a doctorate. Therefore, this sub-variable is essential in the analysis of doctoral research.

Administrative Reform

Administrative reform refers to the political transformation that has occurred in post-apartheid South Africa where there has been substantial state reorganisation. This sub-variable is one that is specific to the South African context and is not found in the international studies (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80). Doctorates that related to public sector reform and state transformation were included under this category.

Public Management and Administration

The sub-variable of Public Management and Administration is a category of topic that refers to general management and administration functions including, planning, organising, controlling and leadership. Included in this category is performance management (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80).

Public Policy

Public Policy has been classified as a topic, in the same way as Public Management and Public Administration which relate to the field of doctorates under investigation. Those doctorates that are concerned with policy analysis are included in this sub-variable. Policy analysis includes the policy cycle of policy formation and policy implementation. Policy analysis also refers to doctorates that deal with sectoral policy such as environmental and housing policy (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80).

Ethics and Accountability

The sub-variable of ethics and accountability refers to doctorates that are concerned with ethical questions, codes of conduct, anti-corruption strategies and policies that are aimed at improving accountability and transparency in the public sector (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 80).

Development and Citizen Participation

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) specifically states that Public Administration must be development-oriented and promote public participation (RSA, 1996: 1331). Public participation is viewed as a fundamental component of developmental policies in contemporary South Africa. This sub-variable of development and citizen participation aims to classify those doctorates that deal with these topics. Doctorates are therefore categorised under this topic as they deal with issues of public participation, public involvement and community development (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81).

Human Resource Management

The sub-variable of human resource management includes topics that focus on labour relations, personnel management as well as wage-related issues such as recruitment, tenure and field (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81). Human resource management could be classified as a broad administrative function, but due to the extensive nature of what is included in this topic it has been designated as a separate topic.

Financial Management

Doctorates were included in the sub-variable of financial management when they were focused on financial issues relating to auditing, budgeting and budget-cycles (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81). There may be a potential overlap between this topic and that of accountability and management. In order to avoid this, if the primary concern of the research is related to financial issues, then the doctorate would be classified as financial management.

Intergovernmental Relations

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa includes the principle of cooperative governance (RSA, 1996: 1331). This forms the basis of intergovernmental relations therefore intergovernmental relations was established as a separate sub-variable. Doctorates concerned with relationships between spheres of government were classified under this topic (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81).

Information, communication, technology (ICT) and E-Governance

The sub-variable of information, communication, technology and E-governance is included in order to classify modern advances within the field. Doctorates that focused on technological advancements in managing information, communication, knowledge as well as technology in the public sector were included in this sub-variable (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81).

Service Delivery

Service delivery as a topic of research includes subjects such as Batho Pele, customer/citizen care issues and concerns around payment for services (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81).

Local Government Reorganisation

The sub-variable of local government reorganisation is included due to the extensive transformation undertaken at this sphere of government. This topic differs from administrative reform as it deals only with one sphere of government – local government as opposed to macro state level reorganisation. Doctorates that deal with metropolitan reorganisation, redefining boundaries and new government structures at the local level were included under this sub-variable (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 81-82).

Other

Any miscellaneous topics are included under the sub-variable of other. These would be doctorates that cannot be classified as being part of mainstream Public Administration. Doctorates that deal with, for example, globalisation, international relations issues and economists' explanations of the informal economy are classified as other (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 82).

3.5.4 Research Purpose

The variable of purpose has been utilised by a number of international studies. The McCurdy and Cleary study on the state of research at the doctorate level included a criterion of purpose (1984: 50). This variable is expanded for this dissertation to include the framework of Stallings and Ferris (1988). Stallings and Ferris developed three mutually exclusive categories or sub-variables for purpose; conceptual, relational and evaluative (1988: 581).

Doctorates were categorised as conceptual if the main aim of the doctorate was to identify and conceptualise the research problem. This would mean that the doctorates are primarily descriptive in nature. Doctorates that focus on causal relationships between variables would be classified as relational. The doctorates which evaluated or analysed policy or programmes would be classified under the variable of evaluative (Stallings and Ferris, 1994: 112 and 114). This variable addresses the research question: ‘what was the research purpose of the doctorate?’

3.5.5 Research Methodology

The variable of research methodology is used to answer the question: ‘what type of methodology was used to conduct the research?’ This variable relates to the type of research methods and approaches that are used in Public Administration (Perry and Kraemer, 1990: 354). This question is addressed by looking at the research design, unit of analysis and the data that was collected for the doctorate. Three sub-variables are used to identify the different methods; desktop, qualitative and quantitative (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 85). A criticism of using only three categories within this variable is that they are too broad and they do not allow for discrimination between the different methods used within Public Administration (Wessels, Pauw and Thani, 2009: 2). An example of this would be content analysis that makes use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Holsti, 1969: 14).

Wessels, Pauw and Thani (2009) have conducted an investigation into the different research methodologies that can potentially be used in Public Administration. The conclusion of this study was that there are ten different types of research methodologies that can be utilised in Public Administration. These ten methodologies are subdivisions of the three broad categories of qualitative, quantitative and desktop (Wessels, Pauw and Thani, 2009: 6-7). However, a result of having numerous categories is that they are not mutually exclusive. The Perry and Kraemer study of 1986 was criticised for just this reason (Stallings and Ferris, 1988). Therefore, in order not to be accused of the same fault the three broader categories of qualitative, quantitative and desktop are used in this analysis.

A doctorate was classified as desktop if the main focus was secondary research. This focus on secondary research points towards the potential lack of a significant contribution to knowledge. This category includes those doctorates where research was obtained from journals, books and existing databases (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 85). This is not to say that original research cannot be desktop in nature. Doctorates making use of documentary research to develop new knowledge in the field have been classified as qualitative. Those doctorates that relook at existing knowledge have been classified as desktop. In the analysis of the doctorates if the research method was not evident, or if there did not appear to be a research method the doctorate was classified as desktop.

The research conducted was classified as quantitative if it involved numbers. Quantitative research includes statistical processes and experiments (McNabb, 2002: 21-22). Experimental research refers to treatment, control groups, quasi-experimental research such as correlational, time series and longitudinal studies (Johnson, 2002: 43). Descriptive statistics and surveys are also included under the sub-variable of quantitative research.

The doctorates under analysis were classified as using qualitative research methods where the data was collected in a semi-structured manner; this would include analyses of written documents and focus group transcripts (Johnson, 2002: 118). Examples of qualitative research methods include ethnography, phenomenology, case studies, hermeneutics, grounded theory and action science (McNabb, 2002: 277).

3.5.6 Research Focus

McCurdy and Cleary use the variable of impact to assess whether the doctorate tested theory (1984: 50). The variable of research focus answered the question: 'is the doctorate research orientated more towards theory or practice?' This question is of particular interest with regards to the analysis of doctorates in Public Administration. The reason for this is that Public Administration encompasses both an academic field as well as a practice. There is a concern that Public Administration is focusing too much on practice and needs to place greater emphasis on developing theory (Frederickson and Smith, 2003: 3). This is also of particular interest in the South African context where there is debate around the concern that Public Administration is focused too much on 'nuts and bolts' at the expense of theory (Cameron, 2005).

Doctorates were classified as being theory orientated if the research explicitly strengthened, weakened theory or established conditions that would indicate that the theory is applicable (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984: 50). The doctorate was classified as practice orientated when general practical suggestions were made such as improving practice (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 88).

3.5.7 Significant Contribution to Knowledge

Significantly contributing to knowledge is one of the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree (Thornhill, 2008a: 3). There are discrepancies between tertiary institutions which offer doctorates in Public Administration as to whether a successful doctorate must contribute to new knowledge or whether it must demonstrate an understanding, application and evaluation of existing knowledge. Therefore, this dissertation has chosen to analyse doctorates based on whether the thesis has significantly contributed to knowledge in Public Administration.

Within Public Administration some recent literature has been concerned with the notion of 'best practices' (Lynn, Heinrich and Hill, 2001: 156-157). This type of research is generally inductive and based on practitioners' observations on particular cases and experiences. This type of research is problematic as it is not always clear as to why that practice worked (Stallings, 1994: 73). Therefore, this type of research does not truly generate knowledge that is transferable and would not then be classified as generating significant knowledge. However, knowledge can be developed through literature reviews in addition to other forms of Public Administration research such as positivist, interpretive and critical research (White, 1994 and 1999). Therefore, it is not only empirical research that is viewed as being able to generate significant knowledge in Public Administration.

Since one of the primary criteria for attaining a doctorate is the contribution to knowledge, this variable is of importance to answer the question: 'did the doctorate significantly contribute to knowledge in the field?' This question is of significance in assessing whether the research done for the obtaining of a doctorate meets one of the base requirements of doctoral research as established by universities. This requirement was discussed in detail in chapter two of this dissertation through an analysis of a number of universities requirements for the attainment of a doctorate in Public Administration.

The discussion concluded that successful doctorates were required to significantly contribute to knowledge. The variable of significantly contributing to knowledge is therefore operationalised in light of whether the doctorate conforms to this requirement for the attainment of a doctorate in the field of Public Administration, as discussed in chapter two. If the doctorate fails to meet this then some tentative conclusions can be drawn regarding the weak state of doctoral research in Public Administration.

3.6 Summary

The primary aim of this dissertation is to conduct an analysis of completed doctorates in the field of Public Administration. This chapter discussed the methodology of content analysis used in this dissertation. The development of the database from which the analysis was conducted was also examined. This process highlighted that doctoral abstracts was the unit of analysis for this dissertation.

This chapter discussed the research questions and associated variables utilised by this dissertation in the analysis of the doctorates. The variables of doctorate type and year of completion were shown to be descriptive in nature and provide general information. The variable of topic was also shown to be primarily descriptive; however it has been used by other studies in an analytical manner to indicate the importance of the topics.

The analytical variables of focus, methodology, knowledge and purpose are the primary concern of this dissertation as these will provide insight into the state of doctoral research. Some of these variables are adapted from other studies on the broad state of research as well as on the state of doctorate research, where these studies were internationally focused the variables used were tailored to a South African context.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Research Findings of the Content Analysis of Doctorates in Public Administration in
South Africa

4.1 Overview

The previous chapters of this dissertation have provided the foundation for the presentation of the findings contained in this chapter. The content analysis is presented in this chapter along with the interpretations of the critical analysis of completed doctorates in Public Administration between 1994 and 2007.

The findings are presented in two general groups those associated with descriptive variables and those associated with analytical variables. The descriptive variables include type of doctorate and year of completion. These provide a background to the presentation of the analytical variables. The variable of topic although it has analytical components is presented under the descriptive variable grouping.

The findings of this dissertation are compared to those from the South African study on the state of research in journals conducted by Cameron and McLaverty (2008). This comparison is done in order to ascertain whether the weak state of research that was described in the study on journals is evident in this study on doctoral research and whether there are differences.

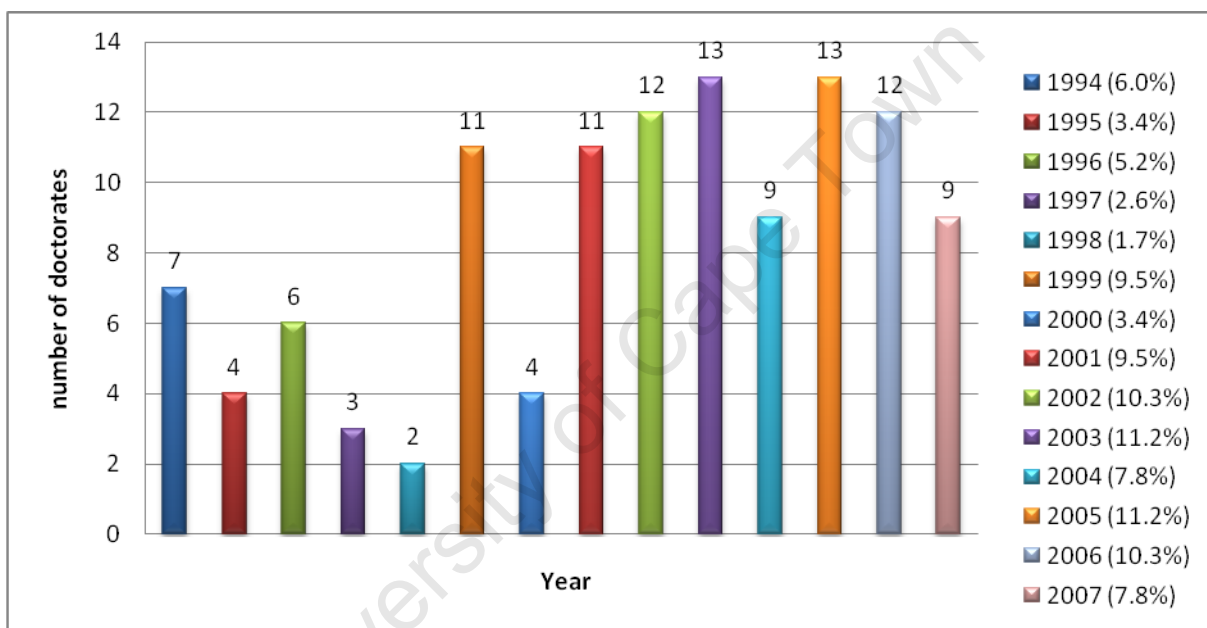
4.2 Results – Descriptive Characteristics of Research

4.2.1 Year of Completion

The focus of this dissertation is completed doctorates over a fourteen year time frame, from 1994 to 2007. It is therefore of interest to note the number of doctorates completed each year within this time frame. The data collected is presented in figure 4.1. The least number of doctorates were completed in 1997 and 1998. Only two doctorates in the field of Public Administration were completed in these years. In 1995 and 2000 only four doctorates were completed. The highest number of doctorates in Public Administration was thirteen, which were completed in 2003 and 2005.

After 2001 there appears to be a higher number of doctorates completed. This pattern reflects governments drive to increase the overall number of graduates. The number of total doctoral graduates has increased from 822 in 2000 to 1176 in 2005 (Centre for Research on Science and Technology, 2009: 22). The Department of Education has aimed at increasing the total number of doctoral graduates to 1700 by 2010 (Pandor, 2007). This aim of increasing doctorates is also evident in the National Research Foundation programmes, which has identified high numbers of good quality doctorates as a key driver (National Research Foundation, 2007: 8).

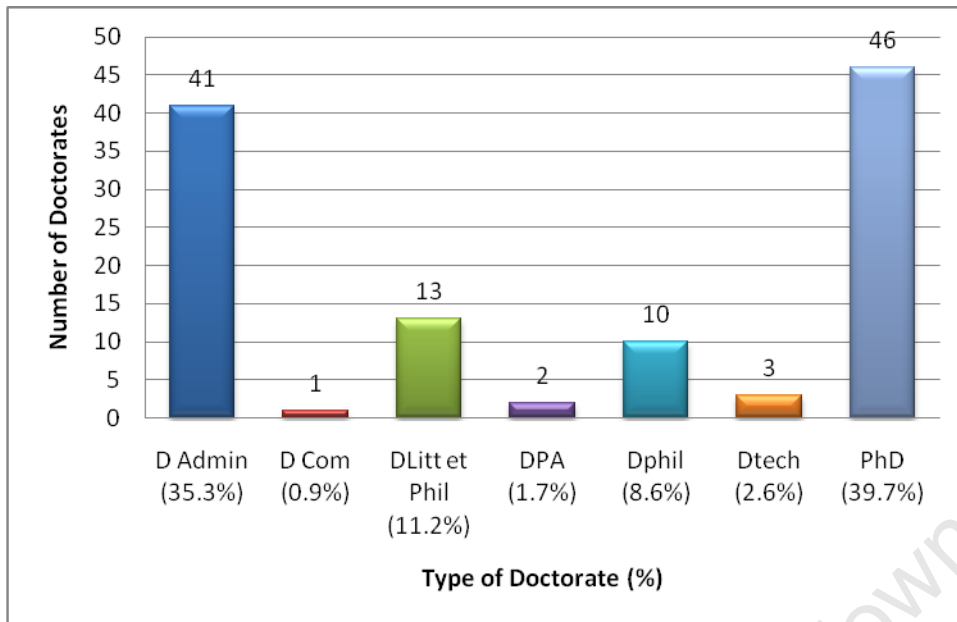
Figure 4.1 Year of Completion (N=116)



4.2.2 Type of Doctorate

Although not the primary focus of this dissertation’s analysis it is of interest to note the type of doctorate under analysis. The two most common doctorates completed in the field of Public Administration are PhD and then DAdmin, followed by DLitt et Phil and DPhil and then DPA, DTech and DCom. These findings are presented in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Type of Doctorate



4.2.3 Research Topic

It must be noted that there is a concern regarding drawing inferences about the importance of the topic based on the popularity of the topics of doctorate research under analysis. However, this is not the proposition of this dissertation. The categories of topics given provide an indication to the extent to which the core topics of Public Administration are being studied, the categories themselves are viewed as the topics of importance. The results for the distribution of topics is illustrated in figure 4.3.

The most common topic of completed doctorates is that of 'Public Management and Administration', which accounts for 17.2 percent of the doctorates under investigation. This sub-variable possibly allows for an inclusion of the broadest range of topics and conceivably should be the most common sub-variable. The next most popular topic is that of 'Public Policy', which accounts for 13.38 percent of the completed doctorates under analysis.

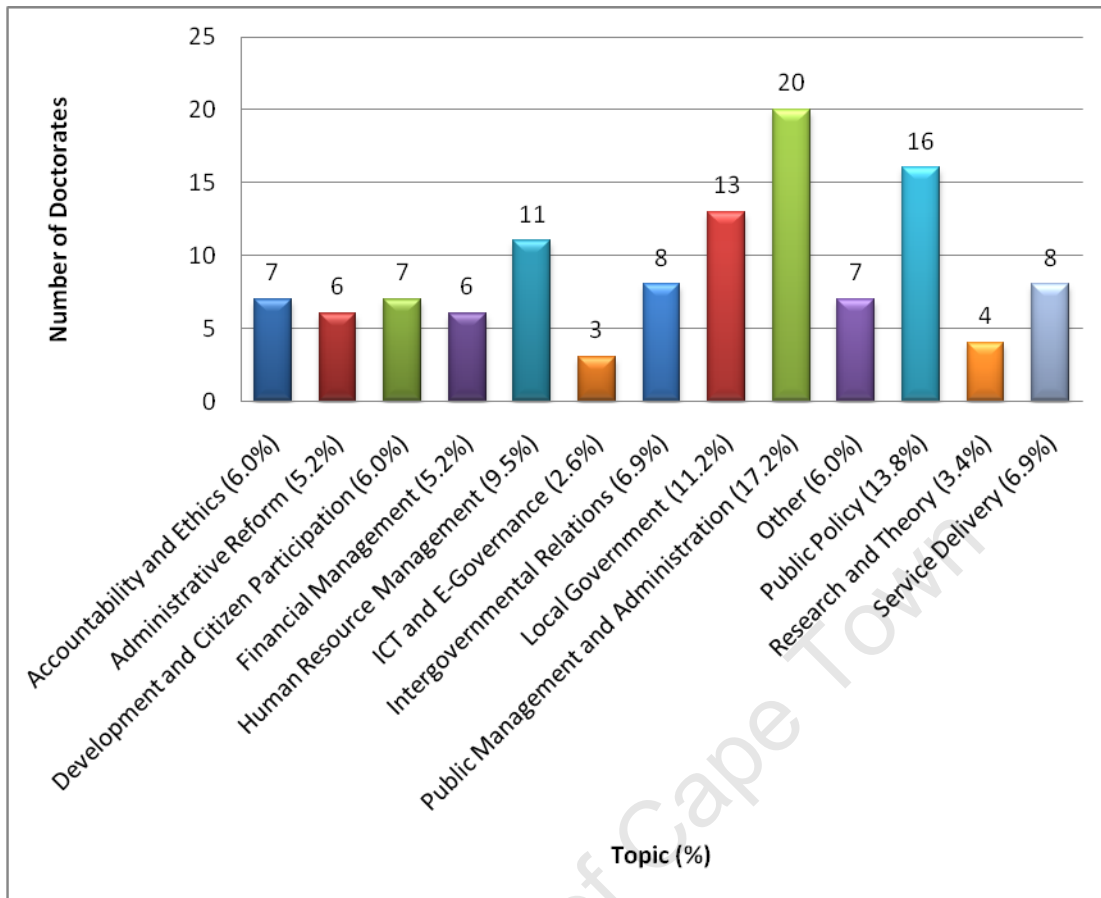
The topic of 'ICT and E-Governance' represents the least utilised category, accounting for only three (2.6 percent) completed doctorates over the fourteen years. This could be due to the technological nature of the topics. Generally technologically related topics appear to be a recent introduction into Public Administration. This can be illustrated by looking at text books in the field. One such example is Hughes *Public Management and Administration* which did not include a chapter on E-government until its third edition in 2003.

The sub-variable of 'Public Administration Research and Theory' is the next least utilised topic. Only four (3.4 percent) doctorates have been completed that would be categorised as relating to research and theory. This category is the one that links most explicitly to that of theory whilst a number of the other categories can relate to that of practice. The limited number of doctorates which can be classified as involving research and theory could be an indication of the low levels of theory in the field of Public Administration. However, this statement needs to be assessed in light of the findings of the analytical variables, particularly that of research focus.

Some of the other more commonly used topics such as 'Financial Management' (5.2 percent), 'Service Delivery' (6.9 percent) and 'Human Resource Management' (9.5 percent) can be seen as being more practice orientated. A conclusion that could be drawn is that there is a stronger focus on practice related topics than topics relating to theory.

Although the variable of research topic can provide an indication of the research focus of doctorates in the field of Public Administration the variable of research focus provides a clearer indication of whether practice or theory has dominated the field.

Figure 4.3 Research Topic (N=116)



4.3 Results – Analytical Characteristics of Research

4.3.1 Research Purpose

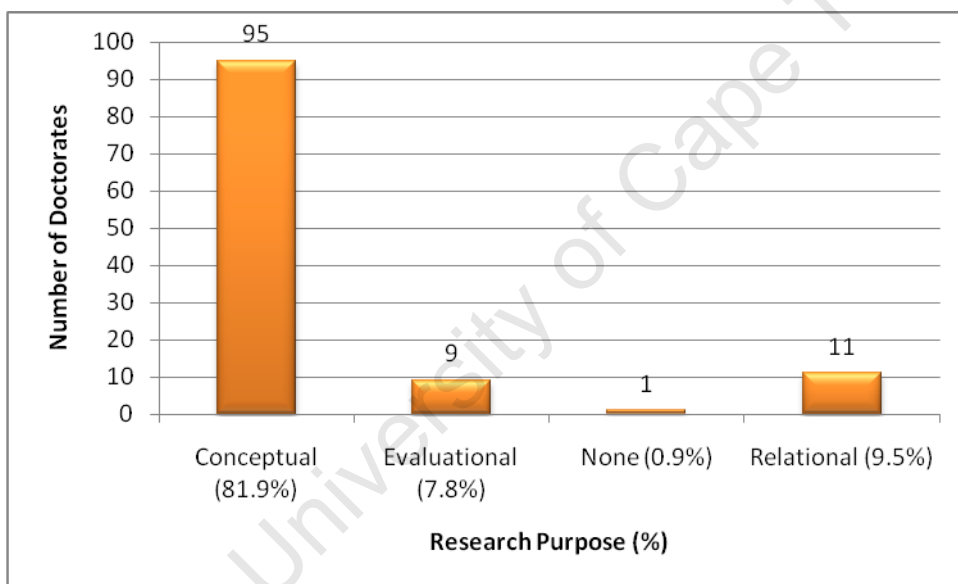
The variable of research purpose addresses the research question of “what is the purpose of the research?” The findings are presented in figure 4.4. It is clear that nearly all of the research conducted at doctoral level in the field of Public Administration has a research purpose, only one of the doctorates under analysis did not have a purpose.

It is clear that the most common purpose of completed doctorates in South African Public Administration is conceptual research. An overwhelming 81.9 percent of doctorates were classified as conceptual. The sub-variable of conceptual indicates that the main focus of the research is to identify and conceptualise the research problem under investigation.

This type of research can primarily be classified as descriptive in nature. With the vast majority of the doctorates under analysis having a research purpose classified as conceptual it is an indication that doctorate research is potentially in a weak state.

There is a marginal difference between the remaining 18.1 percent of the completed doctorates. There is limited evidence that doctorate research is attempting to look at or explain the relationship between variable as a low 9.5 percent of the research can be classified as being relational. A slightly lower proportion of completed doctorates could be classified as evaluational research. A policy or programme that was evaluated or analysed, accounted for only 7.8 percent of the completed research.

Figure 4.4 Research Purpose (N=116)



4.3.2 Research Methodology

One of the key research questions that allows inferences to be drawn regarding the state of doctoral research is “what methodologies are used to conduct research in Public Administration doctorates?” Figure 4.5 illustrates that 62.1 percent of doctorates are classified as desktop research. Where the research conducted is classified as desktop it implies that mainly secondary research is being conducted. It is conceivable then that this type of methodology does not contribute to systematic knowledge within the field.

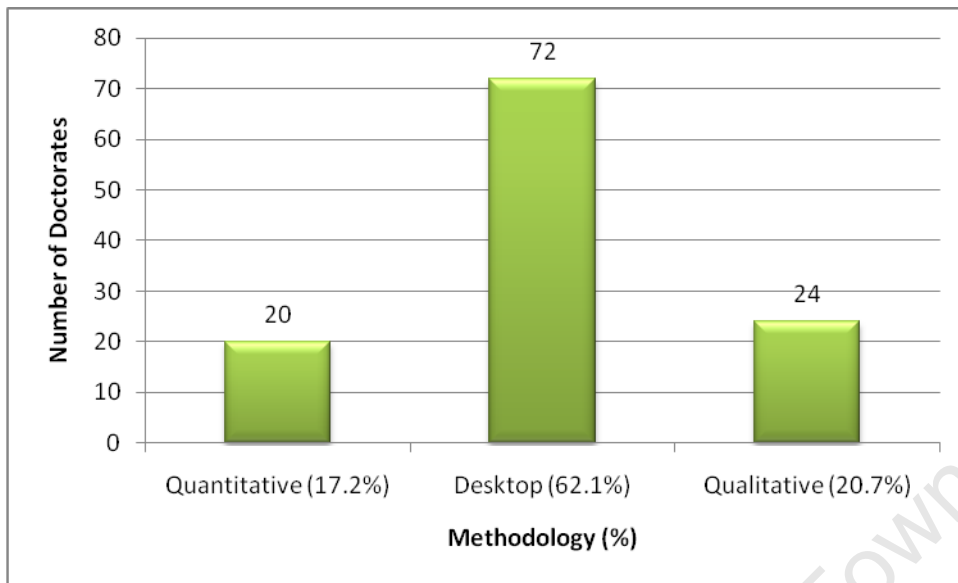
In order to truly assess this notion the findings for this variable will need to be analysed in conjunction with the variable of knowledge.

A total of 20.7 percent of the doctorates made use of qualitative research methodologies. Qualitative research assists in understanding complex phenomenon and understanding context, which cannot always be achieved through statistics alone (Johnson, 2002: 117 and 210). Therefore, this type of methodology is of particular significance to Public Administration where public issues are often interlinked with people's perceptions and values (Johnson, 2002: 182). This is then an indication that a significant percentage of doctorates are engaged with a methodology suitable for Public Administration research.

Quantitative research methodologies are represented by 17.2 percent of completed doctorates. This type of methodology is of importance to Public Administration where there is an increasing demand by a number of actors for measuring results (Johnson, 2002: 2). Therefore, although a smaller number of doctorates are concerned with quantitative methods it is an indication that this methodology is being engaged with by Public Administration research.

There is a concern regarding the state of research in Public Administration at the doctorate level when the findings from this variable methodology are looked at in conjunction with the previous variable of purpose. The majority of doctorates appear to be conceptual in nature and concerned with desktop methodology. Therefore, the majority of doctorates have not conducted original work and have used secondary research (Cameron and McLaverty, 2008: 91). In combination the findings from these variables indicate that the research does not appear to be in line with the general requirements for attaining a doctorate as outlined in chapter two. This indicates a weak state of research at the level of the doctorate.

Figure 4.5 Research Methodology (N=116)



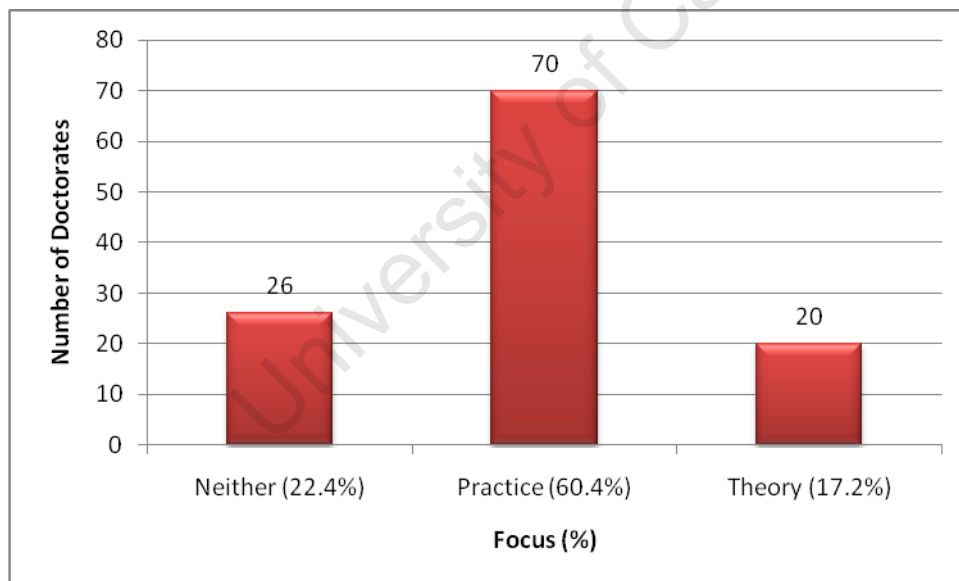
4.3.3 Research Focus

It is clear from the analysis that the primary research focus of doctorates over the last fourteen years has been that of practice. Figure 4.6 illustrates that the majority of the completed doctorates could be classified as being primarily concerned with the needs of practitioners. More than 60 percent of completed doctorates are orientated towards practical problem-solving as opposed to being theoretically orientated. Only 17.2 percent could be classified as explicitly strengthening or weakening theory or establishing conditions that would indicate that the theory is applicable. 22.4 percent of the doctorates could not be classified as being either practice or theory focused. This is of concern and indicates that those undertaking and completing research at the doctorate level are not clear in their intention. As previously discussed this variable is of considerable significance in light of the debate within the field of Public Administration where Public Administration encompasses both an academic field as well as a practice.

In light of Public Administration referring to both an academic field and a practice it can be assumed that doctorate research in Public Administration is supposed to contribute to meeting both the need for academic knowledge development and the practice (Wessels, 2008: 97). It is clear from the analysis that there is a heavy slant towards practice perhaps at the expense of theory.

The main findings of this section are that, in part, due to the over-weighted emphasis on practice the field is in a poor state. However, there is also a valid argument that in a developing country such as South Africa, there should be this focus on practice in order to prepare students for their post study career. However, this still does not negate the need for an evaluation and continued studies into research methodologies and by extension the academic field (Kuye, 1999: 364-365).

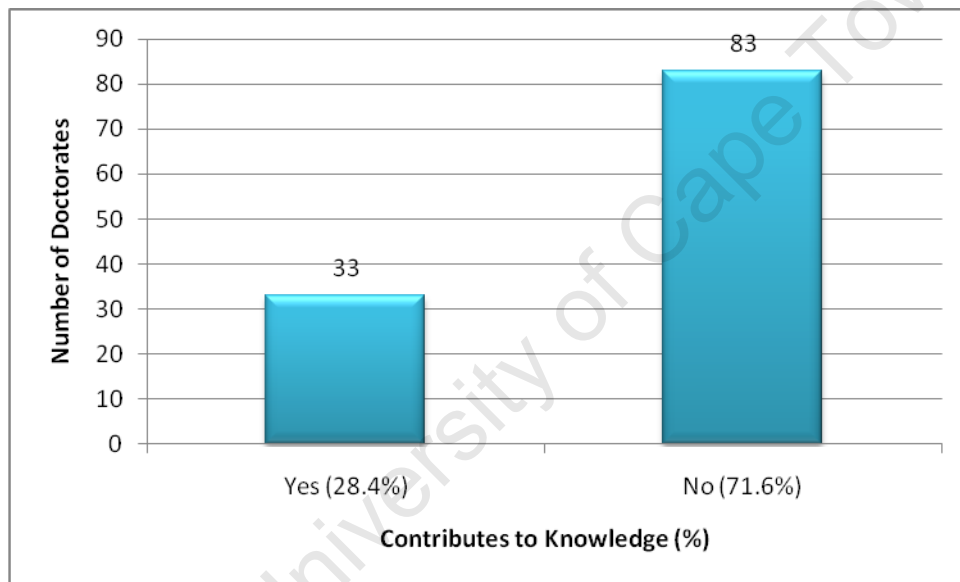
Figure 4.6 Research Focus (N=116)



4.3.4 Significant Contribution to Knowledge

The variable of knowledge and the associated question “does the doctorate significantly contribute to knowledge” is of significance in assessing whether the research done for the obtaining of a doctorate meets one of the base requirements of doctoral research. The results for this variable are evident in figure 4.7. 71.6 percent of the completed doctorates under analysis do not contribute to knowledge in the field. This is a possible indicator of the potential weak state of research in Public Administration at the level of the doctorate. Only 28.4 percent of the doctorates have met one of the basic requirements of doctoral research.

Figure 4.7 Significant Contribution to Knowledge (N=116)



4.4 Comparative Findings Regarding Research in Public Administration

The following section of this chapter compares the findings of the Cameron and McLaverty (2008) study on the state of research contained in journal publications with the findings of this dissertation on doctoral research. The framework for this analysis of doctorates in Public Administration was adopted in part from the Cameron and McLaverty study; therefore, it is of interest to investigate whether the findings in this dissertation relate to the findings of the journal study.

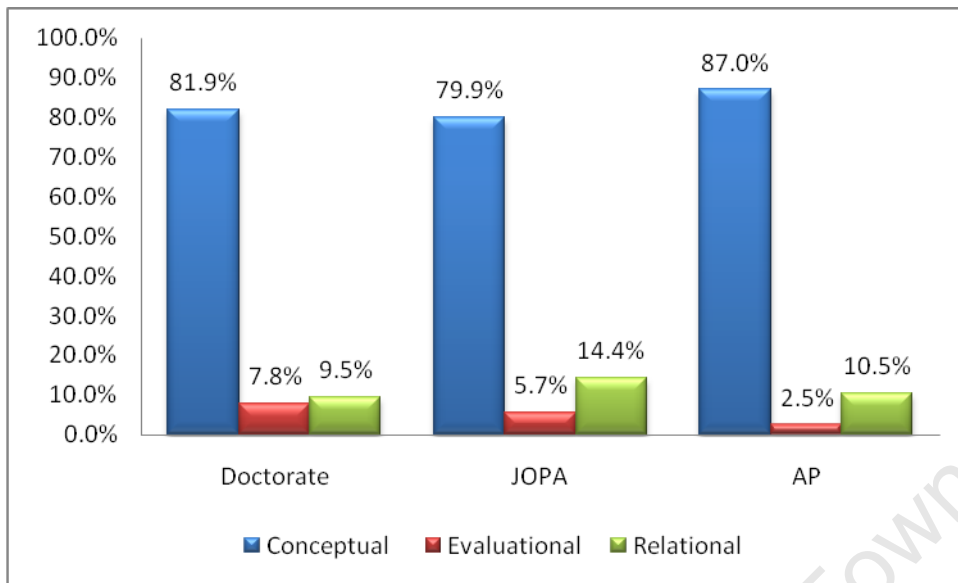
This also provides an opportunity to build on a study already done regarding the state of Public Administration research and therefore contribute to cumulativeness within the field.

The variables that will be discussed from the analysis contained in this dissertation and from the Cameron and McLaverty analysis are those that are analytical in nature; research purpose, research methodology and research focus. The variable of 'knowledge' is specifically used for this dissertation and dealing with the research at the level of the doctorate and therefore cannot be used in this comparison.

4.4.1 Comparison of Results: Research Purpose

Figure 4.8 represents the results of the comparison in relation to the variable of research purpose. There are general consistencies in the findings across the journals and the doctorates. The majority of research is conceptual in nature. Studies of the *Journal of Public Administration* and *Administratio Publica* show that respectively 79.9 percent and 87.0 percent of the articles are conceptually orientated whilst 81.9 percent of the doctorates are primarily concerned with conceptual research. This indicates that research in Public Administration is generally descriptive. This is in line with the findings of Perry and Kraemer (1986; 1994); Stallings and Ferris (1988; 1994) and Houston and Delevan (1990; 1994). The least frequent research purpose across the board is evaluative research. Doctorate research shows a marginally higher percentage of evaluative research in comparison to the journals at 7.8 percent. However, doctorate research shows a lower percentage of relational research than the journals at 9.5 percent. The implication of this is that the research is weak in terms of research purpose.

Figure 4.8 Comparison: Research Purpose

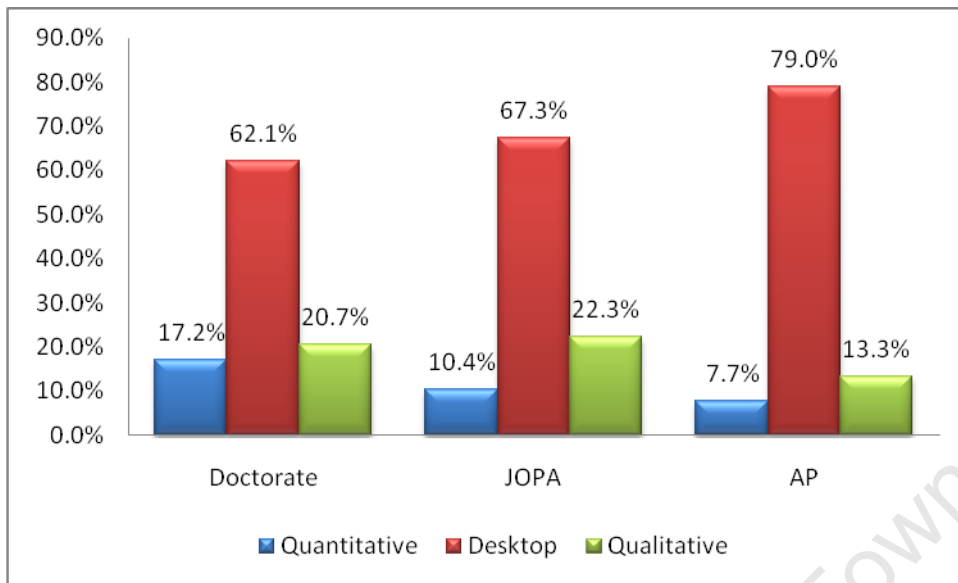


4.4.2 Comparison of Results: Research Methodology

It is evident from the findings represented in figure 4.9 that the overwhelming majority of both articles and doctorates use desktop methodologies to conduct their research. Doctorates appear to utilise desktop methodology the least at 62.1 percent in comparison to the journals where 67.3 percent and 79 percent respectively of articles used desktop methodology. More doctorates (17.2 percent) than journal publications made use of quantitative methods. The percentage of doctorates that used qualitative methods was higher than articles in *Administratio Publica*, 20.7 percent in comparison to 13.3 percent but lower than articles in *Journal of Public Administration* at 22.3 percent.

In South Africa doctorate research seems to be in a slightly better state than journal publications in relation to research methodology. However, doctorates are still mainly concerned with desktop methodology. This means that within doctorates and journal articles the majority of research being conducted is secondary research. When these findings are combined it is an indication of a weak state of research methodology in Public Administration.

Figure 4.9 Comparison: Research Methodology



4.3 Comparison of Results: Research Focus

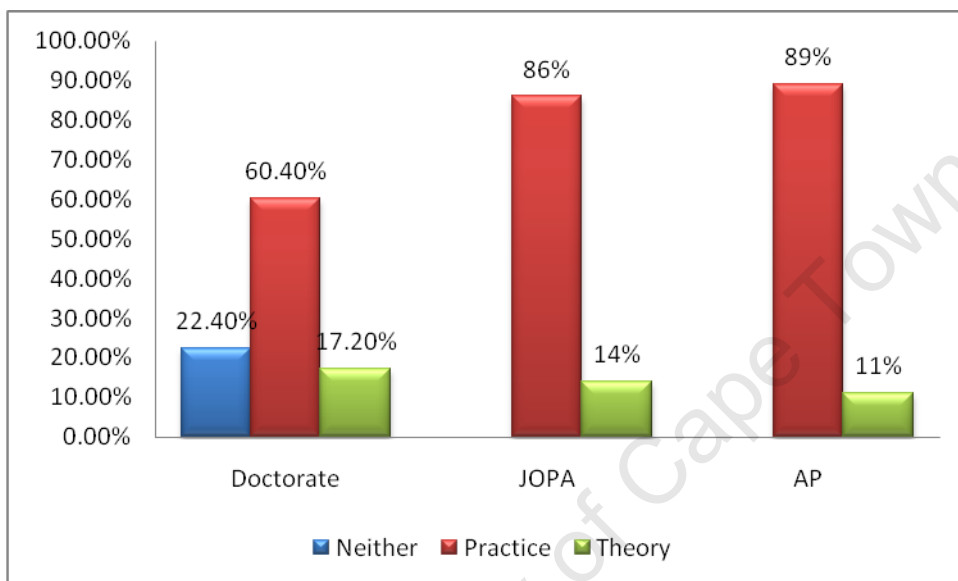
The findings of this study and doctorate research are not as directly comparable to the study of Cameron and McLaverty and journal research as in this dissertation a sub-variable of neither theory nor practice was utilised. What is evident from the comparison is that practice orientated research has dominated in both doctorates and articles. With 86 percent and 89 percent of articles in journals and 60.4 percent of doctorates being practice orientated. The research focus of theory accounts for a limited percentage of research, 14 percent and 11 percent of articles. Doctorate research which focused on theory accounted for 17.2 percent of the total theses. This shows that at the doctorate level research is slightly more concerned with developing theory or testing theory.

However, it must be noted that this dissertation dealt with research for an additional year, 2007, in comparison to the Cameron and McLaverty study which ended in 2006. During this year there was an even split between doctorates focusing on theory and those focusing on practice.⁷ This may have an influence on the overall numbers for doctorate research.

⁷ See annexure 2.

At the level of the doctorate there could possibly be a move towards an equal focus of research on theory and practice. The current picture from 1994 to 2006 shows that practice has been the focus of research in both journals and doctorates which is a concern for the academic field. However, the findings for 2007 show that this trend could be changing and the state of research could be improving.

Figure 4.10 Comparison: Research Focus



4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the dissertations findings based on both the descriptive and analytical variables which formed the basis of the research questions. The key research questions revolved around what the extent to which the variables of focus, purpose, methodology and knowledge were present in doctoral research. This chapter also formed the basis of the analysis of doctoral research from which some tentative conclusion regarding the state of research were drawn.

The focus of research at the level of the doctorate was shown to revolve largely around practice. This concern with practice was reinforced when the descriptive variable of research topic is looked at. The topics more likely to deal with practical issues represented a far larger number of doctorates than the topic dealing with theory and research. It can therefore be concluded that the field has been overly involved with the practice of public administration at the expense of theory.

The analysis showed that the primary focus of doctoral research is conceptual, the main methodology utilised was desktop and there was a clear lack of significant contribution to knowledge in the field. Individually these main findings may indicate that doctorate research in Public Administration between 1994 and 2007 is in a poor state, however, when the findings from the variables are triangulated it is clear that there are some deficits in Public Administration at the level of the doctorate.

The purpose of the majority of the doctorates was conceptual and therefore descriptive. The doctorates are also primarily using desktop research methods which also results in secondary research being conducted. Together these two variables of purpose and methodology imply a lack of knowledge being developed. The results of these two variables were reinforced by the findings associated with the variable of knowledge, as most of the doctorates do not significantly contribute to knowledge. In combination the findings associated with these variables of purpose, methodology and knowledge indicate that doctorates are not meeting up to the requirements of tertiary institutions that are set out for attaining a doctorate, that of original research that significantly contributes to knowledge in the field. Therefore, it can be said that research at the level of the doctorate is in a weak state.

The findings of this dissertation were then compared to those from the South African study on the state of research in journals conducted by Cameron and McLaverty (2008). The findings from this dissertation and the study on journals were similar; however, there were a few discrepancies. Desktop methodology was more popular in the journals indicating perhaps a weaker state of research than at the doctorate level, due to the need for doctorates to make original and significant contributions to research.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Conclusion – Discussion of Public Administration Research at the Level of the Doctorate and Future Research

5.1 Concluding Overview

This chapter acts as a conclusion to this minor dissertation, in doing so it provides a summary of the main points discussed surrounding the analysis of completed doctorates. It also serves to highlight the main points of discussion emanating from the findings. Included in this chapter is a discussion regarding possible future research on this topic.

The conceptual background that was established in the first chapter laid the foundation from which to discuss the key research questions and the associated findings. Establishing an understanding of Public Administration was essential in regards to its dual nature of practice and theory. Developing an understanding of the research doctorate was critical for the analysis of doctoral research.

The analysis of the doctorates provided the answers to the research questions of this minor dissertation. These findings have shown that Public Administration research at the level of the doctorate is in a weak state.

Although the state of research is generally weak at the level of the doctorate and one of the main reasons for this appears to be the over emphasis of practice there does appear to be a potential change in the pattern of completed doctorates. This pattern is evident in the 2007 results; however, additional research is needed to continue the analysis of this in order to ascertain whether there is indeed a change in this direction.

5.2 Findings

The primary aim of this dissertation was to conduct a critical analysis of completed doctorates in the field of Public Administration. The research problem guiding the analysis was the state of research in Public Administration and a question regarding the quality of doctorates in the field of Public Administration in South Africa from 1994 to 2007.

The analytical questions that were used to address this research problem are as follows.

- “What was the focus of the thesis?”
- “What was the research purpose of the thesis?”
- “What type of methodology was used?”
- “Did the doctorate significantly contribute to knowledge in the field?”

It is these analytical questions that were the primary focus of this minor dissertation as these provided an insight into the state of research. Some of these questions were adapted from studies on the broad state of research and the state of doctorate research. When international studies were utilised the questions were tailored to a South African context.

This dissertation also made use of three descriptive questions

- “What type of doctorate degree has been attained?”
- “What year was the doctorate degree completed?”
- “What topic was studied?”

These descriptive questions provide general background regarding completed doctorates in South African Public Administration between 1994 and 2007. The question of “what topic was studied” was used descriptively in this minor dissertation; however, it has been used by other studies in an analytical manner to indicate the importance of the topics.

The key analytical questions are now discussed in greater detail in relation to the findings of the analysis of completed doctorates in Public Administration in South African between 1994 and 2007.

5.2.1 What was the Focus of the Thesis?

The variable of focus was used to address the question of whether the thesis was more orientated towards theory building or the needs of practice. The focus of research at the level of the doctorate was shown to revolve largely around practice. This concern with practice was reinforced when the descriptive variable of research topic is looked at. The topics more likely to deal with practical issues represented a far larger number of doctorates than those topics dealing with theory and research. It can therefore be concluded that the field has been overly involved with the practice of public administration.

5.2.2 What was the Research Purpose of the Thesis?

The variable of purpose addressed the question of “what is the research purpose of the thesis”. The sub-variables of conceptual, evaluational and relational were used to answer this research question. The analysis showed the overwhelming majority of doctoral research to be conceptual in nature. A conceptual research purpose indicates that the main aim of the research is to identify and conceptualise the research problem under investigation. This type of research is primarily descriptive in nature and is not generally viewed as original research. Original research is one of the key criteria for doctoral research at a number of tertiary institutions that grant doctorate degrees. The vast majority of the doctorates under analysis have a research purpose classified as conceptual and this is an indication that doctorate research is in a weak state.

5.2.3 What Type of Methodology was Used?

The analytical research question “what type of methodology was utilised” is addressed through the variable of methodology. The classification of methodology that was used in this minor dissertation’s analysis was qualitative, quantitative and desktop. The analysis showed that over half of the doctorates were classified as desktop research. Where the research conducted is classified as desktop it implies that mainly secondary research is being conducted. The remaining doctorates were divided approximately equally between qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

5.2.4 Did the Doctorate Significantly Contribute to Knowledge in the Field?

The analytical research question of “whether the doctorate contributed significant knowledge” is critical to the analysis of doctorates as it is one of the base requirements for attaining a doctorate in the field of Public Administration, as established by universities. The analysis showed that the majority of doctorates do not meet the criteria of significantly contributing to knowledge in Public Administration.

The analysis showed that the purpose of doctoral research is conceptual, the focus is practice orientated, the main methodology utilised is desktop and there is a lack of significant contribution to knowledge in the field. Emanating from these findings is an overall picture regarding the quality of doctoral studies in South African Public Administration between 1994 and 2007.

5.3 Quality of Doctorates in South African Public Administration

The purpose of the majority of the doctorates analysed was conceptual and therefore descriptive. The analysis also indicated that doctorates are using primarily desktop research methods which also results in secondary information. In conjunction the two variables of purpose and methodology imply a lack of knowledge being developed. The findings of these two variables were reinforced by the findings associated with whether the doctorate significantly contributed to knowledge. The analysis showed that most of the doctorates do not significantly contribute to knowledge. In combination the findings associated with purpose, methodology and knowledge indicate that doctorates are not meeting up to the requirements of tertiary institutions that are set out for attaining a doctorate that of original research that significantly contributes to knowledge in the field of Public Administration. This indicates a weak state of research at the level of the doctorate.

5.4 Comparison of Findings.

The primary aim of this dissertation was a critical analysis of completed doctorates in Public Administration between 1994 and 2007. In relation to this aim was the intention to make inferences regarding the state of doctoral research in Public Administration. However, the dissertation also discussed the broader state of research in Public Administration. In order for this dissertation to continue this discussion a comparison of the findings contained in this dissertation and that of the study on the state of research in journals conducted by Cameron and McLaverty (2008) was provided.

The comparison was conducted on three of the key analytical variables that of purpose, focus and methodology. This comparison was done in order to ascertain whether the weak state of research that was described in the study on journals is evident in this study on doctoral research.

The findings from this dissertation and the study on journals were similar; however, there were a few discrepancies. In comparison desktop methodology was more popular at the doctorate level indicating perhaps a weaker state of research due to the need for doctorates to make original contributions to research.

5.5 Implications for the Field

The analysis contained in this minor dissertation has raised concerns regarding the state research at the level of the doctorate. The potential areas of research that contribute to the poor state of doctoral research, which has implications for the state of research within the field of Public Administration, has already been dealt with in this concluding chapter. However, a discussion surrounding the progress that has been made in the field over the time period under analysis will now be provided. This discussion is necessary when the South African context is considered. The type of publication of research in Public Administration has changed from that being produced during apartheid. There appears to be a move away from research that revolves around internal efficiency of government programmes, which dominated research prior to 1994.

In a post 1994 academic environment topics of research have become more normative and democratic where issues of transparency, accountability, redistribution have been included in the research agenda. This is in contrast to the boundaries imposed by apartheid ideology which limited the topics to be dealt with by research (Cloete, 2008: 35-36).

Although this minor dissertation has presented a potentially negative view of the state of research in Public Administration, particularly at the level of the doctorate, there has been progress made with regards to research becoming more relevant, critical and rigorous. However, there does still appear to be areas of weakness within Public Administration research (Cloete, 2008: 37). It is clear from this dissertation's analysis that greater attention needs to be paid to doctorate research in the field of Public Administration.

5.6 Implications for Theory

The dominance of practice in relation to the research focus of completed doctorates was evident in the findings of the analysis. The topics being studied also showed a marked lack of attention to theory and research related topics. These findings have implications for theory within the field. If theory is not being investigated then there is a possibility that this trend will continue when future research is produced. It appears that practice is dominating research at the expense of theory, at the level of the doctorate. A possible conclusion can be drawn that the atheoretical administrative process approach may indeed still be in existence (Schwella, 2000: 38) at least at the level of the doctorate.

The research at the level of the doctorate appears to mirror the reality of the field of Public Administration, that there is a gap between practice and theory (Bourgon, 2007: 21). However, it is argued that this is an artificial divide as an appropriate theory within Public Administration would act as a guide for practitioners particularly within a democratic context (Bourgon, 2007: 22). The development and testing of Public Administration theory at the level of the doctorate may assist in advancing theory not only for academics but also practitioners of Public Administration.

5.7 Future Research

5.7.1 Longitudinal Study

The state of research at the level of the doctorate appears to be generally weak. The primary reason for this can be attributed to the over emphasis of practice in Public Administration as well as the over reliance on descriptive research methodologies. These results are consistent across the time frame of this analysis, except for 2007. The findings for 2007 have shown that there is a near equal distribution between practice and theory. Further research would need to be conducted in order to ascertain whether this change represented in one year of the analysis is indeed a pattern or whether the results are specific for just this year. An additional time series analysis would be needed to assess future patterns

5.7.2 Graduates and the Workplace

Internationally there is evidence of the growing inclusion of a professional doctorate in the field of Public Administration. Further research would need to be conducted to ascertain whether a professional Public Administration doctorate would be suitable in the South African context. This would be in line with higher education reforms taking place in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Canada. The University of Pretoria is the tertiary institution that is closest in South Africa to providing a professional doctorate. Additional research could be conducted around this doctorate degree to ascertain the broader application for the professional doctorate. The expansion of the professional doctorate may act as a mitigating factor for the concern that practice is overly focused on in the research within the academic field of Public Administration. The focus of research doctorates would then be research culminating in a thesis and the focus of professional doctorates would be improving practice through research. A possible revision of doctoral education in South Africa, that is in line with the social and economic context of post 1994 environment and the current economic recession could also be explored through this additional research.

5.7.3 Publication of Doctoral Graduates

Additional research could also be conducted regarding the publication rate and the content of future research of those who have concluded their doctoral degree. This would further facilitate the discussion surrounding the state of research in Public Administration. It would also provide a larger picture regarding research in the field as it would allow for potential linkages between research conducted at the level of the doctorate and research published in journals to be established.

5.8 Concluding Summary

This study has presented a critical analysis of Public Administration doctorates in South Africa between 1994 and 2007. The analysis was informed by a review of previous international and local studies on the state of research in Public Administration. The actual analysis took the form of an independent study on doctorate level research in Public Administration through a content analysis of completed doctorates over a fourteen year time period from 1994 to 2007. The findings of this analysis have been presented in light of making tentative statements regarding the state of research.

The previous studies, both international and local, which were presented in chapter two of this dissertation, showed that Public Administration was in a weak state. Literature is predominantly internationally based; there is only one study in South Africa regarding the state of research at the level of the doctorate, Wessels (2008). The development of Public Administration, especially in South Africa, was also investigated in order to provide context to the analysis. The emergence of the doctorate was discussed, this was done to show what constituted the unit of analysis as well as to inform the research questions used in the analysis.

The framework that has been used in this dissertation was developed from international studies as well as a local study by Cameron and McLaverty (2008) on the state of journal research. The findings from the analysis showed that research at the level of the doctorate mirrors that of both the international studies and the existing local studies.

Doctorate research primarily focuses on practice, the methodology employed is mostly desktop and the research does not appear to significantly contribute to knowledge. It is the findings regarding knowledge that is of concern as contributing to knowledge is one of the key requirements established by universities in attaining a research doctorate.

Additional studies need to be conducted so as to ascertain whether the findings and trends contained in this analysis continue to be valid. This is especially of concern in regards to the post 1994 South African context where “research, in all its forms and functions, is perhaps the most powerful vehicle that we have to deepen our democracy” (Ministry of Education, 2001: 61).

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ANNEXURE 1:

Variable Codebook for Doctorate Analysis

Variable 1: Year

Variable 2: Type of Doctorate

Variable 3: Research Topic

1. Public Administration Research and Theory
2. Administrative Reform
3. Public Management and Administration
4. Public Policy
5. Ethics and Accountability
6. Development and Citizen Participation
7. Human Resource Management
8. Financial Management
9. Intergovernmental Relations
10. Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) and E-Governance
11. Service Delivery
12. Local Government Reorganisation
13. Other

Variable 4: Research Purpose

1. Conceptual
2. Relational
3. Evaluative

Variable 5: Research Methodology

1. Desktop
2. Qualitative
3. Quantitative

Variable 6: Research Focus

1. Theory Orientated
2. Practice Orientated

Variable 7: Contribution to Knowledge

1. Yes
2. No

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ANNEXURE 2:

Findings Presented in Tabular Format

Variable 1: Year

<u>YEAR:</u>	<u>COUNT</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>1994</u>	7	6.0
<u>1995</u>	4	3.4
<u>1996</u>	6	5.2
<u>1997</u>	3	2.6
<u>1998</u>	2	1.7
<u>1999</u>	11	9.5
<u>2000</u>	4	3.4
<u>2001</u>	11	9.5
<u>2002</u>	12	10.3
<u>2003</u>	13	11.2
<u>2004</u>	9	7.8
<u>2005</u>	13	11.2
<u>2006</u>	12	10.3
<u>2007</u>	9	7.8
<u>TOTAL:</u>	116	100.0

Variable 2: Type of Doctorate

	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>TYPE OF DOCTORATE:</u>																
DAdmin	4	2	1	2	2	5	2	6	3	4	2	4	3	1	41	35.3
DCom	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	0.9
DLitt et Phil	-	1	2	-	-	3	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	1	13	11.2
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1.7
DPhil	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	2	-	10	8.6
DTech	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	3	2.6
PhD	2	1	1	1	-	3	1	3	6	7	6	4	4	7	46	39.7
<u>TOTAL:</u>	7	4	6	3	2	11	4	11	12	13	9	13	12	9	116	100.0

Variable 4: Research Purpose

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	TOTAL	%
<u>PURPOSE</u>																
Conceptual	6	3	5	3	2	10	4	9	10	11	9	6	9	8	95	81.9
Evaluational	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	4	1	1	8	6.9
Relational	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	1	-	3	1	-	12	10.3
None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.9
Total Number	7	4	6	3	2	11	4	11	12	13	9	13	12	9	116	100.0

Variable 5: Research Methodology

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	TOTAL	%
<u>METHODOLOGY</u>																
Qualitative	2	-	1	-	-	3	2	2	2	-	2	3	4	3	24	20.7
Desktop	5	3	4	2	2	6	2	6	6	10	5	7	8	6	72	62.1
Quantitative	-	1	1	1	-	2	-	3	4	3	2	3	-	-	20	17.2
Total Number	7	4	6	3	2	11	4	11	12	13	9	13	12	9	116	100.0

Variable 6: Research Focus

	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>FOCUS:</u>																
Practice	3	3	5	3	1	10	1	4	5	8	6	11	8	4	72	62.1
Theory	3	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	4	18	15.5
Neither	1	-	1	-	1	1	2	6	5	3	2	1	2	1	26	22.4
Total Number	7	4	6	3	2	11	4	11	12	13	9	13	12	9	116	100.0

Variable 7: Contribution to Knowledge

	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Knowledge</u>																
Yes	3	3	1	1	-	4	-	6	3	2	2	4	2	2	33	28.4
No	4	1	5	2	2	7	4	5	9	11	7	9	10	7	83	71.6
Total Number	7	4	6	3	2	11	4	11	12	13	9	13	12	9	116	100.0

ANNEXURE 3:

RANDOM SAMPLE OF TWELVE FULL THESES

	TOPIC	FOCUS	METHOD	PURPOSE	KNOWLEDGE
Abstract 1	Development and Citizen Participation	Practice	Qualitative	Conceptual	No
Thesis 1	Development and Citizen Participation	Practice	Qualitative	Conceptual	No
Abstract 2	Local Government Reorganisation	Neither	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Thesis 2	Local Government Reorganisation	Neither	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Abstract 3	ICT and E-Government	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Thesis 3	ICT and E-Government	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No

Abstract 4	Public Policy	Neither	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Thesis 4	Public Policy	Neither	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Abstract 5	Public Management and Administration	Practice	Quantitative	Relational	Yes
Thesis 5	Public Management and Administration	Practice	Quantitative	Relational	Yes
Abstract 6	Public Administration Theory and Research	Theory	Qualitative	Conceptual	Yes
Thesis 6	Public Administration Theory and Research	Theory	Qualitative	Conceptual	Yes
Abstract 7	Finance	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Thesis 7	Finance	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No

Abstract 8	Public Management and Administration	Practice	Qualitative	Conceptual	No
Thesis 8	Public Management and Administration	Practice	Qualitative	Conceptual	No
Abstract 9	Public Administration Theory and Research	Theory	Quantitative	Conceptual	No
Thesis 9	Public Administration Theory and Research	Theory	Quantitative	Conceptual	No
Abstract 10	ICT and E-Government	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Thesis 10	ICT and E-Government	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Abstract 11	Administrative Reform	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No
Thesis 11	Administrative Reform	Practice	Desktop	Conceptual	No

Abstract 12	Service Delivery	Practice	Desktop	Evaluative	No
Thesis 12	Service Delivery	Practice	Desktop	Evaluative	No

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